



Nationwide Justice Trends:

Prevention and Education Byrne JAG Purpose Area

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program (Byrne JAG) is the nation's cornerstone public safety grant program. Under the law, states and localities may invest the funds across the entire justice system under eight broad purpose areas.* One of those, the **Prevention and Education** purpose area, may include situational and environmental design strategies, programs that promote positive behavior in youth, crime awareness programs and community building.

States and territories have used, or plan to use, Byrne JAG funds to implement and support a broad range of such activities, including, but not limited to:

- Community-based policing initiatives and community services
- Substance misuse prevention through education in schools and in communities
- Increased domestic violence education and available services
- Youth-focused community policing and youth mentoring
- Efforts to improve communication between parts of the justice system
- Gang violence prevention
- Support for non-profit community services

NCJA provides training and technical assistance (TTA) to the state administering agencies (SAAs) in each state and territory responsible for planning how Byrne JAG funds will be allocated. This brief provides a high-level **overview of trends and agency needs** in the Prevention and Education purpose area that states may find valuable as they conduct Byrne JAG strategic planning.

National Prevention and Education Trends

A scan of national Prevention and Education programming trends found several current areas of focus. These include:



Reducing substance misuse and increasing early access to treatment¹ for people with substance use disorders is known to reduce criminal activity. Programs and practices such as substance use disorder screening tools by law enforcement, diversion to treatment instead of prosecution or incarceration and other approaches each seek to minimize criminal activity by addressing the underlying condition of substance misuse.



The issue of violence reduction² has become a top concern in justice systems in recent years, leading to an increase in the quality and number of prevention strategies. Because data show that a large percentage of violent crime is committed by young people (up to about age 24), many education and outreach efforts are targeted toward these groups. This work includes community and school-based education programs³ and special programs

* To learn about the Byrne JAG program and the eight purpose areas, see NCJA's [Investing Byrne JAG webpage](https://www.ncja.org/investing-byrne-jag). (<https://www.ncja.org/investing-byrne-jag>)

aimed at reducing gang-related violence, reducing violence through outreach and targeted law enforcement approaches.⁴

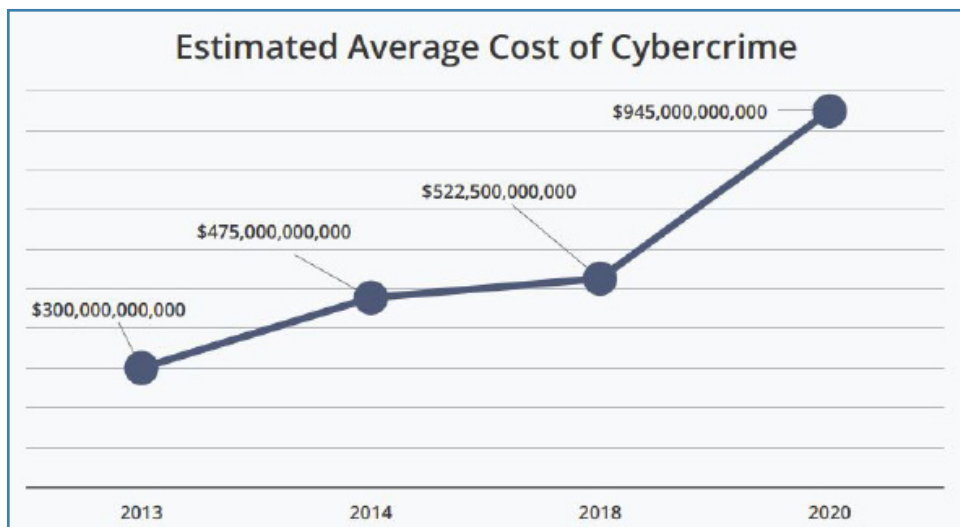


Advancements in technology can help justice systems⁵ operate more efficiently, but they also create new ways for people to commit crime.⁶ These include identity theft, online predatory behavior toward minors, financial scams and more. Systems are in a constant race to recognize and address technology-assisted crime and to foresee the next trend. Nearly every state and some local jurisdictions have directed specific resources

toward [cybercrime units](#)⁷ and personnel devoted to fighting online crime.



Improving access to education and employment and providing pathways to criminal records expungement are ways that some justice systems are working to prevent recidivism in justice-involved individuals. Research—and experience—shows that barriers in these areas may increase the likelihood of committing additional crimes. Some [proposed ways to improve justice systems](#)⁸ are centered around increasing fairness and healing while reducing overly punitive approaches.



It is estimated that cybercrime costs the global economy nearly one trillion dollars in losses annually. Source: [McAfee](#)

National Corrections and Community Corrections Needs

The prevention and education sectors of criminal justice systems are in need mostly of **continued and increased resources toward programming**. Despite a large evidence base demonstrating the [efficacy of prevention and education programs](#) that address the underlying drivers of crime, the vast majority of justice resources are expended on enforcement and punishment. Interventions that promote pro-social behaviors in youth and connect individuals to treatment, employment and housing are just some approaches that can yield significant crime prevention benefits.



Endnotes

- 1 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); Office of the Surgeon General (US). Washington (DC): US Department of Health and Human Services; 2016 Nov.
- 2 Community Violence Interventions: A Fact Sheet. (n.d.). National Criminal Justice Association. <https://www.ncja.org/cvi-fact-sheet>
- 3 Youth Violence Prevention. (2021, April 1). American Institutes for Research. <https://www.air.org/resource/spotlight/youth-violence-prevention>
- 4 Evaluating Violence Reduction Strategies. (n.d.). International Association of Chiefs of Police. <https://www.theiacp.org/evaluating-violence-reduction-strategies>
- 5 Hollywood, John S., Dulani Woods, Andrew Lauland, Brian A. Jackson, and Richard Silbergliitt, Emerging Technology Trends and Their Impact on Criminal Justice. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9996.html.
- 6 Cyber Crime. (n.d.). Federal Bureau of Investigation. <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/cyber>
- 7 Freeze, D. (2020, March 31). Directory of U.S. State and Local Cybercrime Law Enforcement. Cybercrime Magazine. <https://cybersecurityventures.com/directory->

This document was created with the support of Grant No. 2019-YA-BX-K002 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.