



# SAN MATEO COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAM  
ANNUAL EVALUATION

**2020 - 2021**



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## About the Researcher

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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## Program Description

The Family Preservation Program (FPP) serves youths 12 to 18 years of age, primarily focusing on youths who have entered the juvenile justice system under specific circumstances. These circumstances typically include recent criminal charges that resulted from behaviors related to significant emotional or mental health issues, escalating familial issues, or a high risk of being placed out-of-home. The program is also appropriate for youths charged with low-level (non-predatory, non-violent) sex offenses, youths experiencing substance abuse issues, or those who have been or are currently exposed to domestic violence. Additionally, the program is appropriate for youths whose families are currently in crisis or are experiencing serious issues that compromise family functioning. All youths in FPP are at high risk for out-of-home placement.

The Probation Department's FPP unit works collaboratively with Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), Child and Family Services (CFS), schools, and other strength-based collateral agencies to provide therapeutic services for youths and their families. Supervision is dictated by the department's Supervision Standards policy, whereby participation in the program is monitored by meeting with the youth on a bi-weekly basis and the parents/legal guardians as often as needed to ensure compliance with counseling services and adherence to Court-orders. Court hearings occur every 90 days to update the Court on the progress made by the youth and the family.

The program's primary goal is to maintain youths in their homes by expanding intensive supervision, flexible support services, and community-based resources. For FY 2020-21 each Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) in the unit had an average caseload of seven youths who experience significant family, emotional, and/or mental health issues. The program offers intensive probation case management and therapeutic interventions by mental health providers.

## Programmatic Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to present many challenges in fiscal year (FY) 2020-21. The services provided to youths had transitioned to virtual Zoom or phone services and this continued through this fiscal year. Some youths and their families did not have access to Zoom teleconferencing or other similar video conferencing platforms. Also, some families found video conferencing less personal and weren't as receptive to counseling. The engagement was more challenging for the youths and their families.

Lastly, field visits resumed in July 2020, after the shelter-in-place (SIP) order was lifted. Unfortunately, a second SIP order was put into place in December 2020, and in-field visits were temporarily put on hold but have since been lifted. During the SIP, DPOs monitored the youths via telephone calls and video conferencing. Currently, DPOs are in the field meeting with the youths and families regularly. DPOs continue to assess the needs of the youths and families with whom they work and provide referrals for services as needed.

## Evaluation Methods

Programs provided by the FPP are funded by San Mateo County Probation's (Probation) Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA). FPP monitors programs and reports client, service, and outcome data to Probation and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect this data are:

**Participants and Services:** Grantee programs collected demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data elements into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.

**Risk Factors:** Grantee programs used the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) to provide a standard measure of risk for youths. This individualized assessment is a widely used criminogenic risk, strengths, and needs assessment tool that assists in the effective and efficient supervision of youths, both in institutional settings and in the community. It has been validated across ethnic and gender groups. The JAIS consists of a brief initial assessment followed by full assessment and reassessment components (JAIS Full Assessment and JAIS Reassessment). The JAIS assessment has two unique form options based on the youth's gender. Probation has elected to administer the JAIS to all youths receiving services in community programs for at-risk and juvenile justice involved youth. The JAIS Girls Risk consists of eight items, and the JAIS Boys Risk consists of ten items. Each assessment yields an overall risk level of 'low,' 'moderate,' or 'high.'

**Outcomes:** Like all JJCPA funded programs, FPP collects data for several justice-related outcomes for program participants. Probation has elected to report these outcomes at 180 days post entry; the reference or comparison group reflects the past year's cohort of program participants to interpret FY 2020-21 outcomes. In FY 2020-21, FPP collected the following outcome measures:

- arrests
- detentions
- probation violations
- court-ordered restitution completion
- court-ordered community service completion

Additionally, FPP tracks progress toward its goal of keeping all youths unified with their families to avoid out-of-home placements.

## Evaluation Findings

### Fiscal Year Highlights

- FPP has experienced a steady decline in the number of youths in the program. In FY 2020-21, 21 youths participated, a drop from 29 youths in FY 2019-20.
- Ninety-four percent of youths assessed had an alcohol or other drug problem at entry, and 59% of youths were suspended or expelled in the last year. Youths with an attendance problem slightly increased to 76% in FY 2020-21.
- FPP served youths across the criminogenic risk spectrum: 42% scored 'low', 25% scored 'moderate', and 33% scored 'high' on the initial JAIS Risk Assessment (n=12). Of the 12 youths with follow-up reassessments, two youths moved out of 'high' risk to 'moderate' and 'low' risk.

