

Using Taxpayer Dollars Wisely: **What Works (and What Does Not)** **to Reduce Crime**

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Washington State Institute For Public Policy

Created in 1983 by the Washington legislature

Mission: carry out non-partisan research on projects assigned by the legislature or the Institute's Board of Directors

My House

“Evidence-Based Adult Corrections Programs: What Works and What Does Not” (January 2006)

“Benefits and Costs of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs for Youth” (September 2004)

“The Criminal Justice System in Washington State: Incarceration Rates, Taxpayer Costs, Crime Rates, and Prison Economics” (January 2003)

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January 2003

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN WASHINGTON STATE

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September 17, 2004

BENEFITS AND COSTS OF PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

Does prevention pay? Can an ounce of prevention avoid (at least) an ounce of cure?

More specifically for public policy purposes, is there credible scientific evidence that for each dollar a legislature spends on “research-based” prevention or early intervention programs for youth, more than a dollar’s worth of benefits will be generated? If so, what are the policy options that offer taxpayers the best return on their dollar?

These are among the ambitious questions the 2003 Washington State Legislature assigned the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute).¹ This report describes our findings and provides an overview of how we conducted the analysis.² An Appendix, published separately, contains a full description of our results and methods.³

Summary of Findings. Our principal conclusion is that, as of September 2004, some prevention and early intervention programs for youth can give taxpayers a good return on their dollar. That is, there is credible evidence that certain well-implemented programs can achieve significantly more benefits than costs. Taxpayers will be better off if investments are made in these successful research-based programs.

This good news, however, must be tempered in three important ways. First, we found evidence that some prevention and early intervention programs fail to generate more benefits than costs. Our research indicates that money spent on these unsuccessful research-based programs is an inefficient use of taxpayer money.

Our second caveat concerns the “marketplace” for rigorously researched prevention and early intervention programs: it is a young market, but it is evolving quickly. Most high-quality evaluations have

been completed only in the last two decades, and many new rigorous studies will become available in the years ahead. As the evaluation evidence accumulates, and as the market matures, our relative ranking of programs can be expected to change.

Third, while Washington has taken significant steps in recent years, many currently funded prevention and early intervention programs in the state have not been rigorously evaluated. Thus, for many programs in Washington, there is insufficient evidence at this time to determine whether they produce positive or negative returns for taxpayers.

The main policy implications of these findings are straightforward and analogous to any sound investment strategy. To ensure the best possible return for Washington taxpayers, the Legislature and Governor should:

- Invest in research-proven “blue chip” prevention and early intervention programs. Most of Washington’s prevention portfolio should be spent on these proven programs.
- Avoid spending money on programs where there is little evidence of program effectiveness. Shift these funds into successful programs.
- Like any business, keep abreast of the latest research-based findings from around the United States to determine where there are opportunities to use taxpayer dollars wisely. The ability to distinguish a successful from an unsuccessful research-based program requires specialized knowledge.
- Embark on a strategy to evaluate Washington’s currently funded programs to determine if benefits exceed costs.
- Achieving “real-world” success with prevention and early intervention programs is difficult; therefore, close attention must be paid to quality control and adherence to original program designs. Successful prevention strategies require more effort than just picking the right program.
- Consider developing a strategy to encourage local government investment in research-proven programs.

¹ ESSB 5404 Sec. 608(2), Chapter 25, Laws of 2003.

² Suggested study citation: Steve Aos, Roxanne Lieb, Jim Mayfield, Maria Miller, Annie Penrucci. (2004) *Benefits and costs of prevention and early intervention programs for youth*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

³ The Appendix is available from the Institute’s website: <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/pdf/iles/04-07-3901a.pdf>.

