

# Project Summary

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## Vision, Reform, and the Creation of NEW VISTAS

Since first convening in January, 1997, the Santa Barbara County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) has pursued the implementation of a comprehensive, collaborative, and integrated plan 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, which 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.

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.

## Description of NEW VISTAS

NEW VISTAS, an acronym for "Neighborhood Enrichment With Vision Involving Services, Treatment And Supervision," is a comprehensive service delivery model utilizing a family-focused, neighborhood-based supervision team to provide services to criminally involved families with identified substance abuse problems. NEW VISTAS is aimed at addressing major system changes proposed by the JJCC and the Santa Barbara County Probation Department. Originally, NEW VISTAS serviced two neighborhoods in the City of Santa Barbara. In January 2001, the NEW VISTAS target area expanded to include the entire City of Santa Barbara.

NEW VISTAS first opened its doors at 25 West Anapamu Street in downtown Santa Barbara in October 1999 and has since served over 350 youths and their families. Families entered NEW VISTAS via one of four gateways: Probation, Truancy, Parole/CDC and Child Welfare Services (CWS). Once families are identified, a comprehensive treatment plan is generated to provide services and supervision tailored to meet the needs of individual youths and their families. In an effort to promote successful outcomes, NEW VISTAS treatment planning involves all family members in the treatment process and places an emphasis on providing (1) a structured setting with multiple options that offer youths choices, (2) appropriate staff and client matching, (3) lasting relationships with positive peer and adult role models, (4) respect for cultural strengths and barriers, and (5) therapeutic recreation and skill-based programming (academic, social, and living skills).

**The Santa Barbara County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council's 1999 Local Action Plan provided the impetus for the Challenge II NEW VISTAS project.**

**NEW VISTAS is an acronym for the Challenge II program: Neighborhood Enrichment With Vision Involving Services Treatment And Supervision.**

**NEW VISTAS involves all family members in the treatment process.**

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The following describes key components of the NEW VISTAS service-delivery model:

## ***Family-Focused and Neighborhood-Based Supervision***

An interagency, collocated team approach to the supervision, case planning, and case management of targeted families is one of the key components of NEW VISTAS. Core elements of family-focused and neighborhood-based supervision include:

- *Gateway agencies* through which client families enter NEW VISTAS following alcohol and drug screening assessments
- *A neighborhood supervision team* comprised of gateway agency staff who develop case plans for client families, link them to appropriate services, and monitor their progress
- *Team leaders* who are responsible for generating the final case plan, brokering services, and supervising the family
- *Family coaches* who provide case management, client tracking, and support (e.g., home visits, transportation, and “coaching”) to the family in an effort to meet the goals of their personalized case plan
- *Alcohol & Drug Program treatment planners* (i.e., licensed clinicians) who conduct in-depth family assessments of substance abuse and dual diagnosis issues, collaborate with supervision team members to develop treatment plans, and provide case reviews

## ***Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services***

Treatment plans consist of alcohol and drug treatment for family members with substance abuse impairment, prevention services for younger siblings, and resources aimed at increasing family cohesion, competency, and social support systems. Based on the degree of substance abuse impairment (i.e., moderate or severe), families are separated into two service tracks that are appropriately geared toward the individualized needs of each family.

## ***Support Services***

A core network of support services is made available to all client families by linking them to existing services or contracting services for a particular family based on their needs. Such services include:

- *School-based mentoring programs* matching adult mentors with youths
- *Children Are People Too*, designed for children living in a family with a drug or alcohol abusing member
- *Anger management counseling and education* provides individual and group counseling/education aimed at improving anger management skills
- *Family mediation services* designed to de-escalate family tensions and enhance family functioning by facilitating effective communication among family members
- *Parent education and support groups* provide a full-time parent educator who conducts culturally appropriate parent education seminars, support groups, and in-home parent support services

**NEW VISTAS is a family-focused, neighborhood-based, intervention service delivery model.**

**A key component of NEW VISTAS program design is the collocated, interagency team approach to supervision, case planning, and case management.**

**Participants in NEW VISTAS received drug and alcohol treatment in addition to numerous support services.**

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- *Teaching responsibility and independence by education* designed to provide academic and social learning for at-risk teens through tutoring, structured learning activities, and recreational activities
- *After school activities* provide resources for families to cover the cost of membership fees, sports uniforms or equipment, tickets to cultural events, etc.
- *Linkage to existing services* connect families to other existing services in the community (e.g., community-based mentoring, academic support services, classes for English language learners, job training and employment services, health care, and child care)
- *Family and individual counseling and mental health services* designed to address problems experienced by youths and family members and promote healthy coping and problem solving strategies

## ***Gender-Specific Services***

In an effort to meet the gender-specific needs of both female and male participants in NEW VISTAS, the following components were incorporated into treatment planning:

