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Help young offenders make a better choice

Allentown Morning Call

March 18, 2008

<http://www.mcall.com/news/opinion/all-editorial2.6317543mar18,0,1108543,print.story>

Send a juvenile offender off to jail and what comes out? Too often, it's a young person who has learned more about crime than he or she knew before going off to jail. It means the person is more likely to become a repeat offender, graduating to bigger and bigger crimes.

The Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton police departments, and the Lehigh County District Attorney's Office are looking for a better way. Earlier this month, officials from each visited High Point, N.C., to learn more about a program instituted there that has helped to reduce crime.

High Point's program began in 1997 with the help of a criminal justice professor at Harvard. Law enforcement officials in the mid-size North Carolina city were attempting to crack down on drug dealers operating openly in the city's West End. With assistance from Prof. David Kennedy, now with the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, they started a "call-in" program that gave arrested drug dealers a choice and a chance: Go straight, or go to jail.

Essentially, the program applies an approach that caring family and friends sometimes use to convince a drug dealer's customer -- the addict -- that he or she has a substance abuse problem. It's called an intervention.

Once the drug dealer is arrested, police, social workers, clergy and even family members meet with the suspect. In the meeting, the drug dealer is told police have enough evidence to try him in court. Then the person is given an alternative to standing trial -- get straightened out through counseling, rehabilitation, job training, education or whatever is needed.

And, the program works. The recidivism rate for drug dealers going through the High Point program is half that of similar criminals elsewhere in North Carolina. High Point saw its violent crime drop 47 percent. The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard has allotted \$100,000 to promote the program around the country.

It's an alternative approach to law enforcement that prosecutors should seriously study.

Manchester works to create neighbor-based justice system

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

By Diana Nelson Jones

March 24, 2008

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08084/867524-53.stm>

Manchester residents are taking the first steps toward creating a criminal-justice system all their own.

Once established, it would be a pilot for neighborhoods in the city. The system is based on both a revolutionary and old idea: that offenses in the neighborhood are best handled by those most interested in righting the wrongs -- the neighbors.

It is not vigilante justice. In fact, called restorative justice, it is designed to heal the offender, the victim and the community.

"The offender, victim and community are the ones who are involved, not the state," said Jerome Jackson, who initiated the concept in Manchester. He is the program coordinator for the Manchester Citizens Corp. "You pay your debt to the person you harmed rather than to society."

The Center for Victims of Violence and Crime, a nonprofit in East Liberty, would likely help Mr. Jackson train Manchester residents as mediators on accountability panels. The center also makes first contact with the victim to find out if he is willing to discuss solutions with the offender and a mediator.

Some panels deal with the offender and not the victim, but for a case to be diverted from the courts, the victim must participate. The police and neighborhoods can work together without

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permission from the courts, said Jim Rieland, director of Allegheny County Probation. The neighborhood's leverage is that, if the offender does not live up to the agreement he participates in forging -- say, to remove graffiti from a shop window and serve a neighborhood project for 25 hours -- he has to go to juvenile court, he said.

Last year, Mr. Jackson, 45, began plugging the idea of a neighborhood resolution system to the nonprofit's board, getting feedback from other mediators and plotting a strategy. Neighborhood meetings started two months ago. Manchester Citizens will get feedback for a workable plan by knocking on residents' doors.

Mr. Jackson, a 2008 recipient of the mediation center's peace-partner awards, has trained mediators for nonprofits, companies and the state Department of Corrections. He says some parts of the traditional justice system, such as community service removed from the offended community, "make no sense."

"Usually, society doesn't look at the effect crime has on the community or that there needs to be repair," he said. "As it is now, lawyers tell the victim and offender not to talk to each other."

The Manchester experiment will begin with youth offenders, but the ultimate goal is to handle all crime and disputes in the neighborhood, he said.

Georgia Washington, a Manchester resident since 1982, said she is "very optimistic" that restorative justice would serve the neighborhood well, especially in the residents' new-found license to impose standards.

"Don't you think that's the problem today, that young people don't have that [inhibition] because people have grown apart from one another?" she said. On the street, she said, "you get this cold stare back. The kinship is gone, and it hurts."

Restorative justice sounds like a return to the day, she said, "when we had time to know our neighbors and interact with them. Sometimes, you need to go back. We had it right once."

Stephanie Walsh, executive director of the mediation center, said both sides are usually afraid at first. "You're facing the person you knocked down," or the person who burgled your house. "A victim will often say, 'Why did you pick my house?' and the offender, though a stranger, might say, 'I didn't know it was your house.'"

