



September 1995

**SMART ON CRIME  
A PUBLIC SAFETY STRATEGY****FROM THE GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Greater Baltimore, like the rest of the nation, has been victimized by a growing fear of crime. Reports of senseless killings, personal experience with muggings, burglaries or car theft, even encounters with aggressive panhandlers all contribute to a sense among many that their safety is in jeopardy. Crime, and the fear it produces, imperil the quality of life and economic vitality of Greater Baltimore.

Government at every level has responded to this emotionally-charged issue with a "tough on crime" approach. Longer, mandatory sentences have been imposed in state and federal courts. Maryland has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to add thousands of prison beds. More police officers have been put on the streets. But, as a whole, these efforts have been shown to have no impact on violent crime rates and only marginal impact on property crime rates.

Strong and strategic enforcement of criminal laws is critical to improving public safety. But as a society we cannot arrest and imprison our way out of the current crime crisis. More than being tough on crime, we must be smart on crime. The Greater Baltimore Committee believes that a smart approach to the reduction of crime should emphasize the cost-effective and strategic use of resources based on objective reality rather than emotional reaction.

After an in-depth examination of the varied and complex issues surrounding crime, the GBC concludes:

- o The most immediate and overwhelming source of crime in Greater Baltimore is illicit drugs.
- o The escalation of crime -- especially violent crime -- committed by juveniles is a significant problem now and threatens to grow even more so with the projected increase in juvenile population.
- o Seemingly small, petty crimes left unchallenged erode the public's sense of safety and invite further and more serious criminal behavior.

The GBC believes that bold, new strategies that specifically target these conditions can have a powerful impact on crime in our community.

## **DRUGS: THE CORE OF THE PROBLEM**

Drugs are the explosive core of the most serious crime in Greater Baltimore. Police estimate that drugs are involved in nearly three-quarters of the City's killings and nearly all serious crime -- about 85 percent of all felonies. If current trends continue, the future appears bleak indeed: over the past 10 years, drug-related murders in Baltimore have increased sharply -- jumping 50 percent. The victims claimed by these crimes are by no means limited to those involved in drug trafficking. Many victims of drug-related crime may never know that drugs played a serious role in the offense that violated their sense of safety. More and more innocent bystanders, residents, visitors and entire communities are victimized by the fear and violence the drug trade brings to neighborhoods throughout the Baltimore region.

Drugs essentially produce two types of criminal behavior. The first, and most highly publicized, is also usually the most deadly. A large percentage of the killing and gunfire in Greater Baltimore is committed by those who deal in the hugely profitable illegal drug trade and seek to maintain control of their turf through the use of violence. The GBC supports the Baltimore City Police Department's community drug sweeps that target the city's most violent drug dealers. The continuation of such strategic and powerful law enforcement is the first and most vital step to making city street corners safe once again.

The second type of criminal activity produced by drugs is that of addicts who will do whatever is necessary to get money to buy drugs. By some estimates, Baltimore has the nation's highest per capita rate of drug addicts. If anything, it is conservative to estimate that Baltimore has 50,000 drug addicts, equal to more than seven percent of the City's population. While their crimes rarely produce headlines, the acts of these addicts are infinitely more costly in a purely economic sense than the violence of dealers.

Experts and addicts themselves say addicts typically need about \$100 each and every day to support their habits. Most get that money by begging or stealing, often breaking into cars and homes and mugging people on the streets of our city and, increasingly, in suburban neighborhoods. The cost of the fear these crimes cause is high. The economic cost is staggering. Even if only half of Baltimore's addicts steal to support their habits, at \$100 a day for 25,000 addicts, citizens of and visitors to Greater Baltimore may lose as much as \$2.5 million every day; nearly \$1 billion every year. This calculation is based only on the "street value" of stolen property -- not its replacement cost, which may be 10 times higher. Also excluded from the calculation is the cost of property damage, health care and lost wages such crimes often inflict upon their victims. Add to that the inestimable emotional toll taken by these crimes which is perhaps the most costly.

