



CREATING RESULTS WITH YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

San Mateo County Probation Department:
Juvenile Probation and Camps Funding &
Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act

Probation's Parent Programs

JPCF Evaluation Report 2012-2013

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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Presented here is an overview of key data findings covering two evaluation years: 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. The following sections of the report will discuss these findings in detail.

Figure 1. **Data Highlights from 2011-2012 and 2012-2013**

Data Highlights	Evaluation Years	
	2011-2012	2012-2013
Number of clients served	127	121
Average number of hours of service	18.6	16.2
Average length of time in the program (months)	2	2
Percentage of participants who:		
Improved their Total Asset Score	NA	NA
Continued to abstain from AOD <i>(only includes those who reported no drug/alcohol use at program entry)</i>	NA	NA
Reduced their use of AOD <i>(only includes those who were at or above the clinical cutoff score)</i>	NA	NA
Arrested for new law violations	NA	NA

EVALUATION BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

In 2011, six programs serving San Mateo County youth and their families were awarded three-year grants from the San Mateo County Probation Department's allocation of Juvenile Probation and Camps Funding. The Juvenile Probation and Camps Funding Program (JPCF) was developed in response to legislation signed by Governor Schwarzenegger in July 2005 (AB 139, Chapter 74) which appropriated state funds to support a broad spectrum of county Probation services targeting at-risk youth, juvenile offenders and their families. JPCF is administered by the State Controller's Office with the funding amount being dependent upon actual receipts from California Vehicle License fees. After having awarded programs their contracts for the 2011-12 fiscal year, San Mateo learned that they were receiving less JPCF funding than anticipated and was required to reduce contract amounts by one-third. All programs were therefore required to adjust their scope of services for that year. During fiscal year 2012-13, however, 100% of the funds were reinstated, allowing programs to return to their original scope of services.

Applied Survey Research (ASR) was awarded the contract as the evaluator of San Mateo's JPCF programs and also experienced reduced funding from the original proposal. The first year of evaluation was very formative in nature, consisting of an evaluation kick-off meeting to discuss the overall goals and driving evaluation questions, and meetings with each grantee to review program-specific outcomes and finalize the evaluation plan. ASR identified and piloted assessment tools to capture youth development changes (i.e., the Search Institute's Developmental Asset Profile) as well as changes in perception and usage of alcohol and other drugs (i.e., Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Inventory Scale). These assessments were formally launched during fiscal year 2012-2013.

This year's JPCF evaluation report documents:

- Service- and client-level data: number of clients served, the number of units of service and basic client demographics
- Client survey data: pre- and post-survey data captured on the Parent Project and Staying Connected surveys
- Client success stories illustrating the extent to which services impacted youth

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Probation Parent Programs serve Court-ordered or Court-directed probation-referred parents of children eight years old and over. Generally, one parent is required to complete the series (as defined by attending at least eight classes) and the other may also attend. Sessions range in length from two to three hours each. There are two curricula administered by the Parenting Program.

The Parent Project® (www.parentproject.com) is a parent training program designed specifically for parents of strong-willed or out of control teens ages 13-18. The program targets poor school attendance and performance, emotional/behavioral problems, family conflict, runaway behavior, violence, substance abuse, criminal activity, and gang affiliation. The curriculum teaches concrete prevention, identification, and intervention strategies for the most destructive of adolescent behaviors. Parents learn how to increase communication, create positive parent-teen relationships, improve children's school performance, intervene with substance abuse, and apply techniques for active listening and discipline. This is a 10-week program (3-hour groups and 2 hours for the last 4 sessions) taught in English and Spanish. The Parent Project is led by trained, certified facilitators, and parents practice "homework" between groups. Facilitators encourage the group to function independently during the last four weeks. Parents are provided with the UCLA Self-Help Model and encouraged to continue to meet together when the "formal" group ends.

Staying Connected with Your Teen-Prevention Program (Staying Connected) is an educational and skill building program created for families with youth between the ages of 12-18. The goal of the program is to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors that are known to predict later alcohol and other drug use, delinquency, violent behavior, and other behavioral problems in adolescence. The program focuses on strengthening family bonds; establishing clear standards for behavior and helping parents more appropriately manage the behavior of their teens while encouraging their adolescent growth toward independence in the process. The program is 10 weeks in length.

Youth Risk Factors

The families referred to the Parent Programs exhibit risk factors known to significantly influence youth development and delinquency.¹ As indicated during ASR's interview with program staff, a little over half of the parents served by this program are single mothers and about half of the youth have mental health disorders and are at-risk of becoming affiliated or involved in gang activities.

Programmatic Challenges

As noted during ASR's site visit during fiscal year 11-12, Probation's Parent Project would like to eventually increase its staffing to be able to serve more parents in the community.

¹ Please refer to the Local Action Plan 2011-2015 for a list of risk factors identified in the literature, and for a list of needs to be addressed by Local Action Plan strategies.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Profile of Clients Served

From July 2012 through June 2013, a total of 121 unduplicated parents were served by both the Parent Project and the Staying Connected program. The majority of parents who attended one of the two parenting series were females (64%) and most participants were Latinos (71%).