Such a response is a sign the offender understands the victim has a face and the offense was personal, she said. "Crime and violence have a way of disconnecting us and building barriers. The mediator helps them have conversations, supports each in telling their story" and guides them to resolution. "These efforts start to build bridges again, to recreate what is called a neighborhood."

Manchester's would be a first among city neighborhoods, but restorative justice has made inroads into 44 states, including Pennsylvania.

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Allegheny County's juvenile courts have run a restorative justice component with the mediation center as a contractor since 1995, said Mr. Rieland.

Changes in state law that year mandated the juvenile justice system "address community protection, victim restoration and youth competencies," he said. "A small number of youth go through this now." They are chosen based on their crimes. "We are trying to make it part of daily life."

Ms. Walsh said accountability panels have been mediating with youth for low-level offenses in Duquesne, Wilkesburg and McKeesport for four years, with help from the mediation center. They are still too recent to assess, she said, as "it always takes three years for a new program" to prove itself.

In Chester County, Gwenn S. Knapp, a magisterial district judge, started the Young Adult Community Conferencing program to bring college students charged with public drunkenness, noise violations and disorderly conduct to mediation with the people they offend.

Restorative justice is a growing trend in court systems, school systems, towns and neighborhoods because it does reduce repeat offenses and increase victims' satisfaction, said Susan Blackburn, a specialist in the field for the Juvenile Court Judges Commission.

In a lengthy study titled "Restorative Justice: The Evidence," the Smith Institute, a think-tank in Great Britain, indicates repeat offenses among both adults and youth and the financial cost to the public were all reduced.

"The communities hold them very accountable because the peace in the neighborhood has been disrupted, and relationships have been weakened," said Ms. Blackburn. "The community will tell [the offender] what his harm feels like," she said, citing an example: " 'It was not just a TV you stole from Betty's house, but Betty will not sleep well for years.'"

"The whole community will keep an eye on this fellow, and he knows it."

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Juvenile justice reforms reduce racial disparity

Beloit Daily News (WI)

By Cheryl Scott

March 14, 2008

<http://www.beloitdailynews.com/articles/2008/03/14/news/news07.txt>

The population of Rock County 10- to 17-year-olds is 84 percent white and 7 percent African-American. Yet in 2002, the detention admissions were 63 percent white youth and 32 percent African-Americans.

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"This is not unique to Rock County, but unfortunately it is the case in several jurisdictions who have high minority populations," Witt said.

Jason Witt, the deputy director of the Rock County Human Services Department, presented a report on the status of juvenile justice reforms along with other staff members at the Rock County Board of Supervisors meeting Thursday.

To measure the disproportionate minority contact (DMC), the county used what's called a relative rate index (RRI), Witt said.

In 2002, the RRI was about 40 percent, meaning that African-Americans had a 40 percent higher chance of ending up in a detention center, when compared with whites.

By 2006, the percentage had decreased drastically to -20, meaning African-Americans were 20 percent less likely than whites to end up in a detention center, Witt said.

Rock County's work to reduce the disproportionate minority contact helped it obtain grants and pushed it into the national spotlight, Witt said.

For example, the Human Services Department's work to end racial disparity earned it \$100,000 a year for the next three years from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The grant must be used primarily for data collection, said Juvenile Justice Division Manager Kerrie Bischoff.

"Without looking at where the problems are, you can't step in to correct them," Bischoff said.

Rock County received almost \$1 million total in different grants to address juvenile justice through programs such as CASASTART, the First Time Offender program and the Running Rebels program, Witt said.

The Rock County Human Services Department staff also has presented and shared Rock County's approach at several conferences across the country, said Lisa Goers, juvenile detention diversion program supervisor.

"It's (Rock County is) a state and nationally recognized leader," Goers said.

The research showed that placement in secure detention does not deter most juveniles from crime, Goers said. The most effective way to deal with juveniles is with individually tailored programs that involved the family.

The Rock County Human Services Department has been able to reduce the racial disparity in the detention stage of the system, but the department still must work on the DMC in the entry, or arrest, stage and in the secure corrections stage of the justice system, Bischoff said.

Although the Rock County Human Services Department reduced the racial disparity in certain areas of the justice system, Witt explained what DMC cannot do: fix the underlying societal issues

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that may be contributing to the disproportionate minority contact. In addition, the DMC program does not involve being "soft" with minorities, since those committing crimes will be brought to justice, regardless of their race, Witt said.