Preventing addicts from committing crimes must be the top priority in the region's public safety strategy. So far, nearly every community has relied on arrest and incarceration to achieve this result. But incarceration is not the answer. Maryland's overcrowded prisons

house thousands of drug abusers who are in prison for possession and/or sales of drugs or stealing to sustain their habits. Every drug user in prison costs State taxpayers at least \$18,000 per year, and when they are released from prison, most will continue to abuse drugs and prey on citizens to support their habits.

The imprisonment of addicts who rely on criminal behavior to support their habits is effective in eliminating their opportunity to commit crime while in prison. But locking them up has little impact once they are released from jail. Furthermore, only a small percentage of drug addicts will ever spend any time in prison for crimes they commit. Several studies have shown that fewer than one percent of crimes committed by heroin addicts result in arrest, much less jail time. With such a high price tag and low conviction rate, the effectiveness of an arrest and jail strategy is severely limited.

Much more worthwhile is a strategy that eliminates or reduces -- even temporarily -- the only motivation many addicts have to steal; that is, their dependence on drugs. The GBC is convinced that effective drug treatment and prevention are under-utilized and potentially powerful weapons in the region's crime-fighting arsenal.

Drug treatment is an anti-crime strategy steeped in good sense. From a cost-benefit perspective, drug treatment is fiscally sound. A recent study by the Rand Corporation found that drug treatment was the least expensive way to reduce the use of cocaine. The study examined how much it costs to reduce cocaine use and found that domestic law enforcement was at least seven times more expensive than drug treatment; border controls and other interdiction programs were nearly 11 times more costly. Even more impressive are the results of a California study that found that for every \$1 invested in drug treatment, \$7 were saved, mostly in the cost of the crimes addicts would have committed had they not received treatment. California's investment of \$200 million dollars to treat about 150,000 addicts resulted in a savings of about \$1.5 billion to citizens, businesses and taxpayers.

The cost-effectiveness of drug treatment as a crime-fighting tool depends upon its effectiveness in deterring crime. Several respected research studies have shown that drug treatment can be dramatically successful in reducing criminal behavior among addicts. One study of methadone maintenance treatment in three cities, including Baltimore, showed substantial reduction in criminality among addicts who remained in treatment for six months or more. The addicts told researchers that they participated in some type of criminal activity every day before they entered treatment. For those heroin addicts, their overall criminality during drug treatment was reduced by nearly 80 percent and participation in crimes like theft, robbery and burglary were reduced by about 90 percent. The study also showed that criminal activity continued to decline the longer an addict remained in treatment.

Other types of drug treatment have been shown to be effective as well. The California study mentioned above showed a substantial reduction in crime after the completion of a variety of drug treatment methods. For non-methadone programs, both outpatient and residential, criminal activity declined by as much as 80 percent. This study also showed

that the longer the stay in treatment, the larger the reduction in criminal activity.

Providing addicts with effective, intensive drug treatment costs as little as \$5,000 for one year, and provides society a chance to get drug abusing criminals off the addiction treadmill that leads them to prey on citizens to support a habit. But only a small fraction of Baltimore-area drug addicts have access to this kind of drug treatment. Baltimore City has only 5,300 available treatment slots to deal with its 50,000 addicts. Even if one accepts experts' estimates that one-third of addicts would reject treatment if it were readily available, Baltimore would have to turn away the vast majority of the remaining two-thirds. Indeed, most of Baltimore's publicly-funded drug treatment programs are currently operating far above capacity and have long waiting lists.

But simply adding more treatment slots is only a partial solution. Most of the treatment currently available to addicts in the Baltimore region is not the effective, intensive treatment that can be expected to produce lasting results. To maximize the return on money spent, the approach to drug treatment in Greater Baltimore must be dramatically revamped. Ineffective treatment approaches must be replaced with programs that have been shown to work well, and long-term control of addictive behavior must be the principal objective.

