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Juvenile Curfew Practices 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. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy was directed by the legislature to study juvenile violence and other at-risk behaviors of youth.¹ As part of this research, the Institute conducted a survey of cities in Washington State with juvenile curfew/parental responsibility ordinances in 1996. The Institute's approach was to review the city ordinances and survey city officials regarding their experiences.

In May 1997, the Institute conducted a second survey to update the information. At the time of the survey, the Washington State Court of Appeals declared the city of Bellingham's juvenile curfew ordinance unconstitutional. In light of this decision, the Institute issued a supplemental survey question concerning the impact of this decision on juvenile curfews in each city's jurisdiction.

As of September 1997, 55 cities have juvenile curfew/parental responsibility ordinances—28 more cities than in 1996.² Collectively, these cities represent about 20 percent of Washington's total population. Of the total, twenty-eight have *parental responsibility ordinances* in which the parent is in violation of the ordinance and charged. Six cities have *juvenile curfew ordinances*—the juvenile is in violation and charged. The remaining cities have a combination of juvenile curfew and parental responsibility ordinance.

This report provides a brief overview of juvenile curfews and summarizes findings from a survey conducted from May to September 1997. Descriptions of curfew ordinances and responses from survey participants regarding the number of citations issued for curfew violations, the impact on juvenile violence and runaways, the level of community support and participation, and the effect of legal challenges on the city's juvenile curfew ordinance are also provided.

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¹ RCW 70.190.050.

² Some of this increase is due to the inclusion of cities that had curfews in 1996, but were not included in the original survey.