In other business, the Rock County Board denied to authorize the demolition of the county farm house in a 18-6 vote, which fell two votes short of the needed 20.

Proponents of demolishing the farm house, which rests on land next to Rock Haven, said that no one was renting out the farm house now, it would require \$20,000 in repairs and maintenance to be inhabitable and the property may be required for an expansion nursing home facilities.

The cost to demolish the farm house would be \$6,000. The Janesville Fire Department agreed to burn the house for a training exercise, which would save the county \$9,000 in demolition costs.

Chair Richard Ott was one of the supervisors who opposed the demolition of the house because he said the county needs moderate, low-income housing that the farm house provides. Ott also said the house is not deterring any expansion projects at the moment.

Supervisor Hank Brill said the lead paint on the house would be a hazard to children.

Ott still opposed the demolition of the house, saying that he thought lead paint could be sealed by putting on another coat of paint.

Study: Louisiana has highest incarceration rate Nationwide more than 2 million in jails or prison

Associated Press

By David Crary
March 18, 2008

Louisiana has the nation's highest incarceration rate, according to a new report that also shows that more than one in every 100 American adults is in jail or prison.

The report, released by the Pew Center on the States, also urges states to rein in corrections costs with alternative sentencing programs.

Louisiana historically has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country, and the Pew study found the state ranked No. 1 according to 2005 Bureau of Justice Statistics with 1,138 inmates behind bars per 100,000 residents.

Marianne Fisher-Giorlando, a criminal justice professor at Grambling State University, said Louisiana lacks sentencing options and should better prepare inmates to function outside of jail.

"We seem to think prison first," said Fisher-Giorlando, who also is on a board at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. "It's the first and the last resort."

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Louisiana Department of Corrections statistics show that in 2003, the most recent year information was available, nearly 40 percent of the 15,348 state prisoners released from prison went back. Among those reincarcerated, about 6 percent committed new felonies while about 28 percent made technical violations of parole.

The Pew study, using updated state-by-state data, said 2,319,258 adults were held in U.S. prisons or jails at the start of 2008 - one out of every 99.1 adults, and more than any other country in the world.

More findings from the report about Louisiana:

In 2007, Louisiana paid the least per inmate at \$13,009. The 50-state average was \$23,876 in 2005, the most recent year for which information was available.

7.5 percent of the state's general fund expenditures in 2007 went to corrections, a 1.7 percent increase over a 20-year period.

For every dollar spent on higher education, Louisiana spent 46 cents. The national average was 60 cents.

Nationwide, the 50 states spent more than \$49 billion on corrections last year, up from less than \$11 billion 20 years earlier. The rate of increase for prison costs was six times greater than for higher education spending, the report said.

The steadily growing inmate population "is saddling cash-strapped states with soaring costs they can ill afford and failing to have a clear impact either on recidivism or overall crime," said the report.

Susan Urahn, managing director of the Pew Center on the States, said budget woes are prompting officials in many states to consider new, cost-saving corrections policies that might have been shunned in the recent past for fear of appearing soft on crime.

"We're seeing more and more states being creative because of tight budgets," she said in an interview. "They want to be tough on crime, they want to be a law-and-order state - but they also want to save money, and they want to be effective."

The report cited Kansas and Texas as states which have acted decisively to slow the growth of their inmate population. Their actions include greater use of community supervision for low-risk offenders and employing sanctions other than reimprisonment for ex-offenders who commit technical violations of parole and probation rules.

According to the report, the inmate population increased last year in 36 states and the federal prison system.

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The largest percentage increase - 12 percent - was in Kentucky, where Gov. Steve Beshear highlighted the cost of corrections in his budget speech last month. He noted that the state's crime rate had increased only about 3 percent in the past 30 years, while the state's inmate population has increased by 600 percent.

The Pew report was compiled by the Center on the State's Public Safety Performance Project, which is working directly with 13 states on developing programs to divert offenders from prison without jeopardizing public safety.

"For all the money spent on corrections today, there hasn't been a clear and convincing return for public safety," said the project's director, Adam Gelb. "More and more states are beginning to rethink their reliance on prisons for lower-level offenders and finding strategies that are tough on crime without being so tough on taxpayers."

The report said prison growth and higher incarceration rates do not reflect a parallel increase in crime or in the nation's overall population.

Instead, it said, more people are behind bars mainly because of tough sentencing measures, such as "three-strikes" laws, that result in longer prison stays.