### Profile of Youths Served

During FY 2020-21, FPP served 21 youths. All youths (100%) identified as male, and the average age at program entry was 16.7 years old. Over three-quarters (81%) identified as Hispanic/Latino, 14% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5% identified as Black/African American. Youths spent an average of 16.6 months in the program.

**Table 1. Youth Services**

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
<b>Number of Youths Served</b>	61	35	36	29	<b>21</b>
<b>Average Time in the Program (Months)</b>	10.7	13.4	6.8	11.7	<b>16.6</b>

### Risk Indicators

For each youth in the program, FPP evaluated risk indicators upon entry to determine whether youths experienced: 1) an alcohol or other drug problem, 2) a school attendance problem, and 3) suspension or expulsion from school in the past year. In FY 2020-21, 94% of youths had an alcohol or other drug problem at entry, an increase from FY 2019-20, 76% had an attendance problem, a slight increase from 72% in the prior fiscal year. Fifty-nine percent had been suspended/expelled when entering, a decrease from 66% in FY 2019-20.

**Table 2. Risk Indicators at Program Entry**

RISK INDICATORS AT PROGRAM ENTRY	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
Alcohol or Other Drug Problem	39%	74%	59%	72%	<b>94%</b>
Attendance Problem	72%	78%	73%	72%	<b>76%</b>
Suspension/Expulsion in Past Year	67%	70%	64%	66%	<b>59%</b>

*FY 2020-21 n=16-21.*

JAIS Assessment data were available for 12 youths (Table 3). Each youth completed an intake and follow-up JAIS Reassessment. The results of the initial JAIS Assessment indicate that FPP served youths across the criminogenic risk spectrum: 42% scored 'low', 25% scored 'moderate', and 33% scored 'high'.

**Table 3. JAIS Risk Levels at Initial Assessment**

JAIS RISK LEVELS	INITIAL ASSESSMENT
Low	42%
Moderate	25%
High	33%

*JAIS Assessment n=12.*

When looking at the smaller sample of 12 youths with matched data from initial assessment to reassessment (Table 4), two youths at reassessment changed their risk classification. Two moved out of the 'high' risk category into 'low' and 'moderate' risk.

**Table 4. JAIS Risk Levels at Initial Assessment and Reassessment**

JAIS RISK LEVELS	INITIAL ASSESSMENT	REASSESSMENT
Low	42%	50%
Moderate	25%	33%
High	33%	17%

*JAIS Assessment n=12; JAIS Reassessment n=12. The percentages may not sum up to 100% due to rounding.*

## Justice Outcomes

The table below presents justice-related outcomes for the 21 youths in the FPP program whose six-month post-entry evaluation milestone occurred in FY 2020-21. As presented below, the percent of youths arrested for a new violation, and youths with detention decreased compared to FY 2019-20, while the percent of youths with probation violations slightly increased from the previous fiscal year (from 46% to 52%).

**Table 5. Justice Outcomes**

JUSTICE OUTCOMES	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
<b>Youths Arrested for a New Violation</b>	N/A	36%	58%	58%	<b>48%</b>
<b>Youths with Detentions</b>	72%	76%	75%	88%	<b>71%</b>
<b>Youths with Probation Violations</b>	N/A	48%	50%	46%	<b>52%</b>
<b>Completion of Restitution</b>	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Completion of Community Service</b>	33%	40%	*	*	*

*FY 2020-21 Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation n=21, Youths with Detentions n=21, Youths with Probation Violations n=21, Completion of Restitution n=4, Completion of Community Service n=4. \*Indicates that no youths were in that category in the fiscal year, or data were suppressed due to sample size below five.*

### Program Specific Outcomes

The central goal of FPP is to keep youths in their homes. Importantly, of the 21 youths who participated in the program during FY 2020-21, no youth was given an out-of-home placement order.

**Table 6. Out-of-Home Placements**

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OUTCOMES	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21
<b>Out-of-home placement</b>	5%	9%	3%	10%	<b>0%</b>

### Client Stories

Each year, FPP staff provide client stories to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. The following are two client stories provided by FPP for FY 2020-21 (Tables 7-8).

