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Summary of San Mateo County Probation Department's Risk Prevention Program

Issue

What is the status of the San Mateo County Probation Department's Risk Prevention Program?

Summary

The Risk Prevention Program (RPP) was developed by the Probation Department in response to a request by school districts for direct support on school campuses.

The Risk Prevention Program is innovative and serves the community's need for safety and protection by providing intervention services to youth not yet under the court's jurisdiction and their families.

The Grand Jury believes the Risk Prevention Program is successful and effective. It is an extremely valuable program with proven results and deserves continued support.



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What is the status of the San Mateo County Probation Department's Risk Prevention Program (RPP)?

Background

Formerly named the Community Outreach Program (COPS), the Risk Prevention Program was developed by the Probation Department in response to a request by school districts for direct support on school campuses. Police departments also felt that closer working relationships with the Probation Department in the community would greatly enhance efforts toward prevention and suppression of juvenile crime and delinquency. Considered a pilot program, it ran from 1994 to 1996 in the central area of San Mateo County.

The original partners in the project were the San Mateo Union High School District consisting of seven high schools and four middle schools and the cities of San Mateo, Burlingame, Hillsborough, Foster City, Millbrae, and San Bruno.

Judged a success by the Peninsula Community Foundation Report of 1997 and after receiving funding from the Comprehensive Services Act, the program was expanded to the northern and southern parts of the county.

Investigation

The San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) interviewed

- School teachers and administrators from every participating school district
- Probation Department managers
- Probation Department case workers
- Police Chiefs

- Police officers

The Grand Jury also delved into the history of the program and its funding, using County records, police memos of understanding, Probation Department operating procedures, and letters written by schools and school districts.

Findings

- The mission of the RPP is to serve the needs of school administrators, teachers, staff, and the students.¹
- The goals of the RPP include:
 - Management of at-risk students in San Mateo County
 - Supervision and monitoring minors who are on informal probation and those on formal court probation
 - Reduction of crime and violence on campus
 - Minimizing drug and weapons possession
- The duties of probation officers involved in the Risk Prevention Program include:
 - Assist in all aspects of an investigation resulting from student misbehavior
 - Participating in incident review meetings
 - Participating in site truancy meetings
 - Functioning as liaison to police departments
 - Leading the district gang intervention program
 - Being a presence on campus
 - Conflict resolution and violence prevention
 - Cooperating with school officials when requested
 - Involving parents
- All persons interviewed believe the program is highly effective. It has an excellent reputation with police, school officials, and students. School officials unanimously described the officers detailed to the schools as competent, caring, and effective.
- Officials from the County Probation Department, the Sheriff, 15 police chiefs, and seven school superintendents wrote that when a probation officer is visible on-campus²
 - Positive, beneficial intervention is possible
 - Gang activity on campus and in the community drops
 - Violence on campus declines

¹ Taken from the mission statement of the San Mateo County Probation Department.

² Taken from page 3 of a letter to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, dated July 12, 2003, and signed by 15 police chiefs or their representatives and seven school district superintendents.

- Possession and sales of drugs on campus decreases
- Truancy decreases between 66% and 72%
- A cost-sharing formula between schools, cities, and the Probation Department was adopted in 2000. In July 2000, the cities of Redwood City, San Carlos and Belmont opted not to participate in the cost-sharing formula citing philosophical differences over the cost-sharing scheme. Later, Atherton, Menlo Park, and East Palo Alto also withdrew.
- In June 2003, the Board of Supervisors approved three additional Deputy Probation Officers for the south county with cost sharing among cities and school districts (RPP III). The approval was a direct result of the Disproportionate Minority Confinement Report and the increased gang violence and delinquency in the southern portion of the county. The school districts of Sequoia Union, Redwood City, and Ravenswood along with the cities of Redwood City, Menlo Park, Atherton and East Palo Alto committed to finance one-half of the cost of the three Deputy Probation Officers (approximately \$158,480) with the balance borne by the Probation Department. Schools serviced under this arrangement are: Menlo Atherton High, Sequoia High, Kennedy and Hoover Middle Schools; Cesar Chavez, San Francisco 49er Academy, Belle Haven, Aspire Charter School, East Palo Alto Charter School, and East Palo Alto High School.
- At present, the RPP is funded approximately 70% by the County and 30% by the various municipalities and school districts. All of the participants believe the program is effective in preventing delinquency and reducing gang impact; however, because the various municipalities and school districts have disparate funding, some are having difficulty finding the money to participate.

Conclusions

- The Risk Prevention Program is innovative and serves the community's need for safety and protection by providing intervention services to youth not yet under the court's jurisdiction and their families.
- With the County Probation Department funding 70%, the program is an economic bargain for the cities and participating school districts.
- The Grand Jury believes the Risk Prevention Program is effective. It is an extremely valuable program with proven results and deserves continued support.