



Vol. 3, No. 7  
January 2000

*On Good Authority* is a periodic briefing on trends and issues in criminal justice program evaluation. This report was written by staff Research Analyst Karen S. Levy McCanna. It is a summary of program evaluations of the Christian County Extended Day Program, the Peoria County Anti-Gang and Drug Abuse Unit, and the Winnebago County Day Reporting and Assessment Centers. The evaluations were conducted by the Center for Legal Studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield. Copies of the evaluations are available from the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit.

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*The evaluation was supported by grant #96-DB-MU-0017 and grant #97-DB-MU-0017 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.*

*Printed by authority of the State of Illinois, January 2000. Printing order #00-049; 3,000 copies.*

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## Juvenile probation programs evaluated

- Christian County Extended Day Program
- Peoria County Anti-Gang and Drug Abuse Unit
- Winnebago County Day Reporting and Assessment Centers

A team from the Center for Legal Studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield evaluated juvenile probation programs in Christian, Peoria, and Winnebago counties. This *On Good Authority* is a summary of these process and initial impact evaluations, which were funded by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority using federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act funds established under the Byrne Formula Grant. The evaluations provide descriptions of the three programs and examine implementation issues.

### Christian County Juvenile Probation Extended Day Program

The Christian County Probation Department began accepting juveniles into its extended day program in October 1997. The program is designed to extend expanded probation supervision and services to minors and require their accountability. It attempts to reduce the risk of

reoffending among participants and help them avoid institutional placement. Juveniles eligible for the program must be between 12 and 17 years old, have at least one prior delinquency adjudication, have a current offense involving violence or drugs, and be classified as needing

maximum supervision. Program participants are required to attend school or a high school equivalency degree program, and participate in "moral reconation" therapy and life skills training. The program provides access to mental health and substance abuse assessment and counseling services through contracts with local service providers. At the time of the evaluation, a certified teacher was being sought for tutoring services.

Moral reconation therapy is a treatment method designed for clients resistant to treatment. The treatment program is designed to assist the participant's development of moral reasoning to induce more socially acceptable decision-making. The improved decision-making is intended to

enable the juveniles to display socially acceptable behaviors and reduce reoffending. Life skills training addresses self-esteem enhancement, decision-making, personal control, and interpersonal

communication. The training focuses on the concept that social skills may be taught, but maintenance and utilization of acquired skills needs reinforcement if they are to be remembered outside the classroom. Both the moral reconation therapy and the life skills training are

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group sessions facilitated by the extended day program probation officer.

To ensure that juvenile participants are adhering to program and court-ordered mandates, probation staff make use of specific control measures. The measures utilized by the extended day probation officer include establishing curfews and enforcing them through electronic monitoring. Random drug testing also is utilized along with monitoring by the probation officer. Another program component requires participants to perform community service and in some cases provide restitution to victims. The program probation officer carries a maximum caseload of 20 juveniles. The lower number of cases allows the officer to provide closer monitoring of the participant's compliance. Officers may conduct visits at the juvenile's home or probation offices, as well as contact service providers. Noncompliance is usually dealt with through administrative sanctions, but the more serious offenses may result in a petition for revocation of probation.

Program participants are enrolled on the basis of a court disposition for a delinquent offense or as the result of a disposition for a violation of probation. Once a juvenile is identified for program consideration, program staff provide the court with an eligibility recommendation. It is left to the discretion of the court to order a juvenile into the program.

Implementation issues identified by the evaluators included programming, caseloads, resources, and staffing. An anger management curriculum, lasting nine to 11 weeks, was added to the program in an effort to assist participants in dealing with day-to-day interactions and to provide constructive activities for program participants not attending a regular school. Students attending an alternative school and the high school equivalency program have a shorter school day than conventional school students.

One area of concern with the life skills programming was the need for a more defined curriculum. Current programming is based upon materials

collected from a variety of sources and upon an informal determination by program staff of the participants' needs. The available curricula was considered either out of date or cost-prohibitive, so staff members were searching for an affordable and relevant alternative.

