

Background

BACKGROUND

County-Specific Information in Support of Need	56
County-Specific Information Leading to Project Design	57

Background

County-Specific Information in Support of Need

In 1999, the Santa Barbara County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) provided a Local Action Plan and identified Juvenile Justice System Priorities. The county-specific information regarding the need in Santa Barbara County included the following:

The overall crime rate reported in 1999 from the JJCC highlighted that the overall crime rate for Santa Barbara County was 35.9 per 1000 people, which is higher than the neighboring Counties of Ventura and San Luis Obispo. Moreover, the City of Santa Barbara had a crime rate of 48.4 per 1000 people.

Between 1990 and 1998 juvenile referrals to the Santa Barbara County Probation Department increased by 76%, this was a rate three times the population growth of youths ages 10 to 17 years.

Alcohol and drug offenses stood out as a significant concern. While other categories declined between 1996 and 1998, the arrest of juveniles for drug and alcohol offenses increased by 70% between 1994 and 1998. Over half of the active juvenile probationers in 1998 had a substance abuse problem serious enough to warrant drug testing as a term and condition of their probation.

In 1998 there was a significant trend in the increase of the proportion and the severity of crimes committed by female offenders. From 1996 to 1998 the proportions of adjudications for violent crimes committed by females as compared to males increased by 43% and the sustained petitions for narcotics offenses among females increased by 225%. The Santa Barbara County Probation Department experienced an increase in females on formal probation of 47%, an increase of 29% in female juvenile hall confinement, and a 45% increase for out-of-home placements for females.

An analysis of the public safety risks from juvenile crime within Santa Barbara County communities indicated that 40% of the total juvenile probation cases are from the Santa Barbara community area. In this community, the overall referrals increased between 1994 and 1998. The Santa Barbara community experienced the greatest increase in referrals for drug and alcohol offenses. The “Eastside” and “Westside” of Santa Barbara contained the highest concentration of juvenile offenders.

Thus, the JJCC prioritized the implementation of enhancements to the Juvenile Justice System within the Santa Barbara community as this was the area facing the greatest risk with respect to trends in juvenile crime, especially drug and alcohol offenses.

The Santa Barbara County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council's report provided information regarding the county-specific information in support of the need for service enhancements.

In particular, the Santa Barbara County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council placed a priority on implementing services within the Santa Barbara community to address the increase of drug and alcohol offenses and the increase in proportion and severity of crimes committed by females.

Background

County-Specific Information Leading to Project Design

The first Juvenile Crime Enforcement and Accountability Grant (Challenge I) Program was implemented in Santa Barbara County beginning in July, 1997. The 1997 Challenge I program was Santa Barbara County's first opportunity to design and implement a system of care to reduce juvenile crime by providing a targeted array of assessment and intervention services to minors having a high risk of becoming serious offenders. The program implementation was envisioned to be countywide, however, the size of the project and limited resources led to a decision to limit the program to the Santa Maria area in Santa Barbara County.

The research outcomes from the implementation of Challenge I were clearly successful in some areas and less so in others (please refer to the Challenge Grant I What Works Report, UCSB Challenge I Evaluation Team). The four-component program design (i.e., truancy intervention and parent accountability, early intervention, aftercare transition, and family caseload), combined with external societal influences, as well as other juvenile justice projects and community treatment alternatives, were important influences on community outcomes during the project period. One of the most significant outcomes of the Challenge I project was the development of collaborative partnerships between public and private agencies, all focusing on a common goal. Juvenile crime is influenced by the community, and must be addressed by the community. Through the implementation of the Challenge I project, the partnership agencies in the Santa Maria area, as well as the University of California Santa Barbara, met this challenge. These collaborative efforts and strategies continue to serve the youths and families in the Santa Maria area.

The changes to the delivery of juvenile justice services in Santa Barbara County through the implementation of the Challenge I project in the latter part of the 1990s were dramatic and the overall results remarkable. This has been best represented by a reduction in the arrest rate, as well as having seen the average monthly group/foster home placement of Probation Department youths reduced from 117 in 1995 to 64 in 2001, and the annual commitments to the California Youth Authority reduced from 24 to 6 during the same period. The ability to create state-of-the-art services that combine the skills and resources of both public and private agencies in coordinated efforts to reduce juvenile delinquency has been a demonstratively effective opportunity for Santa Barbara County.

In 1999, the Santa Barbara County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) developed a plan to pursue the implementation of a comprehensive, collaborative, and integrated service delivery model to address the needs of youths in the juvenile justice system. Initial efforts of the JJCC in 1997 resulted in the development of a Local Action Plan that specified a swift, certain, and graduated response for juvenile offenders. In October 1998, the Santa Barbara County Probation Department was awarded a Juvenile Crime Enforcement and Accountability Planning Grant from the California Board of Corrections to update the JJCC's 1997 Local Action Plan to reduce juvenile crime.

The Santa Barbara County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council's report provided information regarding the county-specific information leading to the design of the NEW VISTAS program.

The outcomes of the Challenge I project in Santa Maria contributed important information and insights to the development of the Challenge II program in Santa Barbara.

The JJCC developed a plan to pursue the implementation of a comprehensive, collaborative, and integrated service delivery model within the juvenile justice system.

Background

With additional resources to enhance the existing Local Action Plan, the JJCC conducted an extensive needs assessment of the juvenile justice system in Santa Barbara County. As a result of these efforts, the JJCC prioritized the following goals in the updated 1999 Local Action Plan: (1) maximize existing resources; (2) launch a carefully planned drug and alcohol treatment program with a family-focused system of care; (3) develop gender specific assessments and programming across the juvenile justice continuum; (4) test the efficacy of neighborhood outreach services and neighborhood-focused restorative justice programs; and (5) maximize the use of local out-of-home placements rather than out-of-county placements. Efforts to meet the goals of the 1999 Local Action Plan gave rise to the Challenge II NEW VISTAS project discussed in this report.

The family-focused, neighborhood-based intervention model proposed by the JJCC was based on three key premises. The first premise of the JJCC was that in families where there is either an adult or juvenile member who is criminally involved, all juvenile members, including younger siblings, are at-risk for criminal involvement. By addressing the needs of the entire family – and in this case, substance abuse issues in particular – both current and at-risk juvenile offenders can be deterred from further involvement in the Juvenile Justice System.

The second premise of the JJCC was that by targeting criminally involved families with substance abuse problems in an entire neighborhood, that the Juvenile Justice System can substantially reduce juvenile crime and increase the residents' perception of public safety in these neighborhoods. To this end, the Juvenile Justice System will also strengthen partnerships with police, community-based agencies, and neighborhood safety groups with the goal of reducing neighborhood crime.

The third premise of the JJCC was that outcomes will improve for female offenders living in the targeted neighborhoods and families if these females receive gender-specific needs assessments and services. The Juvenile Justice System would work in collaboration with UCSB to develop gender-appropriate risk and needs assessment instruments for female offenders. The Juvenile Justice System would develop life skills trainings and independent living workshops which address female-specific issues and skills. The Juvenile Justice System would deliver all interventions within the project in the context of gender equity and develop case plans which take into consideration the special needs of female offenders.

The JJCC established 5 broad goals for the Challenge II program.

The three basic premises of the JJCC plan were:

involving all family members will deter further criminal involvement,

involving the neighborhood will reduce juvenile crime,

providing female offenders with gender-specific services will enhance outcomes.