- *Life skills training* includes a curriculum of 96 activities to address the realities of adolescent development (e.g., health, parenting, skill development, decision making, refusal skills, risk and protection, violence and personal safety, career and life planning, leadership and community action) from a gender equity perspective
- *Therapeutic recreational and cultural activities* expose adolescent offenders to an after school program aimed at keeping them off of the streets, away from alcohol, drugs, and violent behavior, and offering constructive alternatives for anger and emotional expression
- *Health care services* by Public Health Nurses provide both males and females with necessary assistance for many gender specific health issues
- *Service linkages* by family coaches who establish connections to existing gender-specific services

## ***Neighborhood Enhancement Programs***

The neighborhood-based component of NEW VISTAS is evident in community information and mobilization meetings with neighborhood groups, service agencies, and residents in the targeted neighborhoods. NEW VISTAS also promotes collaboration with the Santa Barbara Police Department to enhance community policing, assist in problem solving efforts, and coordinate neighborhood meetings to obtain residents' feedback. Finally, a neighborhood-focused restorative justice program offers services to victims. Youth offenders involved in these programs are offered a chance to see the human consequences of their crime, work to correct wrongs with the victim and the community, and regain a sense of dignity and self-respect.

**NEW VISTAS offers gender-specific services to address the unique needs of participating male and female adolescents.**

**NEW VISTAS also emphasizes community involvement, outreach, and education to enhance the outcomes of at-risk adolescents.**

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## Summary of Approach and Justification

### *Theory and Previous Research Underlying NEW VISTAS*

A review of literature pertaining to juvenile delinquency supports a number of key components that comprise the NEW VISTAS service-delivery model. First, the family-focused, neighborhood-based emphasis of NEW VISTAS is consistent with a transactional-ecological model of youth development, which highlights the role of environmental influences in various levels of a youth's social context influencing change across time. In accordance with evidence suggesting that family and neighborhood characteristics influence youths' behaviors, NEW VISTAS is based on the premise that successful intervention/prevention efforts focus on the individual and influential parts of the individual's social context. Additionally, the family-focused emphasis of NEW VISTAS satisfies recommendations made by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in designing intervention and prevention programs that would counteract family-based risk factors, such as parental conflict, child abuse, and family history of problem behavior.

Empirical evidence establishes a relationship between substance abuse and delinquency. Thus, NEW VISTAS efforts to identify and attend to substance abuse problems are aimed at further alleviating factors that may reinforce criminal involvement. Prior research has emphasized the association between delinquency and behavioral difficulties in a variety of domains (e.g., physical and mental health, school functioning). Hence, increased efforts to offer comprehensive services within these areas meant to maximize existing resources and promote better outcomes.

Finally, in response to reports suggesting increasing percentages of girls entering the juvenile justice system, literature supporting the efficacy of gender-specific interventions supports NEW VISTAS emphasis on providing resources that appropriately address the unique needs of female offenders. In broadening the gender-specific utility of treatment interventions, NEW VISTAS aimed to improve outcomes for a greater proportion of youths in the juvenile justice system.

### **Overview of Evaluation Procedures and Design**

The evaluation of NEW VISTAS was conducted by a research team at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). Team members employed a variety of research procedures to adequately assess the impact of NEW VISTAS on three primary domains: (1) intervention's effect on targeted neighborhoods, (2) intervention's effect on youths and families, and (3) intervention's effect on programming within the juvenile justice system.

Utilizing the expertise of the UCSB Research and Evaluation Team, the evaluation protocol was developed then reviewed by a Research Advisory Panel, which convened to ensure that all methods were family-friendly and culturally appropriate. This panel consisted of researchers as well as independent representatives from public and private sectors such as police, probation, the school district, drug, alcohol, and mental health

**The NEW VISTAS program reflects a transactional-ecological developmental model of youth development, recognizing the multiple influences (e.g., individual, family, peers, neighborhood) on behavior.**

**Substance use is a particularly powerful risk factor associated with juvenile delinquency, hence the focus on adolescents with drug and alcohol problems.**

**Research indicates that the percentage of female offenders involved in the juvenile justice system has been increasing, thus highlighting the importance of gender-specific interventions.**

**The UCSB research team examined the impact of NEW VISTAS at three levels:**  
**1. neighborhood**  
**2. youths & families**  
**3. juvenile justice system.**

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representatives, and neighborhood residents. Community agencies reflective of and responsive to the community's ethnic diversity were recruited to review and enhance the cultural appropriateness of evaluation procedures and provide perspective to facilitate understanding of analyses.

