

# Juvenile

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intense training, said Undersheriff Richard Winget.

But a one-shot diversity training session may not be enough, because "there's no doubt that police see people differently," said Winget, who noted that changing behavioral and dress patterns also complicate the process.

Overworked public defenders, who generally represent minority youth in court, may also contribute to high incarceration rates, said Las Vegas attorney Kevin Kelly, chair of the Supreme Court task force.

"I think more legal counsel

may be needed for representation provided for juvenile offenders" said the criminal defense lawyer, who has a case on the matter being considered for presentation to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Alternative sentencing is one area where more public defenders could assist black teens. Experts believe that sentences tend to be less harsh when counsel can come before the court with a reasonable alternative to jail time, Winget said.

"The key is to give these kids hope rather than incarcerating them," he said before discussing three Metro programs.

At the end of the meeting the groups compiled a list of the ideas they will flesh out separately. No new meeting date was set.

While state officials are just beginning to compile data on the unequal jailing of minority youth, University of Nevada, Las Vegas criminal justice professor Carol Case said she was not surprised by their preliminary findings.

Data indicates that police are more likely to arrest young, poor, urban and often black men, because they fit the accepted criminal stereotype, she said. "It is a viewpoint that is held by the public in general."

Minority teen-agers are being

picked up, prosecuted and jailed more, because "the criminal justice system, right now, is targeting youth," Case said.

That is not to say that whites do not commit crimes; they do. But police concentrate their efforts into poor, urban areas where they expect to find criminals, she said.

UNLV criminal justice professor Randall Sheldon said the war against drugs is the vehicle being used to lock kids up and to write tougher sentencing laws.

"There's a stereotype surrounding crime, and public policy is determined more by fear of crime than the reality of

crime," he said. "Let's face it. When people think of crime, they see a black or brown face."

With drugs, for example, statistics indicate blacks and white use them at about the same rate, with some studies showing whites are more likely to use drugs. But blacks are more likely to be arrested for drug-related crimes, Sheldon said.

Nationally, "the drug arrest rates for blacks per 100,000 went from 650 in 1981 to over 1,400 in 1993; while the arrest rates for whites remained virtually the same, just over 200," he said.

Sentencing rates were equally startling.

The rate of sentencing for

drug offenses among whites is 50 per 100,000 compared to 600 per 100,000 for African Americans, he said.

In laymen's terms, research suggests that for every white arrest, there are three black arrests, Sheldon said, and for every white prisoner, there are seven black prisoners.

Why?

"The crimes minorities commit are more visible," Sheldon said. "Secondly, it's the kind of drug that is available to these different groups," whites tend to use prescription drugs while crack is the drug of choice for blacks.

# Centers

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"This center will help many children eliminate many of the obstacles of their early years," Mason said as he thanked Gates for spearheading the project.

Educational programs for parents and preschoolers along will be housed at the 951 W. Washington Ave. development center. Programs in the 10,000 square foot facility will target at-risk and special education preschoolers.

Construction of the development center was funded by the two local governments and the Clark County School District (CCSD) with the county paying the lion's share of the expenses. The building's 3.96 acre parcel of land was also donated by the school district, which maintain all upkeep and programming expenses.

In addition to the new classroom, E.O.B. will share a joint classroom with the CCSD special education program, Head Start administrator Jean Childs said.

While the openings were held amid great celebrations by the governmental officials, both facilities were viewed as starting points for later expansion of their respective programs.

About 250 area families could be served by Reach Out, for example, but "I can only serve 98 now," with the new building, said Susan Summer, the program's executive director.

There is room to expand their permanent home, which will put an end to the group's high rents and frequent moves. But it's at least a five-year process, Summer said.

Childs said her classrooms in the educational center provide enough space to add 10 percent more kids to her program's rosters. But the program will continue to serve less than 10 percent of the kids who meet the enrollment qualifications.

Still, "I'm really excited. It's been a long process," Childs said. "It's been an incredible collaborative effort."

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