PRISON ECONOMICS

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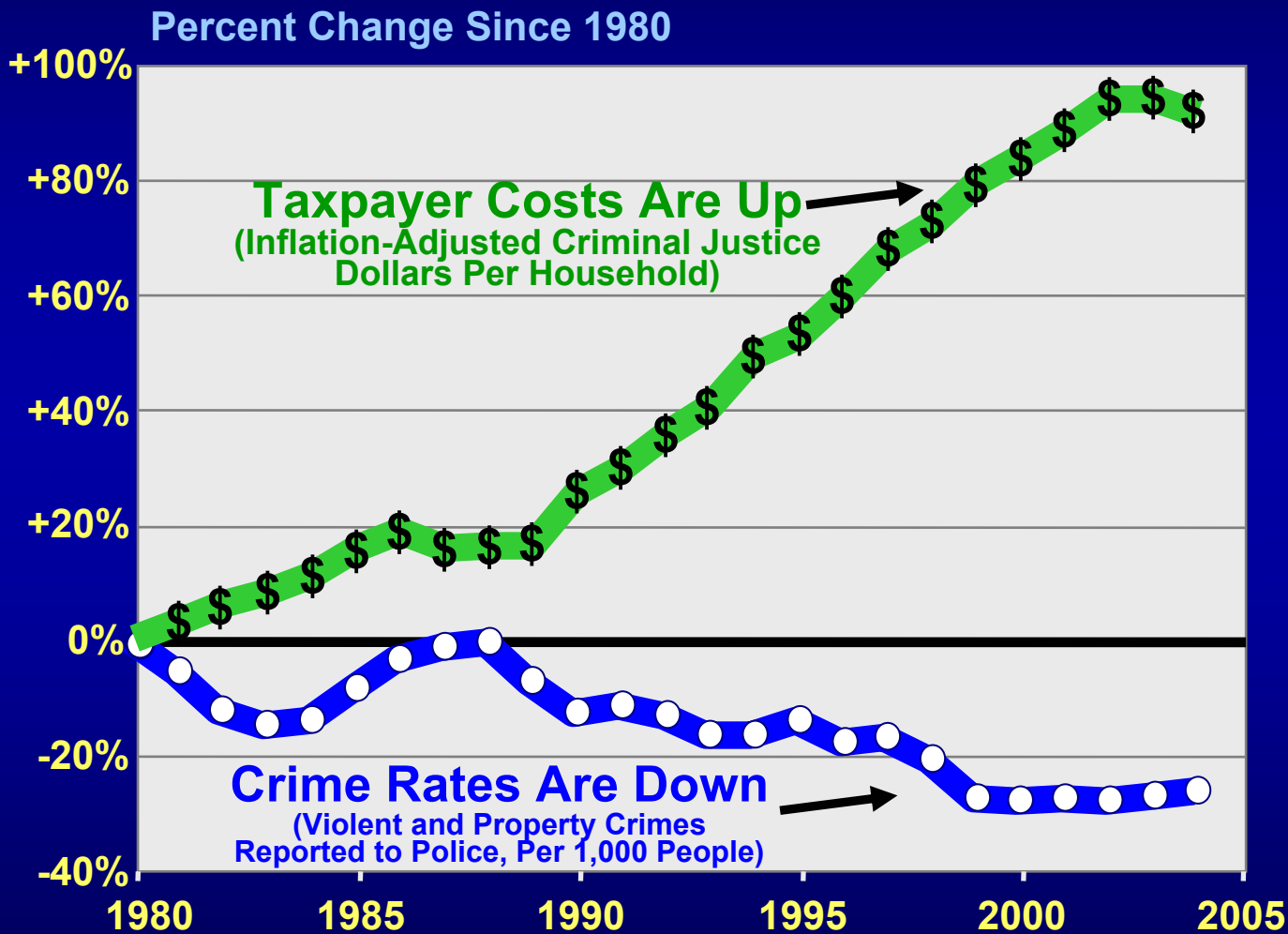
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Crime Rates & Taxpayer Costs

Washington State: 1980 to 2004



In 1980, taxpayers spent \$589 per household on the Criminal Justice System. Today they spend \$1,125: a 91% increase.

In 2004, crime rates were 26% lower than they were in 1980.

Criminal justice spending includes police, criminal courts, prosecutors, local and state juvenile and adult sanctions.

Public Policy Levers

(Three “P”s in a Pod)