## ***Intervention's effect on the targeted neighborhood***

In order to examine the impact of NEW VISTAS on targeted neighborhoods, monthly legal offense data were collected from the Santa Barbara Police Department database and the Santa Barbara County Probation Department mainframe for all offenses throughout the duration of the program. The offense data were also collected for the 60 months immediately preceding program implementation. By having secured a baseline, it was possible to examine changes in neighborhood crime indicators that had occurred since the implementation of NEW VISTAS. Although these correlational analyses do not allow for causal statements about the overall effect of NEW VISTAS, strong patterns provide substantial information with which to make inferential statements about program impact. Additionally, the use of a community-policing questionnaire administered to randomly selected neighborhood residents during each year of the program allowed for an evaluation of changes in residents' sense of satisfaction with local law enforcement and probation staff as well as perceptions of neighborhood safety.

## ***Intervention's effect on youths within targeted families***

Data reflecting juvenile crime rates and pertaining to psychosocial functioning across a broad range of domains (family and peer relationships, problem behaviors, school functioning, mental health) allowed for a more comprehensive evaluation of the impact of NEW VISTAS. Even though a random control group design is ideal for maximizing internal validity, ethical reasons for not excluding any youths from the program prohibited this type of analysis. Therefore, as common in juvenile justice research, a within-subjects design was utilized. To increase the internal validity of this design, youths were measured at multiple points to examine change across time. Measures were collected at various points in the program, including at entry to the program, exit from services, and at 6-month, 12-month, and 18-month follow-ups. Board of Corrections (BOC) core data, demographics and substance use information were collected for participating families and youths. Additional in-depth data were collected through Local Evaluation Measures (LEM) on a randomly selected group of 130 families in order to better understand the effects of this intervention and more rigorously evaluate the attainment of program goals.

Other key evaluation components in this domain include:

- *Historical Comparison Group.* Though constraints prevented using an experimental control group, it was possible to use archival data from the Santa Barbara County Probation Department for the 1994-1998 time period to gather information about youths who had previously received probation services. The 100 youths in the historical comparison group were matched with the LEM participants by gender, ethnicity, age, and severity of offense. Additional requirements for inclusion were that youths lived in the community's boundaries at the time of their involvement in probation services and had drug or alcohol testing as a condition of their probation.

**Legal offense data were gathered for the five years prior to the NEW VISTAS program and for each month during the program.**

**Each year hundreds of neighborhood residents completed a community policing questionnaire providing their perceptions and satisfaction with local law enforcement and probation staff, as well as neighborhood safety.**

**Multiple measures provided valuable information regarding: problem behaviors, family relationships, peer relationships, school functioning, & mental health to examine the impact of the NEW VISTAS program.**

**In addition to analyses of change from intake to exit and follow-up, a historical comparison group was used to examine the effects of the NEW VISTAS program.**

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- *Ethnographic Interviews.* In order to complement the quantitative analyses, structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 10 NEW VISTAS families to gather qualitative data. This process included a parent and youth interview covering a broad range of psychosocial domains that allow for more detailed understanding of the experiences of NEW VISTAS families. These interviews also provided information to promote a culturally and gender specific approach to treatment and evaluation, augmenting the scarcity of information in the literature that addresses the needs of females and Mexican American youths.

## ***Intervention's effect on programming in the juvenile justice system***

Due to the novelty of a collocated, collaborative approach to service provision, efforts to evaluate the implementation of NEW VISTAS within the context of the juvenile justice system helped to inform the feasibility and efficacy of sustaining program operations. Using an interagency collaboration survey, annual feedback from a broad spectrum of agency personnel helped to highlight both challenges and strengths associated with the implementation of NEW VISTAS.

## ***Development of the Santa Barbara Assets and Risks Assessment***

Given the use of risk assessments to determine appropriate levels of supervision, NEW VISTAS incorporated efforts to augment and improve upon existing assessment procedures. In response to research highlighting the limitations of these assessment procedures as well as the need to develop more gender sensitive and culturally appropriate assessments, extensive literature review, participant interviews, and initial empirical examination, informed areas of improvement that led to the development of the Santa Barbara Assets and Risks Assessment (SB ARA). This assessment was piloted for its utility in predicting recidivism (additional legal offenses), understanding youth assets and risks, facilitating treatment and supervision assignment and contributing to balanced probation reports. Analyses examining prediction of six-month recidivism indicate that the SB ARA is a valuable assessment for use with both males and females. Pending further analyses, the SB ARA may be systematically implemented countywide.