The drug treatment system must provide a continuum of treatment services to deal with individual problems. Such a system should provide intensive services -- though not necessarily residential care -- in the beginning of treatment, and then over time reduce the intensity of treatment while still maintaining contact and support for the recovering addict. Special attention must be given to adolescent drug addicts who currently receive little that could be characterized as effective treatment. The system should also identify those who have psychological disorders compounding their drug abuse and work with mental health providers to develop a treatment plan. The investment required to create such a drug treatment system will yield abundant returns in public safety, confidence and quality of life in the Greater Baltimore region.

### *Drug Prevention: Hope for the Future*

Recent surveys show that, after several years of decline, the number of young people who are choosing to use illicit drugs is again on the rise. And yet, no state or local dollars are currently spent on drug abuse prevention in Baltimore. All efforts to prevent drug use among Baltimore's youth are funded by the federal government. And those federal dollars are small and shrinking.

Preventing drug use is key to the long-term battle against crime. Almost half of the young people sentenced to Maryland's Department of Juvenile Justice residential facilities have a substance abuse problem. Studies have shown that many children embark on a path of drug abuse by the time they are 11 years old, sometimes even earlier. Most children begin their substance abuse with alcohol and tobacco, often referred to as "gateway" drugs. Few young people will use drugs at all if they haven't already abused alcohol.

The implications of the research is clear. Efforts to stop drug abuse among young people

must begin at a very early age. And those efforts must produce results. Some research shows that worthwhile drug prevention strategies require coordinated efforts from a variety of sources that target specific groups. Studies have shown that merely teaching the dangers of drugs will not prevent substance abuse, but training young people in the skills needed to refuse drugs in combination with the information on the dangers of drugs is more effective. Similarly, programs designed to enhance self-esteem without building a child's capacity to resist drug use have been shown to make little difference in whether a child will actually end up abusing drugs.

Thus far, the small amount of funding available for prevention efforts in Baltimore has not yet produced the kind of prevention effort that can have a significant impact on drug use among young people. The GBC calls on state and local governments to place drug abuse prevention high on their list of priorities, both for targeted action and for funds. The region's crime problem will only worsen as more young people join the ranks of the addicted.

#### *Drug Free Workplace: A Business Role in the Battle*

As leaders of the business community, the GBC recognizes the important role employers can play in reducing substance abuse and the crime it produces. More than 70 percent of drug users are employed. Besides the social problems they create, drug abusing employees are costly to business. Drug abusers are 33 percent less productive and are responsible for 40 percent of all industrial fatalities. And some drug abusing workers commit crimes, including theft from employers. One study of heroin addicts in treatment found that nearly 60 percent had held full-time jobs before seeking treatment and more than 80 percent had committed crimes. But employers which have drug free workplace policies in force can not only reduce the impact of drug users on their businesses, they can address the larger societal issues of drug abuse, as well.

Drug testing eliminates the opportunity for many substance abusers to use their jobs to create an illusion of a "normal" lifestyle and sends a strong message of zero tolerance for drug use. Businesses that offer employee assistance programs that include drug treatment may be able to stop a worker's addiction before it leads to criminal behavior. The GBC encourages all area businesses to implement drug free workplace policies and will work with its membership to increase the number of drug free workplaces in the Greater Baltimore area.

### **JUVENILE CRIME: EPIDEMIC ON THE HORIZON**

Greater Baltimore faces a crisis in juvenile crime that threatens to escalate at an alarming pace in the next 10 years. Currently, one-fourth of all murders in Baltimore City are committed by juveniles. Baltimore's juvenile violent crime rate is more than double the state average. And the state doesn't compare well with the rest of the country. Maryland ranks sixth in the nation for juvenile violent crime arrest rates. Nationwide, the rate of murders committed by teenagers from 14 to 17 years of age more than doubled since 1985

-- jumping 165 percent.