"For some groups, the incarceration numbers are especially startling," the report said. "While one in 30 men between the ages of 20 and 34 is behind bars, for black males in that age group the figure is one in nine."

Juveniles charged with violent crime have no right to jury trial

Associated Press (WA)

By Rachel La Corte

March 20, 2008

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420ap_wa_scow_juvenile_crime.html

AP story picked up by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, The News Tribune (WA)

OLYMPIA, Wash. -- A juvenile charged with a violent crime has no state constitutional right to a jury trial, the state Supreme Court ruled Thursday.

In a 6-3 ruling, the court upheld a Court of Appeals ruling in the case of Azel Chavez. Chavez was convicted in juvenile court of several counts, including attempted first-degree murder, first-degree robbery while armed with a firearm, and second-degree assault while armed with a firearm.

In 2004, Chavez, who was 14 at the time, was accused of planning to kill three Sequim High School football coaches he was angry with. He led police on a high-speed three-county chase that ended when he collided head-on with a police car on the Hood Canal Bridge.

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He was sentenced by a Clallam County judge in 2005 to up to 7 years in juvenile detention, plus a 12-month firearm enhancement.

The majority rejected Chavez's assertion that juveniles who commit violent crimes are essentially treated like adult offenders, and should be allowed to have a jury trial. The high court has ruled the same in prior cases.

The court noted that even though the Washington state Constitution assures the right to a jury trial, state law has affirmed that juvenile court cases are tried without a jury.

The high court said that because of well-defined differences between Washington's juvenile justice and adult criminal systems, there is no violation of constitutional provisions.

The majority, led by Justice Charles Johnson, noted that Chavez opposed the state's motion to have him tried as an adult, where he would have had a jury trial, and that by remaining in the juvenile system, "Chavez received a substantially lesser penalty upon finding of guilt."

Joining Johnson were Chief Justice Gerry Alexander, and Justices Susan Owens, Mary E. Fairhurst, James Johnson and Justice Pro Tem. Bobbee Bridge.

The majority also upheld the Court of Appeals ruling that the Legislature did not violate the separation of powers doctrine by permitting the court to define through common law the elements of assault.

The high court said that even with changes that have been made to the Juvenile Justice Act, there are enough differences between adult and juvenile court to continue without jury trials for juveniles. "The claim that changes to the juvenile justice system make its focus punitive and no longer rehabilitative has been posited and consistently rejected by this court," Johnson wrote.

But the dissent, led by Justice Barbara Madsen, said even though the juvenile justice system is focused more on rehabilitation, "recognizing a right to trial by jury is not inconsistent with this defining aspect of the juvenile justice system."

Madsen was joined in the dissent by Justices Richard Sanders and Tom Chambers.

The case is State v. Chavez, docket number 79265-8.

On the Net:

Supreme Court of Washington: <http://www.courts.wa.gov>.

Dana Kaplan: New administration in Baton Rouge must continue agenda of reform in juvenile justice

Shreveport Times (LA)
March 23, 2008

<http://www.shreveporttimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080323/OPINION03/803220318/1007/OPINION>

Less than five years ago, the state of Louisiana became nationally recognized for its leadership in reforming a broken juvenile justice system.

With the passage of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2003 (Act 1225), then-Gov. Kathleen Blanco and the Louisiana Legislature ushered in a period of reform in which the notoriously brutal Tallulah prison for youth was shut down and conditions were improved in other abusive youth prisons throughout the state. Also, a commitment was made to both the increased use of alternatives to incarceration for youth and to revamping secure care prisons to be small, therapeutic facilities that were regionalized to keep children closer to their families.

Inspired by the state's commitment to build a juvenile justice system based on best practices instead of brutality, national foundations such as MacArthur and Annie E. Casey partnered with stakeholders across Louisiana, investing both dollars and technical assistance to shaping a more just, and effective, juvenile justice system.

Before the passage of Act 1225, over 2,000 children were held in prison in Louisiana. Today the system holds just over 500 children statewide. In 1998 the rate of recidivism, or children returning to prison after release, was 56 percent as compared to 11 percent today. This decrease in the number of children incarcerated has contributed to an increase in public safety.

With a new governor in Bobby Jindal, and a new administration in the Office of Youth Development (OYD), it is imperative that the agenda of reform continue. Gov. Jindal must ensure the full implementation of Act 1225 and convey his commitment to reform. OYD must continue its investment in community partnerships and invest in alternatives to secure care. By doing so, Louisiana can continue to build a justice system that builds on the strengths of young people, rather than sentencing them to a cycle of brutality and abuse.

