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RE : RESPONSE TO A&E'S BEYOND SCARED STRAIGHT PROGRAM

As one of the leading organizations in America on identifying programs that actually work when tackling the challenges of turning around the lives of juvenile offenders, we are appalled by A&E's continuous airing of "Beyond Scared Straight." Comprehensive research conducted years ago dispelled the myth that scared straight programs were effective. We now know scared straight programs are ineffective and actually do more harm than good.

Because of the lack of research support, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) does not fund scared straight programs, or anything like them, yet a television network – a network that is ironically jointly owned by Disney – continues to sensationalize a program that is profoundly counterproductive for troubled youth.

All of us at the Blueprints for Violence Prevention Program at the University of Colorado have spent the past 20 years identifying truly outstanding violence and drug prevention programs that meet a high scientific standard of effectiveness. We have assessed more than 900 youth-serving programs and systematically and continuously review the research on violence and drug abuse programs to determine which are exemplary and grounded in evidence.

We know what works and what doesn't. For that reason, we join the Coalition of Juvenile Justice, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and other leading organizations in the juvenile justice field to urge A&E producers to provide a meaningful opportunity to present the facts around scared straight programs, and to help inform the public about evidence-based practices and programs for youthful offenders that truly work.

Sincerely,

Delbert S. Elliott, Director

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