These trends will worsen dramatically in the future, because the juvenile population is projected to increase by an astounding 23 percent over the next decade. That means that even if juvenile crime rates remain stable, the sheer number of crimes committed by juveniles can be expected to increase by about 23 percent. But the trends show that the juvenile crime rate is not leveling off. In fact, the juvenile crime rate is increasing steadily, especially for the most violent crimes -- homicide and aggravated assault. And the perpetrators are no longer just males; more and more teenage girls are joining the ranks of violent offenders.

The crisis already has begun to escalate. In Baltimore City alone, the number of youth referred to the Department of Juvenile Justice has jumped by 73 percent in just three years. The warning signs are unmistakable. Juvenile crime is quickly reaching unmanageable proportions. Many people and organizations have worked tirelessly over many years to deal with this deteriorating situation. But the accelerated growth of juvenile crime is outstripping any efforts made to this point to combat the problem. The systems in place are not adequate to overcome the challenges faced today -- and certainly will not be sufficient to cope with populations that will leave their imprint in the very near future. Like corporations across the globe, government must reinvent the way it works in order to be responsive to the new challenges it faces. With regard to juvenile crime, that requires a broader and bolder view of what can and must be done.

#### *Delinquency Prevention: Catching Crime Before It Starts*

More attention must be paid to prevention and early intervention in the lives of the children most at risk for delinquency and their families. Most researchers believe that as few as six percent of juveniles are responsible for the most violent of crimes committed by young people. Some studies have shown that these violent offenders begin showing signs of their propensity for violence at very young ages. And other signs -- like school failure, family conflict, extreme economic and social deprivation -- can point to a child who is at high risk for becoming a delinquent. The evidence is strong that early prevention efforts can be effective in reducing violent juvenile crimes. Yet, in Maryland, we wait too long before intervening in the lives of the children who show clear warning signs that they are headed toward delinquency long before their problems become severe.

Concentrated attention must be paid to young people who are most at risk for committing crimes before they actually break the law. The costs of our failure to do so are high both in an economic and human sense. Experts engage in raging debates about whether juvenile offenders can be reformed once they have committed heinous crimes. Prevention of those crimes is often considered the best -- or only -- way to salvage the lives of these young people and keep other citizens safe from their violent acts.

In economic terms, Maryland taxpayers spend as much as \$53,000 a year to keep a juvenile offender in secure detention. Currently, Maryland's juvenile residential facilities are at or above capacity. They are not equipped to handle the coming wave of juvenile offenders.

Based on demographic projections, Maryland will not have facilities to deal with the sheer numbers of juvenile offenders who will come of age over the course of this decade. To build enough residential facilities to hold the number of delinquent youth expected in the next ten years would cost millions of dollars. It makes better economic sense to spend far fewer dollars today working with the troubled six-year-olds who are on a track to become 16-year-old criminals in 2005.

*Bold Reform: The Time is Now*

Incremental steps are insufficient to the task. They cannot and will not keep pace with the growing number of juveniles and the escalating juvenile crime rate. A new sense of urgency is required. The GBC supports the efforts currently underway to mend some of the problems that plague the juvenile justice system. However, we believe that the coming wave of juvenile crime requires an entirely new philosophy based on a coordinated and comprehensive approach to successful early intervention and focused on measurable outcomes.

That kind of coordination is one of the goals that could be met by the construction of a Juvenile Justice Center in Baltimore City. Currently, the City has no detention facility and little coordination in the intake and prosecution phases of juvenile justice. The GBC believes the construction of the Juvenile Justice Center in Baltimore City is long overdue and should begin immediately.

Long-term solutions that coordinate the actions of all government agencies at every level must be developed and implemented. To hold the Department of Juvenile Justice solely responsible for coping with juvenile crime is a short-sighted and irresponsible plan. The State must rethink and reengineer its approach to juvenile crime. Schools, police, health, housing, courts, and social services all have critical roles to play in preventing juvenile delinquency. All of these government agencies that touch the lives of young people must work together to prevent and intervene in juvenile delinquency.

