

INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOR DELINQUENT NON-VIOLENT JUVENILES BY THE SHERIFF AND PROBATION DEPARTMENTS IN VENTURA COUNTY

Background

Juvenile delinquency is a major social, criminal and public problem in Ventura County. The County needs to focus on an aggressive solution to handle our County's youth at risk. An increase in gang activity, more serious felony crimes and the use of drugs and alcohol at an early age cause youth to fail in school, often leading them into the juvenile judicial system. Our County juvenile courts are overwhelmed and overworked with cases, and our juvenile detention centers are overflowing. The County spends millions of dollars incarcerating these youths. Because of the overflow and the poor condition of our present juvenile halls, a new Juvenile Justice Center was constructed and will open later this year. This study is focused on the activities of the Ventura County Sheriff and Probation Departments.

Methodology

The 2002-2003 Ventura County Grand Jury is revisiting the need for some type of juvenile delinquency prevention and intervention. We are particularly concerned with the County's non-violent youth who may be deemed a risk to themselves or to the public in general.

We visited other surrounding counties to get an overview on how they handle their at-risk youth. We made visits to the Tri-County Boot Camp (Boot Camp) in Santa Barbara County, Vital Intervention and Directional Alternatives (VIDA) operated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the Grizzly Youth Academy in San Luis Obispo County. The Grand Jury also made a visit to Corcoran State Prison for an overview of their Reaching Out Convicts and Kids program. Cops 'N' Jocks of Ventura County made a presentation to the Grand Jury. Information was also gathered on intervention programs offered by the Ventura County Sheriff and Probation Departments.

Findings

- F-1 The Ventura County Sheriff's Department provided information on the following programs about troubled and "at risk" youth in their contracted cities of Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Ojai, Fillmore and unincorporated areas within the County. These programs are available to cities willing to pay the Sheriff for such services.
- Thousand Oaks Police Department: Two Deputy Sheriffs serve the four high schools as Special Enforcement Unit school liaison officers.
 - Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE): Due to the lack of funding, some cities have eliminated this program.

- Sheriff's Teen Traffic Offender Program: This is an intervention program that encourages the community to call and report dangerous driving by teens. A designated deputy sheriff will make personal contact with the offender.
- Parent Project Class: This is a class designated for parents of difficult children seeking guidance in their efforts to keep their children out of trouble.
- Youth Outreach Workers Program: This program coordinates projects with schools, community organization and the teen center in Conejo Valley.
- Police Activities League (PAL): As the funds in the County continue to be unavailable for such programs, some cities have eliminated the PAL program.
- Sheriff's Truancy Education Program: A four-hour class is offered once a month by a youth officer and a member of the District Attorney's office.

F-2 Other cities that operate their own police departments, namely Simi Valley, Santa Paula, Oxnard, Port Hueneme and Ventura, have their own programs for at-risk youth not associated with the Sheriff's Department.

F-3 Ventura County Probation Department provided the following information:

- Cost per day for fiscal years 2000-01 and 2001-02 for incarceration of our youth in Ventura County were:

	<u>Clifton Tatum Center</u>	<u>Colston Youth Center</u>
Juveniles Incarcerated	4,279	414
Average Length of Stay	19.85 days	79.35 days
Cost Per Day	\$89.12	\$117.61

- The Department has over 10,000 youth referrals per year.
- Non-violent youth offenders are assigned to regular probation officers with caseloads averaging 70 per officer.
- Other programs that the Probation Department indicate are under their jurisdiction are: Aftercare/Day Reporting Program, Enhanced Institutional Services, Gang Violence Prevention, Expansion of Early Intervention Program, Habitual Offender Prevention Endeavor and Truancy Habits Reduced Increase Vital Education.

F-4 VIDA, funded by Los Angeles County and various state and federal grants, was a consecutive 16-week program designed and developed by the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department for their youth at risk. The program was a success due to the overwhelming numbers of volunteers from the community, military and Sheriff's personnel. VIDA, described below, was canceled this year due to budget cuts.

- VIDA had the total support of the Los Angeles County Sheriff.
- Participants were required to attend every Saturday for ten hours and two hours on Wednesday evenings for counseling sessions. The parents were also required to participate in the counseling sessions.
- On Saturday, the program was set up with physical training, close order drill and community service.
- The program staff worked closely with all the participants' schools and staff to gather information on their performance while in the program.
- Drug and alcohol testing was randomly done five times during the 16-week cycle.
- The participants were referred to the program by their parents, the juvenile court system or local law agencies. No juvenile was refused for financial reasons.
- The juvenile was well aware of the rules in order to graduate and they learned to work as a team to complete a said task.
- VIDA implemented a mentor program to guide youth outside of the program and their family structure.
- Volunteers from the military service were used very effectively in the program.