Figure 1. **Client Demographics, FY 2012-2013**

		Sample
Number served		121
Gender	Male	36%
	Female	64%
Ethnicity	Latino	71%
	Caucasian	17%
	Filipino/Pacific Islander	8%
	Asian	3%
	Other/Multi-racial	<1%
Average age of clients		NA

Note: The percentages are based on 121 participants.

Client Services

Parents who entered and exited the program during fiscal year 2012-2013 received services for two months. For all parents served, the average amount of service was 16 hours, and the overall number of units of service for the year totaled 1,783 hours.

Figure 2. **Units of Service, FY 2012-2013**

	Units of service
Mean Units of Service	16.2
Total Units of Service	1,783

Parenting Project Survey Findings

A pre and post-survey was administered to 39 "Parent Project" parents who participated in FY 2012-2013. Each survey item was measured on a 4-point scale, with 1 being "Never," 2 being "Not often," 3 being "Often," and 4 being "Always." As such, a high mean score at post-test reflects a high level of agreement with the statement.

Parents made improvements on nearly every item on the survey, many of which rose to a level of statistical significance. The items that experienced the highest change from pre- to post-test are: *"I write my child notes that say I love him/her," "I have conversations with my child about suicide,"* and *"I hug or kiss my child."*

On the other hand, parents reported an increase in behaviors such as lying and stealing (significantly more at post-test). One possible explanation is that parents may have 'under-reported' on these practices at the start of the program or may not have understood or been aware of these issues prior to participating in the program.

Figure 3. Parent Project Pre/Post Mean Scores

	Pre-test mean score	Post-test mean score	Pre/Post change
I tell my child that I love him/her	3.16	3.36	0.20**
I enforce consequences when my child breaks the rules	2.62	3.11	0.49*
I am able to tell or show my child that I am proud of his/her actions	2.97	3.26	0.29
I hug or kiss my child	2.59	3.13	0.54*
I recognize when my child does something positive	3.26	3.46	0.20
I write my child notes that say I love him/her	1.56	2.22	0.66*
My child yells at me	2.86	3.03	0.17
I yell at my child	3.06	3.11	0.05
My child and I verbally argue	2.89	2.89	---
I am aware of where my child is after school, at night and/or on weekends	3.19	3.03	-0.13
I have conversations with my child about:			
Drugs	3.41	3.63	0.22
Alcohol	3.46	3.50	0.04
Peer pressure	3.14	3.34	0.20
Gangs	3.14	3.24	0.10
Sexual activity	2.63	3.10	0.47*
Depression	2.89	3.22	0.33
Suicide	2.24	2.79	0.55**
Running away	2.61	2.71	0.10
My child and I do things together	2.56	2.65	0.10
I monitor my child's grades	2.88	2.97	0.09
I monitor my child's school attendance	2.97	3.33	0.36**
I listen to my child without interrupting	3.03	3.19	0.16
I check my child's:			
Backpack	2.48	2.79	0.31**
Room	2.84	2.94	0.10
Car	1.75	2.00	0.25
My child:			
Lies	2.55	2.21	-0.34
Cheats	3.10	3.00	-0.10
Steals	3.61	3.35	-0.26**
Complies with his/her curfew	2.79	2.79	---
Complies with house/family rules	2.32	2.74	0.42*
Cuts classes at school	2.93	2.93	---
I pay full attention when my child talks to me	3.42	3.46	0.04
I have house or family rules for my child	3.19	3.19	---
I know what consequences to apply when my child breaks the rules	2.94	3.19	0.25

	Pre-test mean score	Post-test mean score	Pre/Post change
I know who my child's friends are by name	2.65	2.72	0.07
I know how to contact my child's friends and their guardians	2.07	2.31	0.24
I know how my child spends his/her money	2.56	2.75	0.19
I know how my child spends his/her free time	2.94	2.83	-0.11

Note: The sample size varied between 4 and 39. (*)=statistically significant at p<.01; (**)=statistically significant at p<.05.

Staying Connected Survey Findings

Provided next are the findings associated with Staying Connected. Please note that this program’s curriculum does not emphasize all aspects of the Parent Project curriculum, and, as such, some of the items were removed from the survey. A pre and post-survey was administered to 29 “Staying Connected” parents who participated in FY 2012-2013. Each survey item was measured on a 4-point scale, with 1 being “Never,” 2 being “Not often,” 3 being “Often,” and 4 being “Always.” As such, a high mean score at post-test reflects a high level of agreement with the statement.

Staying Connected parents made many gains, but the most significant one was about their increased dialogues with their child about suicide, running away, and depression. Parents were also significantly more aware of their child’s whereabouts.

Conversely, some practices worsened from pre- to post-test, such as “I have house/family rules for my child,” “I have conversations with my child about peer pressure,” and “I know what consequences to apply when my child breaks the rules.” As explained in the section above, some parents may have ‘under-reported’ on these practices at the time they started the program or were not aware of these issues prior to participating in the program.