The program was designed to mandate residential drug treatment for participants who repeatedly tested positive for substance use. However, there are often lengthy waiting lists for treatment, resulting in a delay between the positive test result and entrance into a treatment program. Electronic monitoring has been used to monitor the juvenile until admittance into a residential treatment program is possible.

Another issue involved instances of participant expulsion by treatment providers for noncompliance with treatment rules. Lack of progress in the programs was grounds for expulsion in some cases, and probation staff would attempt to negotiate readmission for these juveniles. Despite occasional disagreements, the relationship between the program and service providers was stable and positive.

As of March 1999, the program had not been able to attain the caseload goal of 20 participants in the first year. The requirement that the parent and the youth consent to entering the program may contribute to the lack of participation. Another factor may be the requirement of drug treatment prior to program entry for individuals who tested positive for substance use prior to program enrollment.

The evaluators also found space was a problem. The probation department appeared to have outgrown its location in the courthouse. Compounding the problem was the lack of space for moral reconnection therapy and life skills training groups. Group sessions were conducted in space provided by the sheriff's department in a building that housed the

county jail. Unfortunately, the environment was not conducive to open and serious discussion. At the time of the evaluation, negotiations were under way to find additional space either within or outside the courthouse.

Staff turnover was another issue. The original program coordinator left the probation department in April 1999. The position was filled on an interim basis, but the replacement officer left the department in June 1999.

A final issue that arose during program implementation involved the court order for program participation. The provision requiring program participation was inserted into a standard juvenile probation order. This practice left some program requirements unstated. As a result, program staff developed a separate order for extended day program participation, which allowed the unique requirements of the program to be clearly enumerated.

## Peoria County Anti-Gang and Drug Abuse Unit

The Peoria County Anti-Gang and Drug Abuse Unit (AGDAU) uses organized intervention methods to facilitate

supervision and treatment alternatives for juvenile probationers involved in gang or drug-related activities. Juveniles may enter the program as part of their original disposition or as a modification of an existing probation case. Probation staff use a screening

instrument that attempts to assess the extent of the juveniles' drug and/or gang involvement using a scoring system. A score of 30 points or higher results in a conference with the probation staff, parents, and the juvenile. The program requirements are explained and both the juvenile and parents are asked to sign an agreement stating they will follow the program rules. Finally, it is left to the discretion of the court to order partici-

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pation in the program. Evaluators interviews indicated that there were some juveniles ordered into the program without the assessment, conference, and agreement in place.

AGDAU began accepting juveniles into the five-phase program in October 1997. Program participants are required to complete each phase, in turn, within a six-month time period. The first phase, Planning and Movement Control, includes a needs assessment and intensive monitoring. The second phase, Counseling, Treatment, and Programming, provides anger management programming, drug treatment, alternatives to gang involvement, and other resources as determined by the needs assessment. The third phase, Community Outreach, requires the participants to complete community service work as assigned by the court or the probation staff. Next is the Re-Assignment phase, which is designed to prepare the program participant to return to the standard probation caseload. Finally, the Tracking and Discharge phase ensures that all conditions of AGDAU participation have been met prior to a successful discharge from the program.

Program staff includes two juvenile probation officers who report to the supervisor of AGDAU. The supervisor reports to the chief juvenile probation officer. The officers share a caseload of about 40 program participants. Originally, the plan was for the officers to jointly supervise 100 juveniles, but it was determined that such a caseload was unrealistic given the level of supervision required for each case. In addition, the officers found that six months was not enough time to complete the five program phases.

Schools in the Peoria County area have adopted a no-tolerance policy regarding gang affiliation, which has complicated interaction between school officials and AGDAU staff. Students identified as being affiliated with a gang can be suspended from school for up to one year. If program staff contact school officials to check on program participants, they are effectively identifying those students as being gang-affiliated and putting

them at risk for suspension. Because AGDAU staff believe it is beneficial for the juveniles to remain in school, they are careful not to identify students as AGDAU participants, or they communicate only with school officials who will not automatically suspend students who are affiliated with a gang.

### Winnebago County's Day Reporting Center and Assessment Center

The Winnebago County Day Reporting Center and Assessment Center are the result of growing concern over the high rate of juvenile incarceration and the need to streamline processing of juvenile arrestees. The day reporting and assessment centers share the same facility.

