

TRANSFER OF
KNOWLEDGE
WORKSHOP

✓
**WILDERNESS
INTERVENTION**

101121

MENT OF THE YOUTH AUTHORITY
OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLANNING

**U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice**

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The inclusion of programs described in this publication, other than those directly administered by the Department of the Youth Authority, does not necessarily constitute an endorsement by the State of California or the Department of the Youth Authority.

FOREWORD

Forty people representing all areas of the justice system attended a Transfer of Knowledge Workshop at Micke Grove Park in Lodi, California on May 14, 15 and 16, 1984. This gathering was one of a series of Transfer of Knowledge workshops sponsored by the California Youth Authority and the Office of Criminal Justice Planning. The presentation was designed to encourage discussion, facilitate the exchange of knowledge, and provide a forum for technological development in this important area.

The Department of the Youth Authority wishes to thank the Chief Probation Officers' Association, Contra Costa County Probation Department, Sutter County Probation Department, San Diego Sheriff's Office, San Francisco Police Department, VisionQuest, Pacific Crest Outward Bound, and the Office of Criminal Justice Planning for their support and help in making this Workshop possible.

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This handbook draws from the expertise shared at this Workshop.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Philosophy and Theory	3
Program Models	7-14
Pacific Crest Outward Bound — Directive Program: A Private, non-profit Organization	7
Wilderness Experience Program: Contra Costa County Probation Department	8
Sheriff's Juvenile Diversion Camp: San Diego Sheriff's Office	9
Wilderness Adventure Youth Program: San Francisco City Police Department	10
VisionQuest: A Private, for-profit Organization	11
Operational Issues	13
Conclusion	15
Appendices	17
A. Program	19
B. Steering Committee/Staff	21
C. Participant List	22

INTRODUCTION

"We must always make a place in our society for our troubled youth. We must give them a chance to wander into the wild places and see for themselves how their lives might change."

*Chuck Sipes
Project SUN*

America was founded in the wilderness by people seeking a better, more independent way of life. A demanding teacher, the wilderness challenges those who would survive to draw on physical and mental strengths that often go undeveloped in the confines of city life. Home to Native American cultures, the wilderness is the repository of spiritual traditions that emphasize respect and harmony with the universe — values that have been lost in the complexities of urban civilization.

It is from this honored tradition that Wilderness Intervention programs for troubled youth have been developed. Through these programs, the complexities of 20th century are put aside temporarily so that youth-at-risk can learn new, positive behavior that will increase self-esteem and thus enhance their chances for successful participation in society.

Wilderness programs combine proven casework intervention strategies with the challenges of wilderness survival to achieve swift individual growth and behavior change. Common to all outdoor programs is the belief that the wilderness is a natural laboratory that provides opportunities for:

- risk or perceived risk
- stress
- learning new behavior
- neutralizing ineffective, ritualistic behavior
- providing immediate feedback for decisions
- building self-esteem

- teaching responsibility
- building leadership, team work and trust
- male and female cooperation
- a rite of passage to adulthood.

Several Wilderness/Outdoor Program models are currently in operation in California, ranging from elaborate wagon trains and wilderness camps to one-day ropes courses in a local parking lot. All of these programs share the belief that by creating a perceived risk that requires trust, teamwork, communication, thinking and physical activity, participants can learn new behaviors more quickly than with traditional methods.

The California Youth Authority recognizes the value of Wilderness/Outdoor Intervention Programs as an important new technological development that can be used either as an alternative to, or in conjunction with, existing correctional programming. This handbook offers an overview of some of the major issues associated with the implementation of such programs, as well as descriptions of model programs already in operation.

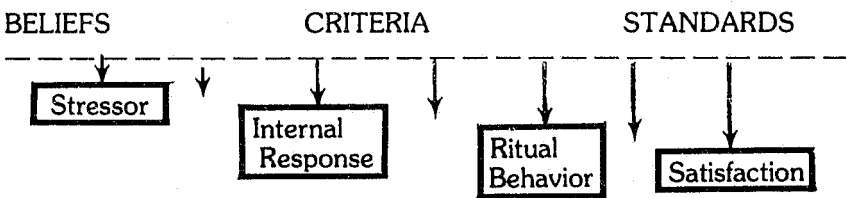
PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY

A Model For Understanding The Outdoor Experience*

Why do Wilderness/Outdoor Intervention Programs work?