## ***Participants in NEW VISTAS***

The 352 NEW VISTAS youth participants ranged from 11 to 18 years of age. Approximately 77% of the participants were between 15 and 17 years old. About two-thirds were males (68%), and 81% of participating youths were Latino/Latina. About one-third (32%) indicated that they were involved in a gang. Most youth participants (79%) had substance abuse problems (56% alcohol and 72% drugs) when they entered NEW VISTAS. Family characteristics indicated mothers were most often the primary caregivers (82%) and that 37% did not have a secondary caregiver. About 26% of the youths lived with someone on probation, parole, or incarcerated. Most participants (87%) entered NEW VISTAS through the Probation Department gateways (juvenile and adult), 13% from truancy and a few from other sources.

**Enthnographic case-study interviews provided valuable qualitative data regarding unique gender and cultural considerations of NEW VISTAS participants.**

**The interagency collaboration survey provided important information regarding strengths and challenges of the collocated, collaborative approach to service provision.**

**The UCSB research team is developing a gender-sensitive, culturally appropriate assessment of both needs and strengths of at-risk adolescents – The Santa Barbara Assets and Risks Assessment (SB ARA).**

**Most of the NEW VISTAS participants were involved with the probation system, approximately 1/3 were female, 1/3 affiliated with a gang, 3/4 were 15-17 years old, 3/4 were Latino/Latina, 3/4 of the youths had substance abuse problems.**

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## Statement of Hypothesized Outcomes

In accordance with program goals, it was hypothesized that NEW VISTAS would produce distinct outcomes at three different levels: (1) within the targeted neighborhoods, (2) among the targeted families, and (3) at the systems level.

### *Within the targeted neighborhoods:*

1. Juvenile crime will decrease. (i)
2. Adult crime will decrease. (i)
3. Juvenile alcohol and drug-related offenses will decrease. (i)
4. Neighborhood residents' sense of safety and public protection will increase. (ii)
5. Residents' satisfaction with law enforcement will increase. (ii)

### *Within the targeted families:*

6. Levels of family functioning will increase among targeted families. (iii)
7. Alcohol and drug use will decrease among targeted families. (iii)
8. Initiation of criminal activity among non-probation juveniles in targeted families will decrease. (iii)
9. The percentage of juveniles among the targeted families under the jurisdiction of Child Welfare Services who subsequently enter the Juvenile Justice System will decrease. (iv)
10. The rate of successful completion of probation restitution and court-ordered community services among targeted juvenile offenders will increase. (iv)
11. The rate of out-of-home placements among juvenile offenders in the targeted families will decrease. (iv)
12. Rates of recidivism among juvenile offenders will decrease. (iv)
13. Problem behaviors of juvenile offenders will decrease. (iii)
14. Behavioral and emotional strengths of juvenile offenders will increase. (iii)

### *Within the local Juvenile Justice System:*

15. Collaboration among private and public agencies will increase. (ii)
16. Accountability of service delivery will increase. (i)
17. A standardized alcohol and drug assessment will be implemented. (i)
18. An assessment tool for identifying levels of criminal risks and needs for female offenders will be developed. (i)
19. A range of services will be developed to meet the needs of a diverse population, considering gender and culture. (ii)

(i) = compared to the historical comparison period

(ii) = compared to the beginning of the program period

(iii) = compared to entry into the program

(iv) = compared to the historical comparison group

**NEW VISTAS  
included objectives at  
three levels;  
1. neighborhood  
2. family, &  
3. juvenile justice  
system.**

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## What Worked: Program Impacts

Evaluation efforts revealed that the NEW VISTAS program successfully achieved the majority of its most significant goals in all three domains: (1) targeted neighborhoods, (2) youth and family, and (3) the juvenile justice system (The table at the end of this section provides a summary of analyses examining each NEW VISTAS hypothesis).

### *NEW VISTAS' effect on target neighborhoods*

In conjunction with the neighborhood-based emphasis of NEW VISTAS, legal offense data collected both before and during program implementation highlight a decrease in the average number of yearly juvenile probation referrals across all categories of offenses since NEW VISTAS began in October 1999. Additionally, neighborhood residents reported perceived decreases in the incidence and severity of criminal activity, more favorable perceptions of police and probation officers, and an improved quality of life within their neighborhoods.

### *NEW VISTAS' effect on target families*

In regards to criminal activity, 56% of youths who completed NEW VISTAS did not commit an offense during the intervention period, compared to 41% of youths in the historical comparison group. Between exit and the six-month follow-up 81% of youths did not commit an offense, compared to 61% of youths in the historical comparison group. During subsequent follow-up periods (among participants for whom data were available), 90% did not commit an offense at each period (12 and 18 months, respectively) compared to 77% and 80% of youths in the historical comparison group. Additionally, NEW VISTAS appeared to have contributed to substantial decreases in substance abuse problems. Among youths who completed NEW VISTAS, approximately 90% of youths with alcohol problems and 91% of youths with drug problems at intake did not have such problems at exit (compared to 39% and 28% for the historical comparison group).

