

March 1996

Juvenile Curfew and Parental Responsibility Ordinances in Washington State

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The increase in juvenile violent crime in Washington prompted the 1994 Washington State Legislature to pass a law enabling local jurisdictions to adopt juvenile curfews. Cities and counties are allowed to establish "times and conditions under which juveniles may be present on the public streets, in the public parks, or in any other public place during specified hours."¹ The Washington State Institute for Public Policy was directed by the legislature to study juvenile violence and other at-risk behaviors of youth.² As part of the Institute's research efforts concerning juvenile violence and prevention, a survey was conducted of the cities in Washington with juvenile curfew ordinances.³ The Institute's approach was to review the ordinances and to survey city officials regarding their experiences.

The Institute found that, as of February 1996, 27 cities currently have curfew or parental responsibility ordinances. Appendix A to this report contains a list of the cities and individual curfew definitions. A *juvenile curfew ordinance* assigns responsibility—and possible fines—to the juvenile if he or she is charged with a violation. A *parental responsibility ordinance*, on the other hand, shifts the burden and penalties to the parent or guardian of the juvenile.

Collectively, the 27 cities with curfew or parental responsibility ordinances represent about 10 percent of Washington's total population.

The Institute's survey of the 27 cities with curfews asked city officials if the ordinances were having an effect on juvenile crime rates. Almost half of the Washington cities with curfews reported that their ordinance had an impact on juvenile crime. These effects ranged from observations, such as more active parent involvement and a reduction in the number of youth congregating, to reducing the incidents of malicious mischief, disorderly conduct, auto prowls, and vandalism. Most of these cities had not conducted a formal evaluation of the curfew's impact on crime rates. Only three municipalities have undertaken a statistical analysis; each found a decline in juvenile crime.

The Institute's survey and review was conducted during January and February 1996. This report summarizes the results.

Document No. 96-03-1201

¹ RCW 35.21.635 and 36.21.425.

² RCW 70.190.050.

³ Washington counties are also enabled by state law to adopt curfews, but none has as of February, 1996.