- ✓ Prisons
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Programs

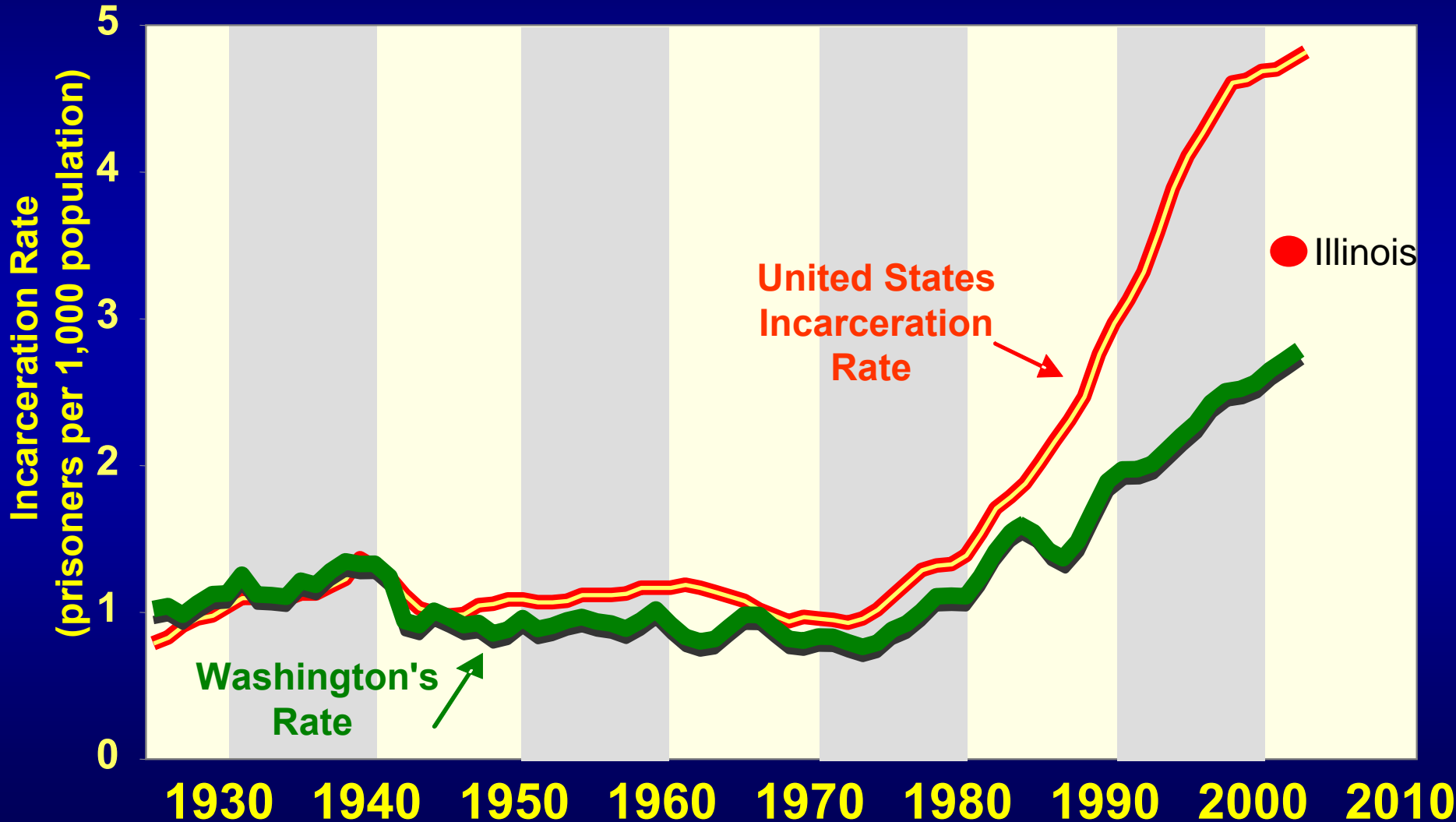
All three cost money (no free lunch)

All three can be effective (or ineffective)

Therefore, a fourth “P” → Portfolio

Prison Populations: 1925 to 2004

Incarceration Rate for the United States and Washington



Two Legislatively-Assigned Questions to WSIPP

1. What “**evidence-based,**” “**real-world**” programs can achieve these outcomes:

- Reduce crime,
- Lower substance abuse,
- Improve educational outcomes,
- Decrease teen pregnancy,
- Lower child abuse or neglect,
- Reduce teen suicides, or
- Reduce domestic violence?