In accordance with treatment goals, NEW VISTAS demonstrated substantial improvement in psychosocial domains as well:

- Both caregiver and youth responses suggest decreases in internalizing and externalizing *behavior problems from program entrance to exit*, with improvement continuing six months after program participation.
- Caregiver and youth responses suggest increases in behavioral and emotional *strengths*, such as interpersonal strength, family involvement, intrapersonal strength, school functioning, and affective strength between entrance and exit of program.
- Caregiver and youth responses suggest improvement in *family functioning* from program entrance to exit. Approximately one half of caregivers and youths who reported unbalanced levels of family adaptability and cohesion at intake reported balanced levels at exit. Once again, improvement in family functioning continued six months after program participation.
- *Parenting strategies* improved during participation in NEW VISTAS. Families of female youths reported improvement in positive parenting, inconsistent discipline and poor monitoring at program exit.

**NEW VISTAS yielded numerous positive impacts:**

**decrease in the number of juvenile probation referrals,**

**reduction in the amount of recidivism,**

**decrease in internalizing problems,**

**decrease in externalizing problems,**

**increase in behavioral strengths,**

**increase in emotional strengths,**

**improved family functioning,**

**improved parenting strategies.**

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## *NEW VISTAS' effect on local juvenile justice system*

Data collected from both clients and agency personnel in regard to program implementation provided support for NEW VISTAS' positive impact on service delivery. In regard to juvenile justice staff, 75% of participants report being "somewhat" to "very" satisfied with interagency collaboration. Moreover, respondents reported positive perceptions of NEW VISTAS' impact in reducing crime, drug and alcohol problems, truancy, family functioning, youth strengths, and service delivery. In regard to NEW VISTAS clients, both youths and families endorsed markedly positive perceptions of NEW VISTAS, with over 85% reporting that "NEW VISTAS was helpful", that they "got the help they wanted," and that "people in NEW VISTAS really cared about them."

## **What Worked to Achieve Impacts: Program Components**

Interagency collocation and collaboration of services in a central neighborhood supervision team office involving a broad network of committed agencies and community/neighborhood resources resulted in comprehensive and effective intervention/prevention efforts that addressed multiple domains of youth, family, and neighborhood functioning. Partner agencies offered an array of programs and resources and remained flexible in addressing the needs of NEW VISTAS youths and families.

Efforts to coordinate effective and personalized treatment plans addressed problem behaviors of youths and families with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Additionally, treatment planners' efforts to connect and collaborate with youths and parents prior to the receipt of services helped to establish supportive relationships and facilitate successful integration into the program.

Family coaches provided close, supportive, and culturally sensitive interpersonal contact with youths and parents to build strong connections with services and provided ongoing communication to facilitate their success and adequately address their needs as they progressed through the program.

Culturally and gender appropriate approaches to service delivery were invaluable in sustaining client participation and enhancing the impact of interventions.

Consistent supervision efforts reinforced motivation and accountability for youths and families. Moreover, inclusion of Probation Officers as active members of treatment teams helped to facilitate clients' trust with the Santa Barbara County Probation Department and also coordinated their involvement across all facets of NEW VISTAS.

Emphasis on substance abuse treatment was successful in addressing problems due to substance abuse and also alleviated problems across a broad range of interrelated domains that contributed to improved outcomes overall.

Efforts to involve family and neighborhood residents in intervention efforts contributed to sustained improvements and motivation in NEW VISTAS youths. Specifically, such efforts helped to address intergenerational issues and environmental factors that are

**On average, 75% of NEW VISTAS staff reported being somewhat to very satisfied with interagency collaboration.**

**Over 85% of participants reported that NEW VISTAS was helpful, that they received the help they wanted, and that the professionals in NEW VISTAS cared about them.**

**Numerous NEW VISTAS factors converged to yield the positive impacts, including:**

**interagency collocation and collaboration of services,**

**personalized, family-focused treatment plans,**

**family coaches to provide culturally sensitive support,**

**gender and culturally-sensitive service delivery,**

**emphasis on substance abuse treatment.**

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often intricately related to youth functioning. Moreover, interventions on these fronts helped to enhance social support systems that may benefit youths long after exiting the program.

Monthly and weekly case review meetings fostered interagency trust, teambuilding, and collaboration and provided opportunities to enhance communication, inform partner agencies of expertise and resources, and share feedback. Ultimately, such efforts helped to optimize treatment planning and service delivery for NEW VISTAS youths and families. Moreover, the benefits of this interagency contact are likely to remain after the end of NEW VISTAS.

The provision of services free of financial cost to youths and families as well as the presence of bilingual staff at multiple levels of service extended the benefits of NEW VISTAS to those who may not otherwise have access to such services.

Open houses and public relations efforts helped to establish the positive reputation of NEW VISTAS and informed the community of available services.