Research on these programs, as well as subjective reports from their developers, indicate that the rate of behavior change is quicker and the recidivism rate lower among youth who complete wilderness programs than among those who receive more traditional treatment methods.

What, then, are the operational factors in wilderness intervention? Consider this model, which has as its premise that a change in the smallest unit of the process generates changes in the whole process.



The *stressor* is a perceived or actual risk, a task we may perceive is beyond our capabilities. How the task is perceived is a function of the *belief system* we bring to the situation. Our *internal response* to the stressor can manifest itself in a number of ways: shaking legs, butterflies in the stomach, increased heart beat, etc. Our natural reaction to these responses (which we associate with the stressor) is to bring ourselves back to a state of homeostasis, or, using the model, a state of *satisfaction*. Our personal history dictates what kind of *ritualistic behavior* will achieve that state of satisfaction.

The ritual may take many forms. It can be expressed as a fight or flight phenomena. With youth at risk the ritual may include making excuses, crying, blaming, regressing to childlike behavior, running away, or other acting-out behaviors. It also might be smoking, eating, or using drugs. Our *belief system*, *criteria* and *standards* will determine both our reaction to the stressor as well as the ritual behavior we will use to reach satisfaction.

Wilderness intervention programs place participants in stressful situations with perceived risk which trigger anxiety-related internal responses. But unlike in familiar settings, the participant's ritual behavior will not bring him or her to a state of satisfaction. Crying, running away, or other acting out behaviors have immediate negative consequences in the

*Viewpoint of Charles (Chuck) Paioni, Chairman, Youth at Risk Network.

wilderness; e.g., meals are not prepared, gear is lost, personal comfort is sacrificed. Thus, other behaviors must be learned quickly to ensure satisfaction.

When new, positive behaviors are tested and mastered, the participant's belief system, standards and criteria are changed, too. Self-esteem is increased, and a willingness to abandon old, ineffective behavior grows.

Interventions can be made at two points in the process. First, participants can learn to transform their internal experience of anxiety into a source of power. This process is similar to Aikido, which teaches one to respond to a stressor in a relaxed yet vigilant manner.

Second, program leaders can encourage participants to change ineffective ritual behavior. Whether the ritual is verbal (e.g., "I can't do it," "I'm tired," "I lost my shoe,") or behavioral (running away, truancy, vandalism) the youth may try to use the same coping mechanism in the wilderness setting as he or she does at home. At home, the incentive to change negative behavior is not great, since meaningful feedback and reinforcement is often either absent or delayed. In the wilderness, risking instead of running, cooperating instead of fighting, thinking instead of acting impulsively brings immediate personal reward.

The ultimate effect of this change process is the expansion of the participant's belief system. Most troubled youth carry with them an ingrained, limited belief system acquired from their families, peers and their own experimentation. A successful wilderness experience provides at the least a powerful challenge to a restricted belief system, and at best may alter permanently a young person's perception of what he or she really can do.

The Intangibles:

If communications and learning theory provide easy ways to diagram the changes that occur in wilderness program participants, they still cannot capture the most important elements of the experience. Concepts more at home in philosophy, poetry and spiritual disciplines are crucial factors underlying wilderness intervention.

The concept of *rites of passage*, utilized most explicitly by the VisionQuest program but inherent in all wilderness interventions, is a powerful element of change. Young people "stuck" in childish, maladaptive behaviors can experience a profound "coming-of-age" as they engage in timeless, survival-oriented rituals in the wilderness. Successful completion of any wilderness/outdoor program can be experienced as a kind of rite of passage — a mastering of important skills

that reinforce a sense of competence and connectedness to others who have come before.

Balance is learned through wilderness survival. The need for play and work, control and trust, assertion and cooperation are lessons the wilderness teaches. The proper role of adult and child, the mutuality of responsibility between the two, and among young people themselves are learned. Too much or too little can mean discomfort and possibly danger in the wilderness.