Figure 4. Staying Connected Pre/Post Mean Scores

	Pre-test mean score	Post-test mean score	Pre/Post change
I tell my child that I love him/her	3.28	3.41	0.13
I enforce consequences when my child breaks the rules	3.11	3.18	0.07
I am able to tell or show my child that I am proud of his/her actions	3.21	3.31	0.1
I recognize when my child does something positive	3.39	3.36	-0.03
My child yells at me	2.50	2.36	-0.14
I yell at my child	2.61	2.68	0.07
My child and I verbally argue	2.58	2.54	-0.04
I am aware of where my child is after school, at night and/or on weekends	2.85	3.15	0.30**
I have conversations with my child about:			
Drugs	3.10	3.21	0.11
Alcohol	3.07	3.14	0.07
Peer pressure	3.00	2.81	-0.19
Gangs	2.79	3.00	0.21
Sexual activity	2.59	2.76	0.17
Depression	1.88	2.58	0.70*
Suicide	1.59	2.44	0.85*
Running away	1.71	2.54	0.83*

	Pre-test mean score	Post-test mean score	Pre/Post change
My child and I do things together	2.46	2.75	0.29
I monitor my child's grades	3.11	3.44	0.33
I monitor my child's school attendance	3.44	3.48	0.04
I listen to my child without interrupting	2.85	2.78	-0.07
I check my child's:			
Backpack	2.56	2.70	0.14
Room	2.96	2.89	-0.07
Car	2.00	2.67	0.67
I pay full attention when my child talks to me	3.29	3.25	-0.04
I have house or family rules for my child	3.21	3.04	-0.17
I know what consequences to apply when my child breaks the rules	3.00	2.89	-0.11
I know how my child spends his/her free time	2.82	3.04	0.22

Note: The sample size varied between 6 and 29. (*) statistically significant at $p < .01$; (**) statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Focus Group Summary

ASR held a focus group with nine program participants, representing seven families. Participants had attended six sessions, and had three more remaining.

What topics did parents learn about while attending the sessions?

- **Drugs** – Parents learned about the side effects of drug and alcohol use; where youth typically hide drugs; the prevalence of drug use at school and in the classroom; and they also learned about the drug culture.
- **Peer pressure** – Parents now understand the level of pressure their child may be under while at school.
- **Gangs** – Parents are now able to recognize the signs of gang involvement or gang association (e.g., colors, clothing).
- **Legal rights for youth** – Parents understand the importance of having their child consult a lawyer prior to talking to the police when an arrest is made.
- **Juvenile justice as a whole** – Parents understand that not all probation officers handle situations similarly. Some probation officers are more lenient than others.

What changes have parents seen in their child's behavior or attitude since attending this program?

- Children become aware of how their behaviors impact the people around them, such as their parents and siblings. "He feels really bad [about seeing his mother come to class] and very guilty."
- Parents have more credibility in the eyes of their child. "My daughter believes me more because I am coming to this class now."
- Children are interested in hearing about what their parents learned during their sessions, which often leads to improved and more frequent parent-child communication.

Parents also shared the following changes that they believe are attributable to their child's experience with the Juvenile Justice System and/or while being on probation:

- Children now understand that there are consequences to their actions.

- Some children become more respectful and humble as a result of their stay in juvenile hall or contact with the system.

Client Vignettes

Probation's Parent Project staff provided the following client vignettes to help illustrate the impact of its services.

Evelyn & Bob – the parents of a 16 year old boy – were court-ordered through their child's probation officer. While the mother was relieved to finally receive some help, the father felt embarrassed and was not happy to have to be there.

Evelyn felt that the program was great. She felt that she got a lot of good information and although she retained a lot of the stuff she learned, she wished that she was able to retain it all. She felt much more confident as a parent and how she deals with her son now.

She learned to stop blaming her son for everything and to accept some blame for how she dealt with her son in the past. She learned that there are things that she and her husband can do differently to discipline and communicate with their non-compliant son.

She is working on trying to stay calm and not lose her cool when her son pushes her buttons. She recognizes that when she loses her temper, nothing gets accomplished. She is also following through with the consequences she gives her son. Prior to the class, she would cave in and her son knew if he argued, he would get his way.

Maria joined the program because her son was placed on Probation. He was using drugs and running away. She was very depressed and anxious. She was very concerned for her son's safety.

As the weeks went on, Maria's mood improved. She began using some of the tools taught in the program and it seemed to have a positive impact on her and her family. She learned the difference between trying to control her son, and making an effort to have a strong influence on him. She also learned how to have effective conversations regarding difficult topics with her son. Additionally, she began to clearly communicate with her son's probation officer. Maria also began to make healthier choices for herself. She no longer engages in loud and unproductive arguments with her family members.

She believes the parenting and communication techniques taught have been beneficial. Also, she appreciated the "sharing" she was able to do with other parents and the facilitators. Plus, she said she was thankful for the supportive environment the facilitator provided and the help with communicating with the probation department.

"It's always nice to know that you are not the only one going through this... In the group I found many other nice people, good, caring and loving parents trying just as hard as we were, with the same issues we were dealing with. There is help for us and I thank Michelle and Jessica for being so supportive."