Efforts to maintain an emphasis on a family-focused approach helped to maximize the impact of intervention efforts and also contributed to sustained improvements over time.

## What Did Not Work

The number of participants expected to be serviced by NEW VISTAS was not obtained due to somewhat restrictive exclusion criteria at program onset. Despite efforts to modify these criteria during program implementation to include youths in a broader age range and geographical area, and despite efforts to promote referrals from non-Probation Department gateways, the target number was not achieved prior to program end.

Despite efforts to decrease the overall number of adult and juvenile criminal offenses in the targeted neighborhoods, arrest data collected throughout the duration of NEW VISTAS do not establish clear improvement in this domain. However, a wide range of factors such as out-of-town arrests and arrests of transient individuals, which remain outside the impact of NEW VISTAS, contribute to trends in arrest rates.

Whereas data examining improvement from intake to exit indicated the effectiveness of the NEW VISTAS program, data collected six months after program completion suggest small increases in some domains of problem behaviors after exiting NEW VISTAS. Since these trends may suggest a relapse of problem behaviors, efforts to bolster intervention efforts through strategic aftercare services may be warranted.

## Problems Encountered

Given extensive diversity in professional approaches, cultures, and philosophies within the large number of partner agencies and community resources involved in NEW VISTAS as well as significant turnover of staff within these agencies, attempts to initially establish

**Numerous NEW VISTAS factors converged to yield the positive impacts, including:**

**involving neighborhood families in intervention efforts,**

**monthly and weekly case review meetings,**

**access to services (overcoming both financial and language barriers),**

**community outreach and activities,**

**family-focused approach.**

**NEW VISTAS also faces several challenges:**

**the limited number of eligible youths and families,**

**the impact of out-of-town and transient arrests on neighborhood criminal offenses,**

**limited aftercare services may be associated with relative declines following program exit.**

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and maintain a coordinated system of communication and cohesive identity presented challenges during the early stages of program implementation. Although evidence suggests that such challenges largely improved over the course of this evaluation period, sustained efforts to facilitate interagency collaboration and information exchange are necessary in ensuring successful and efficient service delivery.

At times, services offered by partner agencies overlapped and this may have triggered adverse reactions between agencies. Caution is warranted in the assignment of multiple services, as careful coordination is required to avoid overwhelming youths and families, which may manifest in poor attendance and noncompliance. Some community partner agencies reported that efforts to encourage NEW VISTAS youth and family to comply with program requirements and also accurately understand the purpose of assigned treatment interventions presented an ongoing challenge for agency personnel. In an effort to facilitate motivation and active participation in NEW VISTAS, renewed efforts to clearly inform youths and families of program procedures and also provide a rationale for treatment led to improvements in this area over time.

Partner agencies housed in areas apart from each other may have contributed to travel difficulties for some youths and families, particularly those who lack easy access to transportation.

The level of problem severity experienced by a large proportion of families was higher than initially expected and forced budget reallocation to mental health and counseling services in order to accommodate increased demand. Consequently, there was a brief delay for some clients in referral to mental health and counseling services.

Differences between time on probation and time required for the successful completion of NEW VISTAS led to the premature exit of some NEW VISTAS youths.

Given the diversity of youths and families participating in NEW VISTAS (e.g., varying levels of probation involvement and problem severity), some agencies reported problems when attempting to provide services that were applicable to all youths. Providing services in a group format may also run the risk of exposing better functioning youths to adverse influences.

The annulment of funding in 2002 restricted the involvement of partner agencies in the NEW VISTAS collaborative and forced the reallocation of funds to core services/programs.

NEW VISTAS staff experienced some minor challenges incorporating the evaluation procedures during the early stages of program implementation. However, this was resolved as the NEW VISTAS staff became more accustomed to the routine evaluation procedures.

**Problems faced in implementing the NEW VISTAS program included:**

- diverse professional approaches, cultures, and philosophies associated with the numerous partner agencies,**
- some lack of continuity in program staff,**
- limited transportation options for participants,**
- level of problem severity was higher than originally anticipated,**
- discrepancy in the time necessary for program completion and the completion of probation,**
- difficult to provide group services to heterogeneous participants,**
- limited funding during the last year of the program severely restricted the involvement of partner agencies.**

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## Future Plans for the Project

The Santa Barbara County Probation Department will continue to collaborate with multiple community agencies to address the needs of youths and families. Recognizing the value of the family-focused, neighborhood-based service delivery model, the important relationships established between community agencies during the NEW VISTAS program will also continue to benefit youths and families. Collocated treatment planners will continue to assess probation families for alcohol and drug issues and will make written recommendations for treatment. Moreover, agencies not involved in the initial program implementation had expressed interest in joining the NEW VISTAS collaborative, further enhancing the efficacy and utility of NEW VISTAS. Finally, further analyses of the SB ARA will determine unique assets and risks among males and females and may yield an appropriate assessment tool for all youths in the juvenile justice system.