And finally, the wilderness renders preconceived biases and barriers meaningless, and offers the participant a chance to feel his or her oneness with each other and with nature. The wilderness is the great equalizer, offering everyone the same advantages as well as challenges. Distinctions among races, ages, sex and economic background are blurred as the importance of teamwork and trust are learned.

PROGRAM MODELS

Pacific Crest Outward Bound — Directive Program: A private, non-profit organization.

Private: To build confidence, self-esteem and increased sense of personal responsibility through an intensive wilderness experience.

Population: Males and females between the ages of 15 and 17 who are experiencing serious behavioral or relationship problems, and/or who are having initial contact with the juvenile justice system.

Further criteria:

- 1) *Criminal:* Individuals on probation or in detention are appropriate. Those with a long history of criminal activity, chronic offenses or who have had lengthy institutional stays are inappropriate.
- 2) *Psychological:* Need to exhibit a sense of right and wrong, or be responsive to concerns of others. Those with sociopathic behavior patterns or histories of physical violence are not appropriate.
- 3) *Alcohol and drugs:* Individuals with physical dependency on alcohol or drugs are not appropriate.
- 4) *Academic:* Dropouts or students with poor school performance are appropriate. Learning disabilities are considered on an individual basis. Special education students with low intellectual abilities may be inappropriate.
- 5) *Motivational:* Those poorly motivated to achieve at home or in school are appropriate, as are those with low motivation to attend the program.
- 6) *Family situation:* Runaways are appropriate, as are those who have problems with parents, step-parents or siblings.

Program Content: A demanding 28-day course conducted either in the desert environment of Joshua Tree National Monument or the mountains of the Sierra Nevada.

Activities include backpacking, mountaineering, rock climbing and rope courses. During the course, students participate in planning and carrying out course activities as both team leader and member. As in all Outward Bound courses, students are presented with a series of increasingly difficult challenges that are geared to the emotional and social resources of the group. Stress is kept to an understandable level, and challenges are met with success rather than frustration. Honest and sometimes confrontive feedback from staff is an important ingredient of the experience.

Parents' involvement is important in the Outward Bound Program. They are invited to participate in a half-day orientation at the beginning of the course, and a two-day seminar at the end. During this final seminar, families learn about their child's experience, and often make new agreements about their relationships and behaviors which can create a more positive environment at home.

Staff: Each patrol of 10 students is accompanied by three staff members, and is backed by a Chief Instructor who provides supervision and assistance on an intermittent basis. Staff must meet the following minimum requirements:

- two years' experience in outdoor experiential education;
- two years' experience with problem behavior clients;
- three years' wilderness experience;
- Bachelor's Degree;
- current First Aid and CPR certification.

For further information contact:

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Wilderness Experience Program: Contra Costa County Probation Department

Purpose: To expose underprivileged urban youth to a mountain experience that will teach them new ways to deal with the problems of urban living.

Population: Groups of seven selected youth under the supervision of the Contra Costa County Probation Department.

Program Content: Four-day backpacking trips in the Sierras, with a public service work project at the end of each trip. Six trips are taken each summer, and a 10-day, 90-mile trip is taken at the end of the summer by the 10 best probationers from the previous trips.

Staff and support: An interagency approach is used. The County provides direct support through equipment (vans and cars), space and office supplies for program staging, and partial salaries for probation

officers supervising the program. The local YMCA covers insurance costs and logistical expertise. Community volunteers accompany the trips as well as provide preparation support. Funds come from community contributions and donations from local businesses and civic groups.

Each group of seven youth is accompanied by one probation officer and one community volunteer.

Benefits:

- 1) Improved rapport between probationers and officers;
- 2) Lasting friendships among participants;
- 3) A sense for "inner strength" and increased self-esteem.

For further information contact:

Jerry Telles, Deputy Probation Officer
Contra Costa County Probation Department
2525 Stanwell Dr.
Concord, CA 94520
Telephone: (415) 671-4028

Sheriff's Juvenile Diversion Camp: San Diego County Sheriff's Office

Purpose:

- 1) To enhance self-image;
- 2) To develop a positive relationship and communication between "cops and kids";
- 3) To offer alternatives to the behavior that got participants in trouble.