Government leaders at every level must take a firm stand that holds accountable all agencies with the potential to prevent juvenile crime. That requires a bold approach to inter-governmental cooperation. No form of business-as-usual will meet the challenge. The GBC believes the State should seriously consider expansion of the Systems Reform Initiative currently in place in Maryland to include a specific focus on delinquency prevention. The principles involved in Systems Reform are those necessary to make government effective in reducing juvenile crime. It requires that all agencies involved share resources, eliminate turf battles, focus sharply on desired outcomes for young people and have leadership with strong will to require that goals be met.

The Systems Reform Initiative works through local boards which are funded by pooled resources from various agencies. Using the flexibility to contract with a wide variety of government agencies and private providers, the local groups have been successful in getting children and families the services they need to reduce the number of children who are assigned out of their homes to more expensive places like foster homes, juvenile

detention or special schools.

In these times of shrinking government dollars, all agencies must evaluate their budgets against a criteria of better outcomes for the young people they are charged with serving. Money spent on programs with poor outcomes or little impact on young people's lives must be redirected to efforts that can work. After such an evaluation, we believe many resources will be available to fund the critical services needed to achieve a broader and more coordinated approach to juvenile crime and its prevention.

The challenge of juvenile crime cries for courageous action and an end to bureaucratic limitations. The GBC calls on Governor Glendening and government leaders at every level to require that all agencies affecting juveniles work together to deliver coordinated services that prevent and respond to juvenile crime.

### **COMMUNITY COURT: SWIFT AND VISIBLE JUSTICE**

Nuisance crimes such as graffiti, vandalism, aggressive panhandling, public urination, and prostitution, when not addressed quickly, speed the deterioration of a community. Left unattended, relatively minor irritations -- such as a window broken by vandals -- contributes to the perception that a neighborhood is fertile ground for crime to breed and adds to the public's perception that an area is unsafe. Ignoring those seemingly minor affronts to a community encourages those who might be inclined to commit more serious crimes. Police and researchers call this the "broken window" effect, where one broken window leads to another and, ultimately, to more serious problems.

One researcher placed identical cars in two different cities. The first had no license plate and was left with the hood up. Within a day, it was stripped. The other car sat untouched for a week. Then, the researcher smashed a window in the second car. It only took hours for that car to be stripped as well.

Studies have found that seemingly minor offenses and unregulated disorderly conduct also cause fearful citizens to stay away from the affected area. The result is that, as people withdraw from the neighborhood, they cannot provide mutual support for others who remain. Researchers found that the unchecked aggressive panhandler is the first step to creating an environment ripe for serious crime. Muggers and robbers who follow the panhandler believe the chances of being caught are minimal since potential victims are already intimidated by the neighborhood conditions.

The GBC believes that these problems seriously sabotage the public's sense of safety and the quality of life in Greater Baltimore. This blight on Baltimore's downtown has a negative impact on businesses deciding where to locate. It also creates an unwelcome reception for visitors and tourists who come to enjoy all of the benefits offered by Baltimore's downtown area.

Working in collaboration with the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, the GBC is seeking innovative approaches to reduce the nuisance crimes on our streets and prevent the

recurrence of these offenses. Although the Downtown Partnership's Public Safety programs have contributed to a 10 percent decrease in crime downtown, an unacceptable level of petty crime remains. Together, we have begun examining the potential for establishing a community court, where nuisance crimes can be quickly addressed and sentences of community service and restitution can be handed down to force offenders to correct or make amends for the problems they cause. The swift attention paid by police to such crimes combined with the visible results of sentences when offenders are performing community service in the very neighborhoods where they committed their crime will yield an increased sense of safety and community downtown.

Such a special court can be found in Manhattan, New York City at the Mid-Town Community Court. This groundbreaking court handles misdemeanors only, such as vandalism, graffiti, aggressive panhandling, illegal street vending and prostitution. The Community Court has promoted a sense of certainty that conviction will result in punishment. The court provides swift justice (with most cases adjudicated on the day of arrest), visible retribution (with most sentences involving community service) and exploits the "moment of crisis" in offenders' lives to channel them into the social service system where they can receive help for problems such as substance abuse, homelessness and illness.

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