

Public Safety

Enhancing Public Safety

The primary responsibility of government at any level is ensuring the safety of its citizens.

While crime rates have decreased in recent years, crime reduction must remain a top priority because victims of crime are not just statistics. Each victim suffers physical and emotional harm, financial loss, and long-term disruption to his or her life.

The Administration is strongly committed to exploring effective means to protect public safety, and is determined to move forward with comprehensive measures that reduce crime and increase the security of California's citizens. These efforts include increasing the number of law enforcement officers in the community, providing state-of-the-art technology to fight and solve crimes, strengthening school safety efforts, implementing preventive programs to reduce future criminal behavior, and reducing parolee crime. To meet these goals, the Budget contains several initiatives:

- Creating a Second Striker Task Force, and increasing supervision for parolees-at-large.
- Increasing services for the mentally ill who are at risk of becoming involved in or re-entering the criminal justice system.
- Ensuring rapid response in emergencies by creating a seamless and effective public safety radio communications infrastructure.
- Providing grants to local law enforcement agencies for high technology equipment and to address school safety, juvenile crime, and gang-related issues.
- Extending the Citizens—Option for Public Safety (COPS) program through fiscal year 2004-05 funded at \$121.3 million in order to provide a minimum grant of \$100,000 for each local jurisdiction.
- Establishing a "boot camp" academy for high school students who commit offenses that violate "zero tolerance" laws.
- Enhancing California's ability to use DNA technologies to solve crime by eliminating the backlog of DNA analyses.

Second Striker Task Force

California now has an estimated 9,800 parolees under active supervision, with at least two prior convictions for serious or violent offenses. These second strikers present a risk to public safety due to their criminal history. The Budget proposes \$10.4 million and 105 additional parole agents to provide intensive parole supervision for serious and violent offenders who are second strikers. This proposal will almost double the supervision of these parolees by lowering the ratio of parolees to parole agents from 70:1 to 40:1.

Parolee-At-Large Apprehension Program

Parolees who fail to maintain specified contact with their parole agent, called parolees-at-large, are increasing in number and pose a significant threat to public safety. As of June 30, 1999, there were over 20,000 parolees-at-large, about 16 percent of the total felon parolee population. The California Department of Corrections estimates that 5,000 (25 percent) of those parolees-at-large are serious or violent offenders. The Budget provides an increase of \$2.0 million and 23 additional parole agents to intensify efforts to apprehend serious and violent parolees-at-large.

Keeping the Mentally Ill Out of the Criminal Justice System

Mentally Ill Parolees

The number of mentally ill individuals in the criminal justice system has increased dramatically during the past ten years. Over 94 percent of mentally ill parolees return to prison within two years.

The Budget includes \$1.9 million and 22 additional parole agents to supervise mentally ill parolees and to assist them in obtaining community-based services. The Budget also provides 63 personnel years, through the redirection of \$6.0 million in the current year, to enhance the current Parole Outpatient Program for parolees diagnosed as mentally ill. These additional resources will likely reduce crimes committed by mentally ill parolees and increase the likelihood of their successful reintegration into the community.

Mentally Ill Homeless

Recent estimates indicate there are 50,000 homeless, severely mentally ill Californians, including 10,000 to 20,000 homeless mentally ill veterans. These individuals are at great risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system as they are often incarcerated for relatively minor crimes, such as vagrancy. Additionally, a recent survey of city and county jails indicates that at least 11 percent of the jail population is comprised of mentally ill persons. Incarceration of large numbers of mentally ill persons strains the resources of the criminal justice system and compromises its ability to protect society from criminals.

Law enforcement officials locally have been implementing a number of successful strategies to provide integrated services to the homeless, parolees, and probationers with serious mental illness, including substance abuse treatment, housing assistance, and employment assistance. The 1999-00 Budget included a one-time \$10.0 million appropriation to support these local strategies for integrating services to homeless mentally ill persons. Currently, the counties of Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Stanislaus are participating in this effort. The 2000-01 Budget doubles this program with a one-time appropriation of \$20.0 million. This \$20.0 million will be awarded both to counties currently participating in the program and new counties through a competitive grant process.