Population: Selected youth who have had contact with the San Diego County Sheriff's Office. Camp accommodates a maximum of 50, with an equal mixture of boys and girls aged 14 to 17. Participants have been involved in a range of non-violent offenses, but most have attitude problems towards authority figures. Some are selected because they need a temporary change in environment for therapy to begin.

Location: Boy Scout Camp Mataguay near Lake Henshaw in San Diego County. Camp includes separate dormitories for males and females, staff quarters, a camp fire ring, and a lodge building with modern kitchen facilities.

Program Content: Three- and four-day weekend camps are held during summer and winter. Participants are divided into groups of eight —

four boys and four girls — which are supervised by a Diversion Officer, and one male and one female counselor. Activities that require problem-solving skills, encourage leadership and cooperation, and which present controlled risk are used. A comprehensive rope course is used for both summer and winter camps. Other activities include the Swinging Log, Tension Traverse, an eleven-foot wall, and two Zip Lines of different lengths.

Staff and support: Staff is primarily volunteers from the Sheriff's Department; 90% are sworn deputies. The project is funded by a variety of sources including the Reserve Deputies Association, the Frontier Optimists Club, and the San Diego Deputy Sheriff's Association. Food is donated by restaurants including Wendy's and McDonald's.

Benefits: The major benefit has been improved relationships between campers and deputies. Improved school performance has been noted, and many parents report positive changes at home. Fewer than 10% of the campers have been rearrested.

For further information contact:

Sgt. Ray Root, San Diego County Sheriff's Office
222 West C Street
P.O. Box 2991
San Diego, CA 92112
Telephone: (619) 236-2876

Wilderness Adventure Youth Program: San Francisco City Police Dept.

Purpose: To teach underprivileged youth-at-risk new wilderness skills that improve self-confidence; and to show police officers in a different, more positive role.

Population: City of San Francisco youth at risk, between the ages of 13 and 18.

Program Content: A wide variety of programs are offered:

- 1) **Rope course:** A permanent fixture located at Fort Miley in San Francisco, built and maintained by San Francisco/San Mateo 4-H and the Urban Pioneer Program at McAtteer High School. A prerequisite for participation in all other program elements. Includes a high and low rope course followed by a barbeque. One day long.

- 2) *Backpacking trips*: A seven-day trip in Yosemite and a five-day trip to Pt. Reyes are the backbone of this program. Thirty trips involving 24 minors in two groups of twelve, accompanied by three staff, are conducted each year.
- 3) *Sailing*: Four sailing trips each year, involving 12 youths each trip with two staff. Three of the trips are in San Francisco Bay and one involves an overnight trip on the open sea.
- 4) *Rock climbing*: Four courses are offered each year, involving 20 minors and three staff at either Glen Park or Mt. Tamalpais.
- 5) *Whitewater rafting*: Two expeditions each year down the American River, involving 34 minors and four staff each trip.
- 6) *Ski trips*: Two three-day cross-country trips involving 14 minors and three staff are taken each year to Yosemite.
- 7) *Christmas and Thanksgiving in Yosemite*: Three three-day trips are taken to Yosemite over the holidays, involving a total of 152 minors and 20 officers.
- 8) *Community Work Project and Picnic*: Once a year program participants accomplish a community work project. In 1983, 125 minors and ten police officers completed a one-day clean-up of San Francisco beaches.

Staff and support: Two full-time police officers coordinate this program which makes extensive use of volunteers, both police officers and youth. Funding comes from a variety of sources including the San Francisco Police Officers' Association, The Yosemite Institute, as well as other private and public donations and grants.

The program has grown from 300 youths in 1981 to 1,346 in 1983.

For further information contact:

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San Francisco, CA 94103
Telephone: (415) 553-1348

VisionQuest: A private, for-profit organization

Purpose: To give troubled, angry youths a chance to undergo a "rite of passage" from childhood to adulthood, thus restructuring their outlook towards society.

Population: Youngsters for whom all traditional approaches have failed, particularly those institutionalized in mental health or correctional systems. Includes multiple offenders and the "hard to place."