We reviewed **rigorous** program evaluations and computed effects (*meta-analytically*)

2. What are the **economics** (that is, the benefits & costs) of each option?

Full Listing Can Be Download at: www.wa.gov/wsipp

Table 1 Summary of Benefits and Costs (2003 Dollars)				
Estimates as of September 17, 2004	Measured Benefits and Costs Per Youth			
	Benefits	Costs	Benefits per Dollar of Cost	Benefits Minus Costs
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pre-Kindergarten Education Programs				
Early Childhood Education for Low Income 3- and 4-Year-Olds*	\$17,202	\$7,301	\$2.36	\$9,901
HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters)	\$3,313	\$1,837	\$1.80	\$1,476
Parents as Teachers	\$4,300	\$3,500	\$1.23	\$800
Parent-Child Home Program	\$0	\$3,890	\$0.00	-\$3,890
Even Start	\$0	\$4,863	\$0.00	-\$4,863
Early Head Start	\$4,768	\$20,972	\$0.23	-\$16,203
Child Welfare / Home Visitation Programs				
Nurse Family Partnership for Low Income Women	\$26,298	\$9,118	\$2.88	\$17,180
Home Visiting Programs for At-risk Mothers and Children*	\$10,969	\$4,892	\$2.24	\$6,077
Parent-Child Interaction Therapy	\$4,724	\$1,296	\$3.64	\$3,427
Healthy Families America	\$2,052	\$3,314	\$0.62	-\$1,263
Systems of Care/Wraparound Programs*	\$0	\$1,914	\$0.00	-\$1,914
Family Preservation Services (excluding Washington)*	\$0	\$2,531	\$0.00	-\$2,531
Comprehensive Child Development Program	-\$9	\$37,388	\$0.00	-\$37,397
The Infant Health and Development Program	\$0	\$49,021	\$0.00	-\$49,021
Youth Development Programs				
Seattle Social Development Project	\$14,426	\$4,590	\$3.14	\$9,837
Guiding Good Choices (formerly PDFY)	\$7,605	\$687	\$11.07	\$6,918
Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14	\$6,656	\$851	\$7.82	\$5,805
Child Development Project ‡	\$448	\$16	\$28.42	\$432
Good Behavior Game ‡	\$204	\$8	\$25.92	\$196
CASASTART (Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrows)	\$4,949	\$5,559	\$0.89	-\$610
Mentoring Programs				
Big Brothers/Big Sisters	\$4,058	\$4,010	\$1.01	\$48
Big Brothers/Big Sisters (taxpayer cost only)	\$4,058	\$1,236	\$3.28	\$2,822
Quantum Opportunities Program	\$10,900	\$25,921	\$0.42	-\$15,022
Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Programs				
Adolescent Transitions Program ‡	\$2,420	\$482	\$5.02	\$1,938
Project Northland ‡	\$1,575	\$152	\$10.39	\$1,423
Family Matters	\$1,247	\$156	\$8.02	\$1,092
Life Skills Training (LST) ‡	\$746	\$29	\$25.61	\$717
Project STAR (Students Taught Awareness and Resistance) ‡	\$856	\$162	\$5.29	\$694
Minnesota Smoking Prevention Program ‡	\$511	\$5	\$102.29	\$506
Other Social Influence/Skills Building Substance Prevention Programs	\$492	\$7	\$70.34	\$485
Project Towards No Tobacco Use (TNT) ‡	\$279	\$5	\$55.84	\$274

Source: S. Aos, R. Lieb, J. Mayfield, M. Miller, A. Pennucci. (2004) Benefits and Costs of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs for Youth. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, available at <<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/04-07-3901.pdf>>.

More detail is presented in the Appendix to this report, available at <<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/04-07-3901a.pdf>>. The values on this table are estimates of present-valued benefits and costs of each program with statistically significant results with respect to crime, education, substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy, and public assistance. Many of these programs have achieved outcomes in addition to those for which we are currently able to estimate monetary benefits.

‡ Cost estimates for these programs do not include the costs incurred by teachers who might otherwise be engaged in other productive teaching activities. Estimates of these opportunity costs will be included in future revisions.

* Programs marked with an asterisk are the average effects for a group of programs; programs without an asterisk refer to individual programs.

