

**The Little Hoover Commission  
Testimony and Background on  
The Juvenile Crime Prevention Demonstration Project  
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**What is the Program?**

The Juvenile Crime Prevention Demonstration Project (JCPP) is a Governor's Initiative administered by the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP). It is designed to demonstrate how a comprehensive array of effective programs can strengthen families, improve school performance, and reduce crime. Funding began in January 1996, for a projected 4.5 years which sunset in June 2000. During this first funding cycle, 16,160 families were served at 12 sites statewide. The original twelve sites worked together to sustain the funding of this proven effective program through the Governor's Budget. An RFP has been released and up to 16 sites (mature and new) will be funded by January, 2001 for a period of 2.5 years.

Two important features of the program are: the development of strong collaboratives to assure the comprehensiveness of services, and the active participation of service consumers and community members in developing and running the programs through a Community Oversight Council. Each site has 5 direct service components as follows:

- § **Family Resource Centers.** Family friendly centers have become the hub for all 12 sites. Through the FRCs, outreach workers identify isolated families with infants and young children aged 0-5 and encourage their involvement in the FRC and community. Statewide, 2,033 at-risk families with children under 5 years of age, were enrolled for case management by the Family Resource Centers. These families participated in center programs for an average of 11 months.
- § **Families and Schools Together (FAST).** Families have met at the schools to participate in eight weekly sessions designed to strengthen family communication, improve family unity and parenting skills, promote mutual support, improve elementary school performance and improve child behavior and school attendance. Following completion of the eight sessions, families met monthly for two years in FASTWORKS family groups. A total of 2,327 families were enrolled in FAST programs throughout the 4.5-year project. Families participated in the FAST program for an average of 11 months.
- § **Mothers and Sons.** Single parent mothers raising sons aged 10 to 14 without male role models have found the intensive support and group services very valuable. Together they enhanced their communication and problem solving skills to prevent delinquency and/or gang involvement. Statewide, 1,025 families enrolled in Mothers & Sons programs, and participated for an average of 10 months.

§ **First Offenders.** Early intervention efforts with 8-18 year old youth who have been *cited or arrested* for involvement in illegal activities have shown remarkable results. First Offender staff members (from probation, social services, mental health, and drug and alcohol agencies) provided intensive family support and school system advocacy to help youth and families make healthy choices to deter further involvement with the law. A total of 3,190 families enrolled in First Offender programs statewide. Their average length of time in the program was 8 months.

§ **Beyond School Hours.** Exciting after school and summer community service, educational and recreational activities have provided alternatives to street life and non-productive or anti-social activities for children and youth. Activities included the application of conflict resolution strategies, decision-making skills, and anger management tools. A total of 8,287 youth were enrolled statewide, while 2,076 youth were targeted for intensive after school services and tracking.

## Who is Involved?

§ Twelve rural, urban and suburban California sites:

<u>Program Location</u>	<u>Lead Agency</u>	<u>Agency Type</u>
Lake County	Lake County Office of Education	county schools
South Lake Tahoe	South Lake Tahoe USD	school district
Chico	Parent Education Network	non-profit
Sacramento	Sacramento Children's Home	non-profit
Sacramento	San Juan Unified School District	school district
Gilroy	County of Santa Clara	dept. of social services
Long Beach	YMCA of Greater Long Beach	non-profit
Lompoc	Santa Barbara Probation Dept.	probation department
Los Angeles	Shields for Families	non-profit
San Diego	SAY San Diego	non-profit
Los Angeles	Para los Ninos	non-profit
Los Angeles	City of Los Angeles	city agency

§ Collaborative partners at the twelve sites include: Juvenile Probation and the courts, law enforcement agencies, Departments of Health and Human Services, Children's Protective Services, Healthy Start, schools, domestic violence agencies, mental health service providers, recreation and park districts, YMCA's, Boys and Girls Clubs, community-based organizations, and parent education networks.

## What Set Us Apart from Other Programs?

§ **An independent evaluation** funded by the Stuart Foundation was conducted by Philliber Research Associates. Data were collected on: characteristics of the families and youth enrolled, the services they received, the collaborative structures that evolved in each community, and the outcomes that resulted for youth and families. Youth and family assessments were completed when the family entered and exited the program, as well as at 6-month intervals. Generally, matched pair t-tests of significance were performed to determine whether families or youth realized significant improvement on various measures. Evaluation reports were prepared and discussed with program staff every six months throughout the project.