## Recommendations for Other Counties Considering Similar Projects

Although grounded in a theoretical approach to service delivery, the implementation of NEW VISTAS during this initial operation period has involved a number of procedural modifications that have helped to enhance NEW VISTAS strengths and decrease its challenges. Given the benefit of having faced and overcome some of the challenges that occurred during the implementation of NEW VISTAS, the following are recommendations that may be of use to other counties considering a similar model:

### *Interagency Collaboration*

- Prepare all program partners to work in a collaborative environment, how to disagree professionally, how to support one another, how to problem solve together, how to resolve conflict, and how to build positive relationships.
- Plan for activities and meetings that promote teambuilding and open communication. Encourage process discussions, solicit feedback, and reinforce collective identity in order to build trust and enhance working relationships that need to develop within a collaborative.
- Limit the number of partner agencies for more effective, streamlined collaboration and communication in order to reduce the risk of duplicating services and allow for enhanced funding/sustainability of core programs and agencies.

### *Program Implementation and Evaluation*

- Team leaders and family coach interactions are critical if a family is to be successful. It is important that these individuals reflect the diversity of the participating minors and families.
- Funding permitting, the implementation of aftercare services and more extensive follow-up may bolster positive outcomes.
- Efforts to maintain an emphasis on a family-focused approach helps to maximize the impact of intervention efforts and also contribute to sustained improvements over time.

**Santa Barbara County Probation Department will continue to collaborate with community agencies to address the needs of youths and families.**

**The UCSB researchers continue to collaborate with the Santa Barbara County Probation Department to develop the Santa Barbara Assets and Risks Assessment.**

**Lessons learned regarding interagency collaboration include:**

**prepare program partners for the collaborative environment,**

**promote teambuilding and communication,**

**avoid duplication of services among partner agencies.**

**Lessons learned regarding program implementation and evaluation include:**

**open communication among team leaders and family coaches is essential,**

**aftercare services may sustain positive outcomes,**

**excellent research and evaluation information is fundamental,**

**it is important to examine both increases in positive behaviors and decreases in negative behaviors.**

# Project Summary

- Culturally and gender-appropriate approaches to service delivery were invaluable in sustaining client participation and enhancing the impact of interventions.
- The value of the research and evaluation team is fundamental to understanding the effects of the program. Information obtained through semi-annual reports provides an opportunity to address specific issues and also examine the efficacy of the program.
- When examining outcomes, consider both increases in positive behaviors and decreasing problems.

## *Administration*

- Understand the roles, responsibilities, boundaries, and chains of command of each project position and their accountability.
- Frequently review the objectives and goals as stated in the program design, and compare where the program is against where it needs to be.
- Establish an executive oversight committee to provide better management and facilitate more immediate decision-making, which is especially valuable when critical program or fiscal issues arise.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

While the current evidence supports the success of NEW VISTAS in addressing the needs of high-risk youths and families within the City of Santa Barbara, efforts to evaluate the NEW VISTAS service delivery model in other geographical areas are warranted to examine effectiveness with a broader population of youths, families and communities. It would be important to evaluate the implementation of strategic aftercare services to determine if program effects could be maintained for most participants over an extended period. Should additional resources be made available, efforts to assess psychosocial functioning in a larger proportion of NEW VISTAS participants may further inform the impact of the NEW VISTAS service model on multiple domains of functioning. Finally, the evaluation of the efficacy of the SB ARA to identify both assets and risks and provide information regarding allocation of supervision and services would be invaluable in efforts to identify appropriate assessment tools for youths in the juvenile justice system.

### **Lessons learned regarding administration of the program:**

**understand the roles, responsibilities, and boundaries of each position,**

**frequently review the objectives and goals of the project,**

**establish an executive oversight committee to facilitate decision making.**

**The NEW VISTAS program provides valuable information for future implementation and research of a family-focused, neighborhood-based, service delivery model to address the needs of at-risk youths and families.**