Evidence-Based Programs for Adult Offenders —Summary of Benefits and Costs (2005 Dollars)—						
	Estimated Effect on Crime		Benefits and Costs (Per Person, Life-Cycle Present Value)			
	Percent change in recidivism	Number of studies on which the estimate is based (and the number of)	Benefits (of the reduction in recidivism to taxpayers and crime victims)	Costs (marginal program costs compared to the cost of alternative)	Benefits per Dollar of Cost	Benefits Minus Costs
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Programs for Drug-Involved Offenders						
Adult Drug Courts	-10.6%	57 (19258)	\$5,640	\$4,245	\$1.33	\$1,395
In-prison therapeutic communities with community aftercare	-6.9%	6 (1989)	\$4,479	\$3,756	\$1.19	\$724
In-prison therapeutic communities without community aftercare	-5.3%	7 (1582)	\$3,458	\$2,902	\$1.19	\$556
Cognitive-behavioral drug treatment in prison	-6.8%	8 (3788)	\$4,466	n/a	--	--
Drug treatment in the community	-12.4%	5 (54334)	\$6,606	n/a	--	--
Drug treatment in jail	-6.0%	9 (1436)	\$3,203	n/a	--	--
Programs for Offenders with Co-Occurring Disorders						
Jail diversion (pre & post booking programs)	0%	11 (1243)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Programs for the General Offender Population						
General & specific cognitive-behavioral treatment programs	-9.0%	25 (6546)	\$5,201	\$1,000	\$5.20	\$4,201
Programs for Domestic Violence Offenders						
Education/cognitive-behavioral treatment	0%	9 (1254)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Programs for Sex Offenders						
Psychotherapy for sex offenders	0%	3 (313)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Cognitive-behavioral treatment in prison	-22.8%	3 (397)	\$8,218	n/a	--	--
Cognitive-behavioral treatment in the community	-32.8%	4 (319)	\$8,039	n/a	--	--
Behavioral therapy for sex offenders.	0%	2 (130)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Intermediate Sanctions						
Intensive supervision: surveillance-oriented programs	0%	24 (2699)	\$0	\$3,671	\$0.00	-\$3,671
Intensive supervision: treatment-oriented programs	-21.9%	10 (2156)	\$12,084	\$6,980	\$1.73	\$5,104
Adult boot camps	0%	22 (5910)	\$0	-\$10,781	\$0.00	\$10,781
Electronic monitoring	0%	9 (2064)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Restorative justice programs for lower risk adult offenders	0%	6 (783)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Work and Education Programs for the General Offender Population						
Correctional industries programs in prison	-7.8%	4 (7178)	\$4,796	\$821	\$5.84	\$3,975
Basic adult education programs in prison	-5.1%	7 (2399)	\$3,128	\$795	\$3.94	\$2,333
Employment training and job assistance in the community	-4.8%	16 (9217)	\$2,964	n/a	--	--
Vocational education in prison	-12.6%	3 (1950)	\$7,733	\$654	\$11.83	\$7,080
Program Types in Need of Additional Research & Development						
<i>(The following types of programs require additional research before it can be concluded that they do or do not reduce adult recidivism rates)</i>						
Case management in the community for drug offenders	0%	13 (2897)	\$0	n/a	--	--
"Therapeutic community" programs for mentally ill offenders	-27.5%	2 (145)	\$18,789	n/a	--	--
Faith-based programs	0%	5 (630)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Domestic violence courts	0%	2 (327)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Intensive supervision of sex offenders in the community	0%	4 (392)	\$0	n/a	--	--
"Mixed" treatment of sex offenders in the community	0%	2 (724)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Medical treatment of sex offenders	-30.6%	1 (99)	\$11,027	n/a	--	--
COSA (Faith-based supervision of sex offenders)	-31.7%	1 (60)	\$11,444	n/a	--	--
Regular parole supervision vs. no parole supervision	0%	1 (22016)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Day fines (compared to standard probation)	0%	1 (191)	\$0	n/a	--	--
Work release programs (from prison)	-5.6%	4 (621)	\$3,462	n/a	--	--

Source: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2006

Selected Findings

Summary of Benefits and Costs (2005 Dollars)

Dollars per Person (PV lifecycle)	Benefits	Costs	B - C
Early Childhood Education	\$17,551	\$7,709	\$9,843
<u>Nurse Family Partnership</u>	\$32,735	\$9,632	\$23,103
<u>Functional Family Therapy</u>	\$20,501	\$2,260	\$18,241
<u>Aggression Repl. Training</u>	\$13,952	\$802	\$13,151
<u>Multi-Systemic Therapy</u>	\$21,190	\$6,001	\$15,189
<u>Intensive Juv. Probation</u>	\$0	\$1,566	-\$1,566
<u>Adult Drug Courts</u>	\$5,640	\$4,245	\$1,395
<u>Adult Cog/Beh Treatment</u>	\$5,201	\$1,000	\$4,201
<u>Basic Education (in Prison)</u>	\$3,128	\$795	\$2,333
<u>Intensive Adult Supervision</u>	\$0	\$3,671	-\$3,671