Undoubtedly, the road to effective reform is far from complete. Despite an increase in investments into alternatives, there is not yet an effective continuum of sanctions for youth. There is also a lack of quality, evidence-based alternatives — those that employ Functional Family Therapy (FFT) or Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), identified by the National Institute of Health to be the only types of programs that are effective at reducing adolescent violence. The population of youth in secure care is 60 percent non-violent — children who would be more appropriately served in effective alternatives.

The size of both Jetson and Swanson Centers for Youth cuts against best practices of secure care, and while there are plans to spend money to expand more secure-care beds, there is no plan to shut existing facilities. In recent months the situation at Jetson in particular has been deteriorating,

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with reports of abuse, widespread fighting, and most recently, the tragic death of a child. Just three weeks away from his release date, the death of this young man reveals more than anything the human cost of a juvenile justice system in need of further reform.

The solution for Gov. Jindal, OYD, and for the Juvenile Justice Implementation Commission — the government body responsible for overseeing Act 1225's implementation — is to deepen Louisiana's commitment to reform, and to quicken the pace of implementation.

Evidence shows us models that work to improve public safety and the lives of children, and states like Missouri have already led the way. At the dawn of a new administration, Louisiana can also demonstrate its continued leadership. An aging facility like Jetson, where parents fear for the safety of their children, belongs in the history of Louisiana's broken juvenile justice system, not in the current path towards reform.

Gov. Jindal and the Office of Youth Development must act as leaders in this reform, and finally deliver a better future for all of Louisiana's children.

Dana Kaplan is executive director of the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana.

The Juveniles Are Gone, Yet the Jails Remain

The New York Times

By Jim Dwyer

March 26, 2008

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/26/nyregion/26about.html?em&ex=1206676800&en=a47824c88d462c0c&ei=5087%0A>

The public pays about \$500 a night for each of the 25 beds in the Auburn Residential Center — a place for teenagers who have gotten into lower-grade trouble with the law, a junior-varsity jail. For the last two weeks, the beds in Auburn have been empty. And state officials expect them to remain empty, permanently.

But even with no one under the sheets, each bed will continue to cost as much as \$200,000 a year, the officials say.

Auburn, near Syracuse, is one of three state facilities for teenagers that are becoming high-priced ghost jails. Brace Residential Center, in Delaware County, with 25 beds, has just two teenagers staying there, watched over by a staff of 24; Great Valley in Cattaraugus County has 10 young people and a staff of 24. Soon, Brace and Great Valley, like Auburn, will no longer have teenagers staying there.

Yet if the State Senate has its way, all three will remain open until at least January 2010. "I believe the number of juveniles was deliberately reduced this year and the kids sent elsewhere" to justify closing Great Valley, said State Senator Catharine M. Young, a Republican from Cattaraugus County, which is in the western part of the state, near the borders of Pennsylvania

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and Ohio. The Senate has passed a resolution that requires Great Valley and the others to remain open.

Nearly all politicians fight to keep jobs in their districts. Prisons, jails and juvenile facilities have been a source of political and economic power to upstate areas that have little other industry. Most of the inmates came from the five boroughs and the metropolitan area.

In the battle over the ghost jails, though, the fight is not simply about the local economy, but also about a system of juvenile corrections that has been in a quiet state of collapse for nearly a decade, particularly for teenagers who are not in trouble for serious offenses.

New York City has found better, cheaper ways to move teenagers onto safer ground, said Ronald E. Richter, the city's family services coordinator.

For offenders whose home lives are filled with problems, the city now provides intense programs for the entire family, buttressing the role of adults in the lives of the teenagers. Last year, about 275 teenagers and their families were sent into these programs rather than the state juvenile system.

So instead of sending the teenagers off to state facilities that cost \$140,000 to \$200,000 a year per person, the city is spending about \$17,000 a year, Mr. Richter said. And while the state's juvenile recidivism rate is 80 percent, the city program had a rate of about 35 percent in its first year, he said.

Gladys Carrión, the commissioner of the state's Office of Children and Family Services, which administers the juvenile centers, says straightening out teenagers who have committed minor offenses is a job better done in community-based systems. The juvenile centers, she said, should be reserved for "young people who are a danger to themselves and their communities."

"For most of the kids, we don't need these facilities, and we don't need to be shipping them hundreds of miles away from their families," she said. "That money can be reinvested in programs that work better for these young people."

