

July 1995

A Plan for Evaluating Washington State's Violence Prevention Act

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1994 Washington Legislature passed E2SHB 2319, a wide-ranging Act whose primary purpose is to reduce the rate of violence—particularly *youth* violence—in the state. The legislature also identified six additional “at-risk” behaviors that it wants to reduce. These include: “teen substance abuse, teen pregnancy and male parentage, teen suicide attempts, dropping out of school, child abuse or neglect, and domestic violence.”¹ The Act also seeks to reduce the rate of state-funded out-of-home placements of youth.²

To accomplish these reductions, the legislature adopted three policy approaches. First, state agencies and local communities were directed to take a “public health” approach to controlling and preventing the problems identified in the Violence Prevention Act. Second, the legislature instructed local communities, as opposed to state agencies, to take a larger role in planning and implementing prevention activities. To do this, the legislature created a new entity—Community Public Health and Safety Networks. Third, the Act increased certain criminal penalties, including those for the unlawful use of and access to firearms, and changed other policies concerning public safety, education, and the media.

The legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to evaluate the effectiveness of these policies in reducing the rates of violence and the other at-risk behaviors, and increasing protective factors. The Act instructs the Institute to submit an evaluation plan to the legislature and the Governor by July 1, 1995. This report describes the Institute's plan for carrying out these responsibilities.

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¹E2SHB 2319 Section 203.

²E2SHB 2319 Section 310 (6).