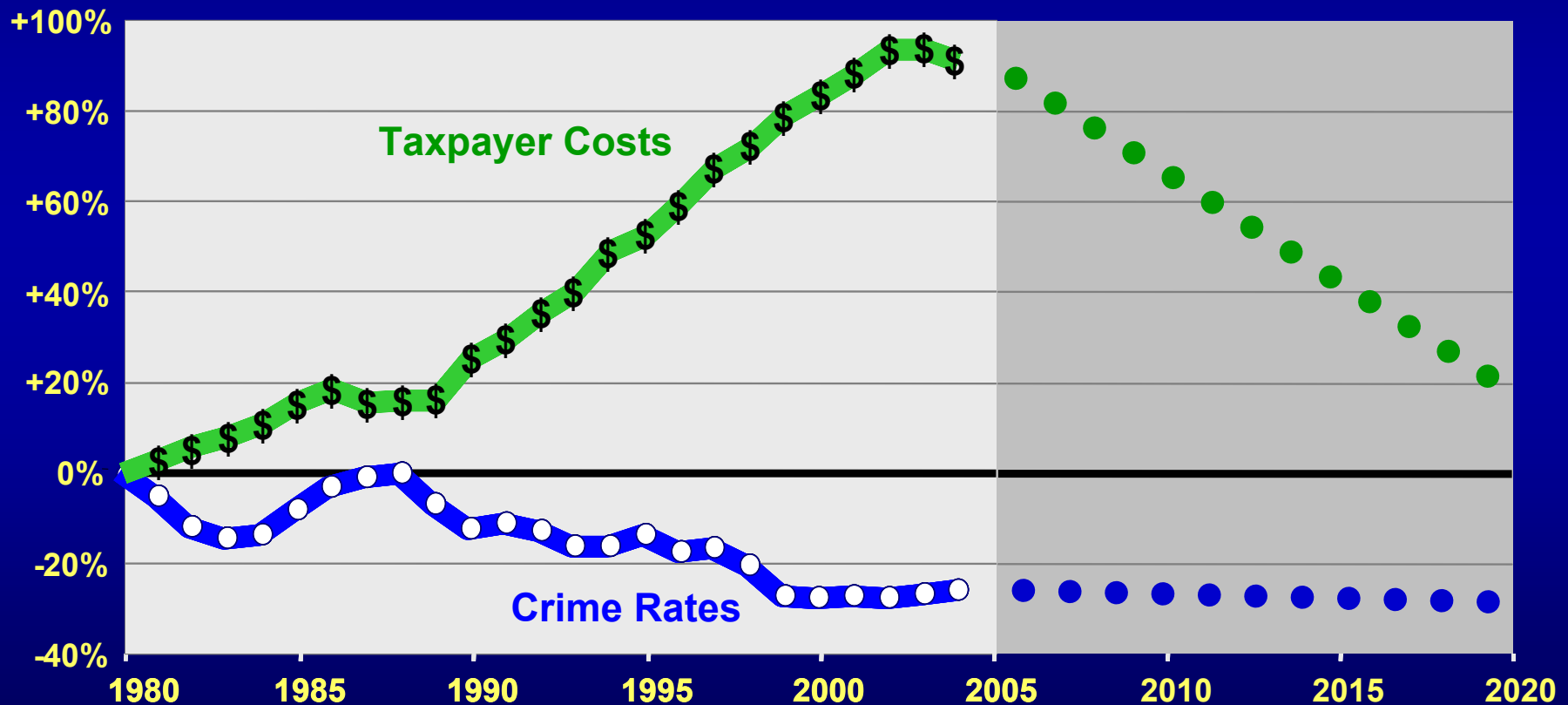
Summary of our Findings (To Date)

Can Prison, Police, and Programs Pay Off?

- ✓ **Good News:** Credible scientific evidence indicates that **some** well-implemented policies and programs achieve significantly more benefits than costs...
- ✓ **Useful News:** Credible evidence indicates that **some** polices and programs do not pay off...but...
- ✓ **Bad News:** Many (most) existing policies and programs lack a rigorous outcome evaluation.

The Public Policy Challenge:

Can a State Identify and Implement a Portfolio of Evidence-Based, Cost-Beneficial Policies and Programs to Change This Picture?



Our Report is Due to the WA Legislature October 2006

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