F-5 Tri-County Boot Camp, Santa Barbara County, allocated 20 beds to Ventura County adolescent males between 13 and 18 years of age who were sent there by our juvenile court system. As of June 30, 2003, the County will no longer have those beds allocated. The County could continue to send our juveniles to Boot Camp but would be charged \$132.49 per day providing there were beds available at the time.

- The average stay for a Ventura County juvenile is 119 days until graduation.
- The youth are being acquainted with a positive and supporting system in an environment with structure away from adverse influences.
- The youth learn new skills so when they graduate they will not have the need to reacquaint themselves with criminal or gang activity.
- Self-discipline and self-confidence make it easier to get assigned tasks completed when working alone or as a team. The juveniles learn to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner.
- The wards continue the education process with a team of teachers who are willing to give them extra attention.
- Boot Camp provides the ward with counseling in preparation for reunification with his family upon his graduation.
- Boot Camp teaches the ward the effects of the use of drugs and alcohol. Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings are provided on site to enable them to stay away from drugs and alcohol and remain sober once they leave.
- Boot Camp provides individual and group/platoon counseling on a daily basis.

- Boot Camp has a wide range of sports that the wards can participate in as an individual or team. They may also compete against other boot camps and youth groups in the area/state.
- Boot Camp offers vocational training sponsored by the Contractors' Association and Kiwanis.

F-6 Cops 'N' Jocks is a nationwide mentoring program designed to break down barriers between high school students and law enforcement officers who patrol their neighborhoods.

- There are over 200 volunteer officers with students across the country, giving the students a close look and feel to the positive side of law enforcement.
- Cops 'N' Jocks in Ventura County has a Youth Academy to add to their accomplishments.
- No County monies are used to operate this program as there are corporate sponsors.
- There are currently 15 County high schools that participate.
- Most County city police agencies are involved as well as the Sheriff's Department and California Highway Patrol.

F-7 Grizzly Youth Academy is based in the California National Guard facilities in San Luis Obispo County and is designed for troubled potential high school dropouts.

- Fourteen counties participate in the program. Twenty percent of the cadets are from Ventura County. There is presently a Spanish-speaking recruiter in Ventura County who solicits applications from area high schools.
- The Academy is operated by members of the California National Guard in conjunction with San Luis Obispo County Office of Education and Paso Robles School District.
- The funding for this program is 65% Federal and 35% State.
- There is no charge to the applying party to enroll his/her child.
- The goals are leadership and followship; community service; job skills; life coping skills; education excellence; responsible citizenship; health and hygiene and physical training.
- Students increase their academic achievement anywhere from one grade level to five grade levels. The average academic growth for a student at the academy is 1.5 - 2.0 grade levels in 22 weeks.
- Students go to work four days a week for 4-6 weeks and learn firsthand what it is like to have a job, and they receive academic credit for their work.
- Grizzly Academy also has a mentoring program in place.
- Approximately 120 cadets graduate after each 22-week cycle.

Conclusions

- C-1 According to the Ventura County Sheriff, there is uncertainty as to funding for the programs outlined by the Sheriff. Many of their programs are not specifically aimed at youth intervention or youth at risk. (F-1)
- C-2 Intervention programs would cost the Sheriff and Probation Departments less than the cost of current incarceration. (F-1, F-3)
- C-3 All of the Probation Department's youth-at-risk programs could be combined into fewer intervention programs. (F-3)
- C-4 A program like VIDA is cost efficient because the juveniles are not incarcerated, volunteers are used to administer the program, and only one sheriff's deputy is required. This type of program could be instituted at our new Juvenile Justice Center in El Rio. (F-4)
- C-5 Non-participation in Tri-County Boot Camp will adversely affect treatment of our at-risk youth. (F-5)
- C-6 Lack of a program like Grizzly Academy detracts from Ventura County's ability to treat our youth. (F-7)

Recommendations

- R-1 Ventura County Sheriff and the Probation Departments need to work together to establish non-residential programs for youth at risk.
- R-2 It is imperative that a program such as Grizzly be established in Ventura County or the County should aggressively send our juveniles to San Luis Obispo County's program. This program is funded through Federal and State grants, and Ventura County Sheriff and the Probation Department should seriously study their procedure for obtaining such grants.
- R-3 If we do not send our juvenile youth to Tri-County Boot Camp, it is urgent to establish such a facility in Ventura County, possibly at our new Juvenile Justice Center.
- R-4 Continue the Cops 'N' Jocks program since there is no cost to the County
- R-5 If the Sheriff is unable to fund programs formally under his jurisdiction, contract cities should continue or add programs for youth at risk in their communities.

R-6 The Board of Supervisors needs to re-evaluate the necessity for residential/non-residential confinement facilities for youth at risk with the Sheriff and Probation Departments.

Responses Required:

Ventura County Sheriff's Department (R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5)

Ventura County Probation Department (R-1, R-2, R-3, R-5)

Ventura County Board of Supervisors (R-6)

City Councils - Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Ojai and Fillmore (R-5)