The Day Reporting Center is an alternative to incarceration, providing educational, vocational, and other social programming. In addition, mental health and substance abuse treatment is available to program participants. Juveniles eligible for the day reporting program must be adjudicated delinquent for a forcible felony or an offense that can be waived to adult court, must be classified under the Strategy of Juvenile Supervision (SJS) as in need of casework control or limit setting, and must be ordered by the court to participate in the program.

The Assessment Center is open weekdays from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m. as a holding facility for law enforcement to drop off arrested juveniles for processing. The center is staffed by probation personnel, and a sheriff's deputy. Staff are able to relieve law enforcement officers of the time-consuming task of locating and contacting the adult responsible for a juvenile and processing the arrestee. Juveniles are finger-

printed and photographed while waiting at the center. The sheriff's deputy provides security, assists with crisis intervention and transports juveniles to the local detention facility. Probation staff utilize the time a juvenile is at the center to conduct an intake investigation, which may result in a probation adjustment, referral to the state's attorney or placement in secure detention.

As part of the intake investigation, program staff conducted record checks on juveniles by contacting the main probation office. However, the office is closed between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. As an

alternative, the program purchased computer equipment to conduct the electronic checks directly. That process was still being developed at the end of the evaluation period.

Regarding the day reporting center, activities are focused around four programmatic goals:

1) reduce institutional placements, 2) reduce juvenile criminal conduct, 3) provide rehabilitative service, and 4) provide increased monitoring. In addition to mental health and substance abuse treatment, and educational and vocational programming, staff provide positive role models and engage participants in social activities. Aggression replacement training is scheduled four days a week for program participants and is facilitated by probation staff. The curriculum incorporates social skills training, anger control training, and moral education.

Issues surrounding the evolution of the program included facility location, records access, transportation, changes in the educational programming, expansion of eligibility criteria, and nonparticipation by parents. One week prior to the beginning of the program, the location was changed to a building with limited space and in need of

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extensive renovation. One advantage of the new location was its proximity to the local detention center, which made it easy to transport youths to detention. On the other hand, due to the remote location, transportation was necessary to drive participants to many activities. The detention center shares its van with program staff, but detention staff must transport juveniles between the detention facility and the courthouse. Use of the van by program staff, therefore, was limited to hours when court was not in session.

The educational programming component changed over time. Initially, day reporting participants were assigned to a local alternative school. At the end of the school day, at 1 p.m., the students and teacher would report to the center and continue their educational programming. However, program staff felt that the alternative school was not making a positive contribution to daily programming, and that participants would benefit from remaining in a traditional school atmosphere. Conse-

quently, the relationship with the alternative school was terminated.

Another issue involved the expansion of the eligibility criteria to include juveniles classified under SJS as in need of selective intervention. This modification was made to increase the number of juveniles attending programming in an effort to stabilize class size. Each class was scheduled to accommodate 24 juveniles for six months. As a result of the eligibility change, program staff were able to modified the classes to accommodate 16 juveniles for four months. This model still allowed 48 juveniles to participate in a 12-month period. To maintain consistent class sizes, the program began allowing juveniles to enter the program as needed, rather than waiting for a new class period to begin.

Finally, nonparticipation by parents in group sessions with their children was a problem. Program staff had no means of enforcing this condition of the program. Staff attempted to reduce nonparticipation by eliminating excuses for nonattendance, such as transportation and child care.

## Recommendations

The evaluators made several recommendations for improving the three juvenile probation programs, including:

- Planners in each county should search for ways to encourage staff stability and to institutionalize the positive contributions of current staff.
- Program administrators and staff should develop clear policies regarding sanctions associated with program violations. Program participants and parents should be informed of the consequences of program violations and notified when such sanctions are applied.
- Each program is encouraged to examine additional ways in which positive behavior or success can be acknowledged or rewarded and publicized to parents and others with responsibility for the juveniles.
- Program personnel are encouraged to examine all possible mechanisms for encouraging greater parental participation. New initiatives, such as support groups for parents, might better address parents' needs and interests. ♦