Substance Abuse Treatment Program Expansion

Substance abuse is often cited as being a primary or contributing cause of criminal behavior. The Budget contains \$12.3 million and 23 personnel years to expand in-prison substance abuse treatment beds from 6,514 to 8,014, including residential aftercare treatment for 50 percent of the program graduates.

Ensuring the Reliability of Emergency Communications

Effective communication between public safety agencies during disasters, emergencies, and the commission of crimes saves lives and property. However, public safety agencies currently use separate and often incompatible radio systems, putting public safety officers and citizens at risk. In addition, rapidly aging communications equipment for many state public safety agencies, such as the California Highway Patrol, need to be replaced in the coming few years.

The proposed Public Safety Radio Integrated Systems Management (PRISM) project would make one integrated communications system available to all major state public safety agencies and allow California to compete for the bandwidth that will soon be allocated by the Federal Communications Commission for public safety communications.

The Budget includes \$1.8 million for the first year of a two-year, \$3.4 million effort to engineer and design the PRISM public safety radio system, as a precursor to a potential \$90 million three-year pilot project in the six-county Sacramento area. If the pilot is successful, a multi-billion dollar project to construct a statewide-integrated system facilitating interagency communication would follow. It is the Administration's intent that, prior to proceeding to the pilot phase of the project, substantial financial participation would be secured from the federal government.

Technology Grants for Local Law Enforcement

The Budget includes \$100.0 million for one-time grants to local law enforcement agencies to purchase high-technology and other safety equipment. Of these funds, \$25.0 million will be specifically geared toward school safety, juvenile crime, and anti-gang efforts. With the availability of these additional resources, the Administration expects local law enforcement agencies will be able to prioritize use of the Citizens' Option for Public Safety program funding to hire sworn peace officers.

Citizens' Option for Public Safety

The Administration proposes to extend the Citizens' Option for Public Safety (COPS) program for five years to provide greater funding stability. The Budget includes \$121.3 million for the COPS program to provide for minimum grants of \$100,000 to eligible frontline law enforcement agencies. To be eligible for allocations under the COPS program, a local jurisdiction must submit an expenditure report annually to the Controller as required by current law and fully expend its allocation within 24 months of receipt. Combined with the high-technology and other safety equipment grants above, these two changes will encourage the use of COPS funds for their intended purpose—to hire sworn peace officers.

Boot Camp Academy

The Administration is fully committed to enforcing "zero tolerance" policies toward violent crime and school violence. It is especially important that California provide a strong system of deterrence and guidance for teenagers who commit serious and potentially violent crimes, particularly in the school environment.

Current law authorizes schools to expel students who commit "zero tolerance" crimes on school grounds, such as carrying a gun, sexual assault, or selling drugs. However, most students face little or no meaningful penalties for these serious offenses, and there are few alternatives for expelled students other than commitment to the Youth Authority or the streets.

The Administration proposes to establish a "boot camp" program at the National Guard facility at San Luis Obispo for students who face expulsion for "zero tolerance" offenses. This 12-month residential program, designed in collaboration with the Sheriffs of Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Orange Counties, will include a strict disciplinary regime, physical training, behavioral and substance abuse counseling, and an intensive academic curriculum focused on core subjects and gateway employment skills. The 2000-01 Budget includes \$9.2 million and 84 personnel years to establish the program for up to 160 cadets. Cuesta Community College will provide the academic component of this program.

DNA Data Bank: Eliminating the Backlog and Increasing Crime-Solving Abilities

The Budget proposes a \$5.5 million General Fund increase for additional resources necessary to eliminate the backlog in the state's DNA Data Bank, as well as additional staff to enhance the capabilities of the DNA Data Bank by increasing the application of this crime-solving technique in case analysis. These funds will also prepare the DNA Laboratory for the future by investing in additional state-of-the-art equipment, providing additional training for criminalists, assessing the space needs of the laboratory, and researching new, cost-effective techniques of evidentiary analysis.