Program Content: A visual revival of America's past, VisionQuest recreates a vanished culture built on cooperation, self-discipline and the work ethic. Underneath this veneer lies a well-considered approach to working with troubled youth, in which participants become more amenable to therapeutic intervention.

VisionQuest programs include group homes, the HomeQuest (with youth remaining in their own homes), specialized learning centers, wagon trains, sailing programs, wilderness camps and other high-impact programs.

While individual needs are considered, youth usually begin their placement in either the Wilderness Camp or Wagon Train. Trains run continuously, and a youth enters the program for a specified number of miles — usually around 2,000, which translates to three or four months. Life on a Wagon Train is rigorous, with a tightly structured daily routine that is closely allied to the youth's treatment.

Staff and youths are organized into teepee "families" of eight to twelve youths and four to six staff. Each family is responsible for a wagon, mule team, complement of riding stock, harness, tack and equipment. A family earns its way into driving the front wagon by consistently performing well in its responsibilities.

The family teepee is the basic treatment and learning unit of the Wagon Train. While the youths travel, they communicate regularly with their natural families. Staff encourages family participation in counseling services along the way.

Working with animals is the key to treatment on the Wagon Train. Without the animals the train would not move; but even more important, youths soon learn they cannot "con" a stubborn mule in the same way they have manipulated people in the past. Withdrawn youth who have had difficulty developing healthy relationships with people can learn to relate more positively through responsibility caring for an animal. The absence of verbal language offers the youngster an opportunity, often for the first time, to learn gentleness, caring and discipline.

An Individual Educational Plan is developed for each youth. Student progress towards goals is discussed in weekly staffings by the program team. A formal multi-disciplinary staffing is held at three-month intervals during which changes in the IEP are made.

For further information contact:

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OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Wilderness/Outdoor Intervention programs are characterized by a complicated new technology that require staff to have an extensive background and training in basic wilderness and survival training skills. If concerned agencies choose to use this program area, professional help should be sought before attempting to implement a program model.

Corrections would have three basic options in developing a wilderness/outdoor intervention program. These options are 1) start on own, under their own department and staff, 2) contract for individual placement with an outside agency, and 3) contract out for the whole program. Whichever option is chosen, a successful program will have as its basic component the effective management of risk. The following issues and concerns are integral to managing that risk effectively and are directly related to the implementation of a Wilderness/Outdoor Intervention Program.

1. **Safety:** Perhaps the number one implementation issue, ensuring participants' and staff's safety is a concern that bears directly on almost every other aspect of program implementation. Considerations include:

a.) A *Procedures Manual* which spells out checks and balances, standards of care and equipment, contingency plans, etc. A well thought out manual can anticipate many situations that require specific actions to avoid accident or injury.

b.) *Troubleshooting* equipment, terrain and procedures before each trip or outing. This is part of good planning, and involves consideration of all the "what ifs" that staff could conceive of.

c.) *Provision of backup equipment and personnel* that is readily accessible in case of emergency.

d.) *Adequate preparation of participants* regarding potential emergency situations, health hazards, necessary safety precautions.

2. **Training:** Staff should be experienced in both outdoor/wilderness skills, as well as working with troubled youth. First Aid, CPR and EMT training is necessary, depending on the duration of the trip. Ongoing staff training is essential.

3. **Adequate staffing:** Most programs recommend a ratio of no more than 5 participants per staff member, and usually fewer. Experienced supervisory personnel should be available to staff for planning, evaluation and emergencies. And, staff should be monitored and regularly relieved to avoid burnout.

4. **Adequate screening of participants:** The goals of the program dictate the type of person accepted. Criteria should be established for participant screening, and the program designed to accommodate that population. Straying outside those criteria will strain the ability of staff and possibly endanger the group.

5. **Adequate insurance coverage** for participants and staff.

Other important issues to consider are:

- Participants whenever possible should to some degree *want* to join the program. It should be the more attractive alternative available.
- Co-ed trips seem to be more effective than uni-sex programs.
- Family participation, whenever possible, is extremely valuable, both in the planning stages and after the program is completed.
- Programs should remain flexible, and stay open to experimenting with a variety of activities. "Falling in love" with one type of intervention shifts the focus away from the participants' needs.