- § All staff have participated in **rigorous, research-based training and technical assistance**. A statewide network of providers has developed and can assist with replication of this program beyond the initial twelve sites.
- § The program model was **well designed and well funded**. Each site received 4.5 years of funding at an annual level of \$804,000. The model provides **a continuum of services** that are:
  - § **Family focused** – whereas most juvenile delinquency prevention programs are focused primarily on youth, JCPP requires meaningful participation of the parents. Prevention services are also directed to siblings.
  - § **Comprehensive** – services are offered to families with children aged 0 –18. The services range from early intervention at the FRC; prevention in FAST, Mothers & Sons and After School; and intervention in the First Offender component.
  - § **Accessible** – services are delivered in home, in the schools, and in the community. Services are provided beyond school hours (in the evening, weekends, and summer).
  - § **Culturally appropriate** – service teams match the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the target community. Services are delivered in multiple languages in some JCPP communities.
  - § **Collaborative** – each site brings a broad range of professional expertise by forming partnerships with the following types of agencies: juvenile probation, law enforcement, social service providers, mental health providers, schools, and youth development/ recreation providers.
  - § **Community driven** – community members and service consumers actively participate in overseeing all components of the project. Valuing the importance of effectively representing communities, JCPP Community Oversight Councils conducted community needs assessments in 1998-99.
- § **Careful monitoring and support** by the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) assured that the program model was implemented as planned at all 12 sites. Cross-site training and support was encouraged and funded which enabled site visits to programs exemplifying “best practices” and statewide Project Director meetings. There was a true emphasis on self-reflection and model strengthening.

## What Was Learned?

- § The **programs targeted a very high-risk population** for service. At intake, the families and youth had the following risk characteristics:
  - § Nearly three-quarters of the families had an income of \$1,300 or less a month and more than half of the households had no adult employed full-time.
  - § More than two-thirds of the families had a mother or father with less than a high school diploma.

- § A single mother headed three-fifths of the families.
- § More than a third of the families had a member who had been arrested within the past 6 months and had a member who was on probation, parole or incarcerated.
- § About two-thirds of the youth served were male. Their ages ranged from 4-19 with an average age of 12. Their ethnicities were diverse with 45% Latino, 24% Caucasian, and 18% African-American.
- § Nearly half of the youth reported school discipline problems and failing grades.
- § Almost a third of the youth reported alcohol use, and a fifth reported marijuana use.
- § Two-fifths of the youth had been picked up or cited by the police, and nearly a third had been arrested.
- § Two-thirds of the youth would be classified as socially maladjusted as measured by the Jesness Inventory.
- § By case closure, the program demonstrated significant child and family outcomes including:
  - § **Significant decreases in violent, criminal and delinquent behaviors** between intake and case closure, including significant declines in youth being picked up or cited by the police (from 41% at intake to 17% at closure) and in those being arrested (from 31% to 12%).
  - § **Significant decreases in negative school behaviors** between intake and case closure, including detention (from 46% to 32%), suspension and expulsion (from 34% to 20%), and failing grades (from 46% to 34%).
  - § **Significant decreases in substance use** between intake and case closure, including alcohol (from 30% to 22%) and marijuana use (from 20% to 13%).
  - § **Significant decreases in social maladjustment** between intake and case closure (from 63% to 49% classified as socially maladjusted).
  - § **Significant reductions in problems with basic needs** between intake and case closure, with families showing overall improvements in basic needs including such things as medical care, employment, food and clothing, housing, transportation and child care (63% of the families experienced improvements).
  - § **Significant improvements in family functioning** between intake and case closure, including improvements in parenting skills (55% experienced improvements) and improvements in family cohesion and family adaptability (32% experienced improvements)
  - § **Significant decreases in the families' criminal justice involvement** between intake and case closure, including a decrease in the number of families reporting arrests (from 37% to 16%) and other involvement with the legal system (from 32% to 27%).

## What Systems Have Been Changed?

One of the most productive and exciting results of the JCPP projects has been the achievement of actual “systems change” within these communities. PRA conducted structured focus groups in each community and documented the following areas of systems change:

- § **Growth of the philosophy that juvenile crime prevention strategies should emphasize early intervention.** Professionals in law enforcement, schools, county agencies and non-profits now believe that juvenile crime prevention programs should not only focus on youth on the brink of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system; rather, interventions must begin much earlier.
- § **New community role for police officers.** Referrals are a welcome new tool, as police officers now refer people to the juvenile crime prevention programs. Officers are familiar faces at the Family Resource Centers, work with community members and other agencies to solve common problems, and see themselves as community partners. Some Police Departments have instituted regular community problem-solving meetings. The JCPP projects provided structure for much of this interaction.
- § **Increased trust between police and community members.** Police and community members now have regular ways of working together to solve problems. Increased interaction brings increased trust on both sides.
- § **Expanded options for the courts and police.** By referring youth to the First Offender programs, police and courts now have an option that is stronger than a warning, but not as serious as sentencing. This has resulted in better prevention and treatment for youth, and fewer youth in the system.
- § **Counselors and social workers have new knowledge of police and probation systems.** Through working closely with police and probation officers, counselors and social workers have greater insight into the judicial system and therefore their clients' lives. With counselors and law enforcement working together, they provide coordinated services to clients.
- § **Probation departments now advocate more broad-based services for youth on probation.** There is increased belief that diverse services, such as counseling, drug and alcohol programs, mentoring, and job development deliver positive results to youth on probation. Probation officers in the field are energized by their expanding role. High-level probation officers have become advocates for collaboratives and continuing funding for programs that work.
- § **School administrators and law enforcement have stronger relationships and work together on crime prevention.** The JCPP project provided structured opportunities for school administrators and police and probation departments to interact, and placed many officers in prevention roles on high school campuses.
- § **School principals, counselors and other staff are less isolated and more collaborative.** As a result of the JCPP programs in their communities, school districts are referring students to outside agencies, and working as a team to solve problems. Relationships with community members and parents have benefited.

- § **Multi-disciplinary or integrated approach to social services emphasized throughout community.** Top-level agency administrators are now committed toward creating new, integrated service delivery. Many large county agencies have Child Protective Services, health, or mental health professionals located outside their agency building in schools and in smaller community centers. Placing agency staff in community centers provides better service delivery and outcomes. The JCPP project was a catalyst for integration of services.
- § **Shift in client attitudes about social services.** Clients have trust in Family Resource Centers and feel safe there. This differs from their attitudes toward traditional social service delivery.
- § **The birth of collaborative infrastructures.** Agencies are less competitive, more cooperative. County agencies, non-profits, probation, police, and the courts now communicate regularly through collaborative groups to deliver streamlined services and solve community problems. For example, one JCPP site has a Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, comprised of representatives from the courts, probation, police, mental health, which monitors and fills in the gaps for a comprehensive juvenile justice strategy.

In these, and many other ways, the collaboration inherent in the JCPP projects has changed systems of delivery and improved communities. Professionals in law enforcement, school districts, county agencies, and community non-profits have much in common – but they are too often insulated from one another. Continuing to fund the Juvenile Crime Prevention Demonstration Projects provides critical front-line service delivery, and the tremendous benefits of collaborative community work.

## What's Next?

- § In the next phase of funding, the twelve sites expect to ***refine the 5-component program model*** through an exploration and implementation of “best practices.” Efforts will begin to develop materials and procedures for replication of this successful program model.

## Recommendations to Policy-Makers

- § ***Follow the recommendations of the 1999 Little Hoover Commission Report, “Now in Our Hands,” particularly in regard to implementing Proposition 10, the replication of proven models and the funding of prevention services.*** Rationale: Often, new statewide initiatives strive to demonstrate a new model. Since resources are limited, funding demonstrations frequently means not funding proven models thus losing both the proven model and the state investment in developing it.
- § ***Fund comprehensive programs and ensure integrity to the model.*** Rationale: Avoid funding piecemeal programs. Comprehensive programs such as JCPP have been proven effective. Close monitoring by the funding source is necessary to assure successful implementation and integrity to the model.
- § ***When funding collaborative and community engagement efforts, allow adequate resources and an adequate timeframe to develop and manage them.*** Rationale: Collaboration and community engagement are labor intensive and long-term efforts. They produce impressive results such as more inclusive civic participation, volunteerism, and financial and in-kind contributions.

- § ***Allocate adequate resources for a statewide evaluation effort.*** Make sure that the evaluation design is comprehensive enough to measure outcomes and impacts on the personal, organizational, community and system levels. Use evaluation data to refine programs on a regular basis. Rationale: A comprehensive system wide evaluation is the key tool for determining the effectiveness of the investment.
- § ***Build in resources for coordinated statewide training and technical assistance efforts in order to develop local and statewide capacity and capability.*** Include training and technical assistance on direct service models, collaborative systems and management, community engagement processes, and community development. Rationale: The purpose of a demonstration effort is to test a new theory or method of service delivery to see if it solves a social problem and/or positively impacts a set of social conditions. Any new theory or method of service delivery requires new learning. Ensuring that the new learning occurs increases the probability that the test results will be accurate.
- § ***Use system wide learning such as evaluation findings and training and technical assistance results to modify service delivery design for replication.*** Rationale: The purpose of evaluation studies is to learn what works.