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Group: Investing In Preschoolers Can Prevent Crime

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Reporting

(KDKA) PITTSBURGH Local law enforcement leaders say investing in preschool-aged children now can help put them on the right path to avoid a life of crime.

Pittsburgh-area police chiefs, prosecutors and sheriffs are joining a statewide effort by a group called "Fight Crime: Invest in Kids" that's pushing for Governor Ed Rendell's \$75 million plan to increase access to pre-kindergarten services, especially in at-risk communities.

According to a recent study, pre-kindergarten education can play a role in reducing the chances that criminal justice systems might have to deal with these young lives years later.

"At age 27, the at-risk kids who do not participate in a program were five times more likely to grow up to become chronic law breakers than those who attended the program," Deputy Chief Paul Donaldson of the Pittsburgh Police said at a news conference today.

"The sooner you get the kids, the easier it is to teach them things," added Acting Allegheny County Sheriff Bill Mullen.

"I think it's very important for the General Assembly to approve this initiative," Mullen continued, "so that we can reach children – have the money to reach children – to teach them the discipline, to teach them right from wrong, to give them a sense of conscience."

Right now, about 2,000 children between ages 3 and 4 in the region don't have access to pre-kindergarten services.

Educators and law enforcement leaders alike want to fill that gap.

If the plan is approved, the Pittsburgh School District and other community groups could get up to \$2.4 million in new state funds that would serve 300 additional children.

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