CONCLUSION

The wilderness offers a compacted environment where the complexities of modern civilization are reduced to a minimum. In such an environment, stressful situations involving risk, or perceived risk, can be created to give young people a chance to change behavior patterns and learn new skills that lead to increased self-esteem.

By carefully managing risk, a Wilderness/Outdoor Intervention Program provides immediate feedback on decisions, and teaches responsibility, leadership, teamwork, trust and cooperation.

The careful management of risk requires a method to ensure safety at all program levels, through thorough staff training, planning, codification of procedures, care of equipment, and consideration of potential liability.

Wilderness/Outdoor Intervention Programs offer a rich program resource which can be used as a dispositional alternative by judges, probation, law enforcement and corrections. These programs can stand alone, or be used as a part of a larger system in both the community and institutional settings.

APPENDICES

WILDERNESS INTERVENTION WORKSHOP

PROGRAM

First Day — May 14, 1984

- 11:00-12:00 Registration
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch
- 1:00-1:05 Welcome — Gerald S. Buck, Chief Probation Officer
Contra Costa County
- 1:05-1:30 Keynote - James Rowland, Director, California Youth Authority
- 1:30-2:30 Warm Up and Introduction Exercises
Charles Paioni and Gail Martin-Mausser
- 2:30-3:30 Panel on the History, Philosophy and Purpose of Wilderness Intervention

Charles Paioni, Children-At-Risk
Brad Childs, Director, New Safaris
Chuck Sipes, SUN
Bob Burton, Chairman, Board of Directors, VisionQuest
Pat Feeney, Associate Director, Pacific Crest Outward Bound
Gail Martin-Mausser, California Wilderness Training
- 3:30-3:45 Break
- 3:45-5:00 Panel on the History, Philosophy and Purpose of Wilderness Intervention
(continued from 3:30)
- 6:00-7:00 Social
- 7:00-9:00 Barbeque

Second Day — May 15, 1984

- 8:00-10:00 Survival Under Nature (Inside)

Ruth Kranovich, Superintendent, O. H. Close School
Chuck Sipes, Youth Counselor, SUN
Don Hoffman, Parole Agent, SUN
- 10:00-10:15 Break
- 10:15-11:40 Outward Bound and Wilderness Experiences

Pat Feeney, Associate Director, Pacific Crest Outward Bound
Jerry Telles, Deputy Probation Officer, Contra Costa County
- 11:40-12:10 Lunch

12:10-1:00 Outdoor Programs by Law Enforcement
Sgt. Ray Root, San Diego County Sheriff's Office
Pat Root, San Diego County Sheriff's Office
Walt Scott, San Francisco City Police Department
Brenda Walker, San Francisco City Police Department

1:00-5:00 OceanQuest, VisionQuest Wagon Train, and Camps
Jake Devonshire, Director, Wilderness Camps
Tim O'Sullivan, Wagon Master
Steve Rogers, Executive Director, VisionQuest
Jim Yester, Director, Wilderness Programs

5:00-8:00 Campfire

Third Day — May 16, 1984

8:30-11:30 Ropes Course — California Wilderness Training
George Martin-Mausser, Coordinator
Gail Martin-Mausser, California Wilderness Training
Brad Childs, New Safaris
Charles Paioni, Children-At-Risk
Chuck Sipes, SUN

11:30-Noon Discussion — Ropes Course

Noon-1:00 Lunch

1:00-2:45 Panel on Operational Issues
Pat Feeney, Pacific Crest, Outward Bound
Phyllis Yester, Administrative Director, East Coast VisionQuest
Jerry Telles, Deputy Probation Officer, Contra Costa County
Don Hoffman, Survival Under Nature
Gail Martin-Mausser, California Wilderness Training
Charles Paioni, Moderator

2:45-3:00 Break

3:00-4:00 Work Groups

FACILITATORS

Charles Paioni
Rod Haas
Don Hoffman
Chuck Sipes
Bill Rogers

4:00 Closure

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WILDERNESS INTERVENTIONS
"Transfer of Knowledge Workshop"

May 14-16, 1984
Lodi, California

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