The prison economy is a central feature of New York's political economy. The state Public Employees Federation, which represents some of the employees in the juvenile centers, has bought advertisements in small newspapers in towns near the centers, arguing that the state is jumping the gun.

"We think it's premature," said Darcy Wells, spokeswoman for the union. "The police say that juvenile arrests are up by 8 percent in New York City."

Ms. Carrión said that there would be plenty of space if serious juvenile crime rose sharply. "Even after I close the facilities, I will have 20 to 30 percent excess capacity, so I have the flexibility in the system," she said.

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Senator Young said that the community-based programs like the one in New York needed to be studied before the existing system was shut down. The current data, she said, is not adequate.

Ms. Carrión says there is no need to wait: The current juvenile system catapults needy youngsters far from the families they will eventually return to, with no changes in the households that they left. "Almost all of the kids are black and brown," she said. "This is the alternative boarding school system for children of color. We can do better than this."

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Chicago battles rise in teen murders

Recent wave of violence includes 20 students killed since September

Associated Press (IL)

3/27/2008

**Picked up by MSNBC.com*

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23824652>

CHICAGO - The morning trip to school for dozens of teenagers here had all the normal signs: bleary eyes, oversized jackets zipped up against the chill, the seemingly endless wait for the bus.

But there was tension underlying the routine: The trip was under the watchful eyes of parents, an alderman, a principal and police.

The escort to and from Crane Tech High School this week, dubbed "Operation Safe Passage" is just one of the ways Chicago is dealing with a wave of violence that has stunned the city.

Since September, 20 Chicago Public Schools students have been killed, 18 by gunfire. Last school year, 24 of the more than 30 students killed were shot to death, compared with between 10 and 15 fatal shootings in the years before.

"The loss of life that we've seen among our young people is ... devastating," said school district spokesman Michael Vaughn. "This gun nonsense has reached a crisis level."

Dramatic increase

The number of violent deaths involving students in the nation's third-largest school district has increased so dramatically in the last two years that police are increasing school patrols and soon will be the first department in the country with live access to thousands of security cameras mounted outside — and inside — schools.

Chicago Public Schools is one of the only urban districts to track how many students are killed by guns — though none of the slayings have occurred on school property.

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Nationally, homicide was the second-leading cause of death for young people ages 10 to 24 in 2004, and of those killed, 81 percent were killed with a firearm, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Chicago's overall homicide rate, like that in other major cities, dropped to a record low in 2007. But the murders that do occur are hitting young people hard, frightening students and parents, and prompting everyone from Mayor Richard M. Daley to activists to call for action.

Operation Safe Passage began this week. It provides escorts for students from the ABLA Homes public housing development to Crane Tech High School. Many of the 120 students from the housing project have not been to school since March 7 because they fear retaliation after a reputed gang member from ABLA shot and killed another student who lived on a rival gang's turf.

Three of Michelle Johnson's children attend Crane, and she says the escorts help — somewhat. "For right now, I feel it's kinda safe," said Johnson, who added that she is willing to take her children to school every day until the situation improves.

Police to have access to school cameras

Daley recently announced a new resource for police — access to the 4,500 security cameras mounted inside and outside about 200 elementary and high schools.

The real-time video from the cameras once was available only to school officials, but now police and the city's Office of Emergency Management and Communications will be able to see it as well. Daley said indoor cameras will be used only in emergencies.

Daley also has rolled back the curfew times for minors by half an hour, to 10 p.m. on weekdays and 11 p.m. on weekends.

Many observers insist the issue isn't a school problem but a symptom of overall violence in the city. In fact, students in some of the city's most violent neighborhoods say school — with metal detectors, private security guards and uniformed police officers — is the one place they feel safe.

Antigun activists and officials say the violence highlights a dangerous reality: Arguments among young people that used to be resolved with fistfights now end in gunfire.

"They're just shooting out of rage," said the Rev. Michael Pfleger, an outspoken priest on the city's South Side whose church is putting up a \$2,500 reward for information each time a CPS student is killed. The Chicago Board of Education has promised to match with its own \$2,500 reward.

Tio Hardiman, executive director of the anti-violence group CeaseFire, said many young people consider a firearm their only protection. The way to reduce violence is to stop petty arguments among young people before they escalate into gunfire, Hardiman said.

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"A lot of young guys in the community, first of all, would rather get caught with a gun than without a gun," Hardiman said. "There's a need a dire need for more conflict resolution training."