# Project Summary

Table 1. Summary of the analyses examining each NEW VISTAS hypothesis

	Accomplished	Progress	Remains	
1. Juvenile crime will decrease.			✓	<b>Accomplished</b> indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was successfully completed.
a. Monthly arrests			✓	
b. Probation referrals	✓			
c. Parole violations	✓			
d. Property crimes	✓			
e. Crimes against persons	✓			
2. Adult crime will decrease.			✓	
a. Monthly adult arrests			✓	
b. Reported crime activities	✓			
3. Juvenile alcohol and drug-related offenses will decrease.				
a. Monthly juvenile arrests		✓		
b. Probation referrals		✓		
4. Neighborhood residents sense of safety and public protection will increase.				<b>Progress</b> indicates that the available data suggest that the objective was not successfully accomplished. However, the trend suggests progress towards the stated objective.
a. Reported satisfaction and quality of life	✓			
b. Reported levels of safety in neighborhood	✓			
5. Residents satisfaction with law enforcement will increase.				
a. Reported satisfaction with police	✓			
b. Reported satisfaction with probation	✓			
6. Levels of family functioning will increase among targeted families.				<b>Remains</b> indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was not successfully accomplished, and the issue remains to be addressed.
a. Positive parenting		✓		
b. Inconsistent Discipline	✓			
c. Poor Monitoring/Supervision		✓		
d. Family adaptability		✓		
e. Family cohesion		✓		
f. Family communication	✓			
g. Problem communication	✓			
h. Parenting stress	✓			
7. Alcohol and drug use will decrease among targeted families.				
a. Targeted youth addiction severity	✓			
b. Parent substance abuse behaviors			✓	
8. Initiation of criminal activity among non-probation juveniles in targeted families will decrease.				
a. Delinquency behaviors of siblings		✓		
b. Aggression of siblings		✓		

# Project Summary

Accomplished Progress Remains

9. The percentage of juveniles among the targeted families under the jurisdiction of Child Welfare Services who subsequently enter the Juvenile Justice System will decrease.
  - a. Percentage of youths ✓
10. The rate of successful completion of probation restitution and court-ordered community services among targeted juvenile offenders will increase.
  - a. Completion of probation restitution ✓
  - b. Completion of community service ✓
11. The rate of out-of-home placements among juvenile offenders in the targeted families will decrease.
  - a. Rates of out-of-home placements ✓
  - b. Rates of institutional committment ✓
12. Rates of recidivism among juvenile offenders will decrease.
  - a. Rates of recidivism ✓
  - b. Rates of probation violations ✓
  - c. Number of serious offenses ✓
13. Problem behaviors of juvenile offenders will decrease.
  - a. School misbehavior ✓
  - b. Externalizing behaviors ✓
  - c. Internalizing behaviors ✓
14. Behavioral and emotional strengths of juvenile offenders will increase.
  - a. School behavior (grades & attendance) ✓
  - Youths' perception of
    - b. Caring Relationships ✓
    - c. High Expectations ✓
    - d. Meaningful Participation ✓
    - e. Social Competence ✓
    - f. Autonomy ✓
  - Parents' perception of
    - g. Youth's Interpersonal Strength ✓
    - h. Youth's Family Involvement ✓
    - i. Youth's Intrapersonal Strength ✓
    - j. Youth's School Functioning ✓
    - k. Youth's Affective Strength ✓

**Accomplished** indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was successfully completed.

**Progress** indicates that the available data suggest that the objective was not successfully accomplished. However, the trend suggests progress towards the stated objective.

**Remains** indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was not successfully accomplished, and the issue remains to be addressed.

# Project Summary

Accomplished Progress Remains

- 15. Collaboration among private and public agencies will increase.
  - a. Overall success of collaboration ✓
  - b. Quality of collaboration ✓
  - c. Satisfaction with collaboration ✓
  - d. Awareness of collaborative services ✓
  - e. Reduction of challenges in collaboration ✓
- 16. Accountability of service delivery will increase.
  - Parent report of satisfaction
    - a. Overall satisfaction ✓
    - b. Amount of help received ✓
    - c. Kind of services received ✓
    - d. Positive recommendation ✓
    - e. Helped in life ✓
  - Youth report of satisfaction
    - a. Overall satisfaction ✓
    - b. Amount of help received ✓
    - c. Kind of services received ✓
    - d. Positive recommendation ✓
    - e. Helped in life ✓
    - f. Professionals cared about me ✓
    - g. Quality of the services ✓
    - h. Met individual needs ✓
- 17. A standardized alcohol and drug assessment will be developed and implemented.
  - a. Adolescent Addiction Severity Instrument ✓
- 18. An assessment tool for identifying levels of criminal risks and needs for female offenders will be developed and implemented.
  - a. Santa Barbara Assets and Risks Assessment ✓
- 19. A range of services will be developed to meet the needs of a diverse population, considering gender and culture.
  - a. Services will be effective for clients at varying levels of acculturation status ✓
  - b. Services will be effective for both males and females. ✓

**Accomplished** indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was successfully completed.

**Progress** indicates that the available data suggest that the objective was not successfully accomplished. However, the trend suggests progress towards the stated objective.

**Remains** indicates that the available data suggest that the stated objective was not successfully accomplished, and the issue remains to be addressed.