**Table 7. FPP Client Story #1**

<b>Name of Client</b>	Raul
<b>Age and Gender</b>	17, male
<b>Reason for Referral</b>	Raul came to Probation when he was 15, and he was placed in the intensive supervision unit. Within six months, he was ordered into the Family Preservation Program. Raul did not have respect for the property of others as he had several petitions filed from August of 2018 to August of 2020 related to motor vehicle burglary, petty theft, attempted grand theft, and assault. Raul is also a Norteño gang member associate.

<p><b>Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program</b></p>	<p>Raul was a sophomore at a comprehensive high school and was deficient in credits. He was failing all his classes and was being sent to the principal’s office at least once a week on matters related to disruption in class, causing a disturbance, and not being prepared for class. His mother felt like giving up on him because he was always in trouble at school, at home, and in the community. Raul was reserved with the information he provided to Probation. He had a strained relationship with his stepfather and there was little to no communication with his mother.</p>
<p><b>Activity Engagement and Consistency</b></p>	<p>The family was referred to Behavioral Health and Recovery Services for intensive in-home family therapy. Their meetings were consistent with the clinician once a week for one year. The family completed the required sessions; however, they asked to continue for a second round and beyond. Raul was referred to StarVista for individual drug and alcohol counseling. He completed the program and continued meeting with his therapist voluntarily. The consistent weekly meetings and accountability from Probation also helped him stay focused and on track, in addition to bi-monthly family meetings with the probation officer. This officer referred him to the Fresh Lifelines for Youth Program, where he continues to be an active participant.</p>
<p><b>Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program</b></p>	<p>Raul transferred to Gateway Community School voluntarily, and his attendance has been exceptional, even during the pandemic. He has accumulated the necessary high school credits to transfer back to his comprehensive high school, as a senior, or he may choose to stay at Gateway and possibly graduate a semester early. Raul actively sought employment and was hired at Party City, where he works approximately 25 to 30 hours a week. He continues to engage in treatment, and he consistently meets with his therapist once a week.</p>
<p><b>What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program</b></p>	<p>As a result of his participation in the program, Raul indicated, “even though I didn’t have a choice about therapy, and sometimes it was boring, it was also good to know that someone was always available to listen.”</p>
<p><b>What the Client is Doing Differently in Their Life Now as a Result of the Program</b></p>	<p>Currently, Raul has had no police contact in over a year, and he stated, “as time goes by, your mindset will change. I have a job and a savings account.”</p>
<p><b>The Value of the Program in the Client’s Words</b></p>	<p>Raul stated that the value of “this program is primarily for kids who have problems controlling their behavior and need a space to talk about their life.”</p>

**Table 8. FPP Client Story #2**

<p><b>Name of Client</b></p>	<p>Blaze</p>
<p><b>Age and Gender</b></p>	<p>16, male</p>

<p><b>Reason for Referral</b></p>	<p>He was ordered into the Family Preservation Program (FPP) by the Court after an incident within the home. Blaze was referred for that offense but had many other issues within the home.</p>
<p><b>Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program</b></p>	<p>When Blaze was initially ordered into the FPP Program, he presented as someone with low self-esteem, and his confidence was noticeably low. During their meetings, he would not make eye contact and held his head down. He was someone whom his probation officer knew would benefit from services. The officer referred Blaze for individual counseling, anger management, family therapy, and group counseling.</p>
<p><b>Activity Engagement and Consistency</b></p>	<p>Blaze is currently participating in therapeutic services. Initially, given his low self-esteem and discomfort engaging with people, he was very resistant to therapy. He would frequently miss his scheduled counseling sessions, and he would engage minimally when he did participate.</p>
<p><b>Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program</b></p>	<p>After a lot of work with Blaze, he is now actively engaging in therapy, his school attendance and grades have improved, and his overall adjustment in FPP has been satisfactory. He now maintains eye contact during meetings, he shows up in counseling in a productive manner, and he has found his voice.</p>
<p><b>What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program</b></p>	<p>The program has taught Blaze that there is accountability for his actions, and most importantly, he is in control of his actions.</p>
<p><b>What the Client is Doing Differently in Their Life Now as a Result of the Program</b></p>	<p>He is now mindful of his triggers and puts forth the effort to govern himself accordingly. He now plays football and engages with his teammates in a healthy manner.</p>
<p><b>The Value of the Program in the Client’s Words</b></p>	<p>Blaze said the program has impacted him by, “helping me control my feelings with my mom and everybody else too. Like, I use to get really angry and irritated. For example, I use to get irritated when my therapist would call me. My anger issues are really not as bad as they use to be. I have more patience.”</p>