

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL  
EVALUATION OF PREVENTION  
FINAL REPORT**

124559

**National Council on Crime and Delinquency  
Research Center, San Francisco  
June, 1981**

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U.S. Department of Justice  
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NATIONAL COUNCIL ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY  
RESEARCH CENTER, SAN FRANCISCO  
JUNE, 1981

PREPARED UNDER GRANT NUMBERS 77-NI-99-0008 AND 77-JN-99-0007 FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION, OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION, LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
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NATIONAL EVALUATION OF PREVENTION FINAL REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes a national evaluation of the largest funded delinquency prevention program in American history. More than 20 million dollars went to 168 private sector youth agencies in 68 cities across the nation. Approximately 20,000 youth were served by these programs during the two-year study period.

This was the first discretionary program launched in the prevention area by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). A basic OJJDP program assumption was that private youth agencies possessed the appropriate strategies and capacities to impact youth crime. This policy assumption was not supported by this evaluation. Rather, the research showed that private sector youth-serving organizations reach a large number of youth but are not realizing their potential to impact delinquency. These agencies urgently require theory development, staff training, and technical assistance to direct their efforts towards reducing delinquency. While private agencies may hold great promise for delivering prevention services, their current expertise and ability to work with delinquent youth should not be romanticized. Continued federal-level leadership, particularly in terms of research and innovative program models, may be required to stimulate significant local efforts to prevent delinquency. While the national program described in the report does not represent a model of federal program development, subsequent OJJDP activities have stressed a more theory-based approach to delinquency prevention through families, schools, peer groups and the employment sector. The role of research in improving prevention practice is also better understood by OJJDP.

II. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. OJJDP's national delinquency prevention program, the largest such effort in American history (involving over \$20 million for programs, technical assistance and evaluation), was implemented on a foundation of factors which precluded a successful delinquency prevention or research program. The "state of the art" in the field of delinquency prevention itself has not provided clear direction for delinquency prevention efforts. There are many competing claims and continuing definitional ambiguities about preven-

tion.

There was a lack of clarity in the OJJDP program objectives. The guidelines were confusing, ambiguous, and not specifically focused upon delinquency prevention. There was insufficient articulation of the expected program activities or program goals. Although strategies such as direct services, community development and capacity building were suggested, these were broad and their connections to delinquency prevention were not spelled out. Delinquency prevention was seen by OJJDP and grantees as not specifically aimed at reducing rates of delinquency, but rather as promoting "positive youth development" among all youth in selected target areas. This permitted grantees wide latitude in the services they provided. For most grantees, the result was a continuation of the types of services they traditionally provided (primarily recreation), although they reached out to youth not previously served by their agencies.

2. The major finding emerging from the data on direct services is that the grantees, lacking specific federally mandated guidelines or explicit delinquency prevention theories, delivered the same type of services that they had been providing for many years--under the new rubric of delinquency prevention. Although grantees were offered a range of intervention strategies by OJJDP (direct services, community development and capacity building), grantees chose to reinforce and expand their traditional direct services. The dominant direct service provided was recreation, with more limited resources directed towards other services such as counseling, employment or education. When community development and capacity building were attempted, they were used to augment direct services rather than to ameliorate the socio-economic or structural contributors to youth crime mentioned by the grantees in their project proposals.

For the most part, grantees lacked formal intake screening procedures to decide which youth should receive what type of service. Thus grantees did not distinguish between those with characteristics most common to youth who become delinquent and those youth unlikely to be arrested or adjudicated as delinquent. Grantees did not see such distinctions as important to their projects. The lack of intake screening procedures resulted in services being essentially self-selected by youth. Analysis of project data indicates that age was the primary factor associated with service selection, with younger clients selecting recreation and older youth more likely to select employment services.

3. The OJJDP Program Announcement did not require, and the grantee proposals and subsequent programs did not reflect, a clear statement of delinquency theory on which programs were based. Projects lacked logically linked sets of program objectives and service activities appropriate to meet such objectives. These program design defects had several effects on services. Grantee proposals envisioned a multi-service approach to counter a wide

range of service deficiencies believed to contribute to delinquent activity--but this was not achieved. In practice, a majority of all youth (59%) received only one type of service, and for a majority (56%) of these the single service was recreation. Further, project resources available to grantees did not permit implementation of meaningful multi-service programs to cope with the service deficiencies described in project proposals. Services were provided to any youth within defined geographic areas if the youth appeared at project sites. In practice this recruitment policy meant that project resources were directed at many youth with low chances of becoming delinquent even without services.

4. Contextual factors (i.e., agency and community characteristics, theoretical assumptions about delinquency causation, etc.) clearly affected program operations, but these factors were not sufficiently responded to by grantees in program design and implementation. Agencies varied in their organizational characteristics (location, historical background, etc.) but with a few exceptions these characteristics did not produce significantly different programs. Similarity of programs among grantees was the case even between groups of agencies considered "traditional" (i.e., nationally affiliated, established agencies) and those considered "community-based" (i.e., more recently formed and locally organized).

Although community characteristics varied considerably by project site (along lines of urban-rural, ethnic composition, geographic location, etc.), the essentially similar nature of the services implemented suggests that community characteristics were not adequately responded to in program designs. Community problems (poverty, unemployment, school dropout) were specified as reasons for selecting target areas, but attempts to change these conditions were an inconsequential aspect of project activities. Although some grantees included employment services (primarily skill development plus some employment placement), these programs had little effect on unemployment since few jobs were available for youth. Generally these jobs were dependent upon government funds such as CETA and were temporary in nature.

It is questionable whether the target areas selected by most grantees could be classified as communities in any manner useful for delinquency prevention. Most areas did not have the inter-relatedness of individuals or social institutions within the area to qualify as communities. This fact would have rendered program activities focused on community change questionable from the outset.

Although most projects did not take contextual factors into consideration in program design, these factors did have major and sometimes serious impact on project operations. Geographic distances and/or lack of transportation posed problems in connecting youth with services. Agency images posed problems for client recruitment and service implementation. The lack of theory

coupled with ill-defined objectives produced global expectations for service delivery which clashed with the realities of limited project resources.

5. The OJJDP program objectives did not include delinquency prevention. (Primary goals were stated as increasing the number and types of services available and the number of youth served.) The OJJDP Program Announcement did mandate that evaluation plans attempt to measure the impact of programs on delinquency. Despite the fact that both impact and process evaluation were anticipated by OJJDP, no impact evaluation was possible for a number of reasons:

- a) Programs funded were not specifically aimed at delinquency prevention.
- b) There was lack of clarity and measurability of the dependent variable--delinquency prevention--necessary for an impact evaluation.
- c) Programs were not attempting the kind of results (i.e., reducing rates of delinquency) that the evaluator was asked by OJJDP to measure.
- d) Baseline data such as delinquency activity for youth or target area population were not available from the community or from grantees and could not be obtained. Even if baseline data were available, the transient nature of the service contacts with many youth would have precluded any attribution of success to program methods.

6. Rigorous impact evaluation was not possible but a detailed process evaluation was completed at most sites, including data on the youth served and the nature of services provided. A wealth of data was collected about the nature and workings of a sizeable group of youth-serving agencies. Also, additional insights were gained into the utility of process evaluation as a research methodology. When measured against the objectives of the national delinquency prevention program specified in the OJJDP Program Announcement, the results are as follows:

- a. OBJECTIVE: "To increase the number of youth from target communities utilizing the services of private and public not-for-profit youth-serving agencies and organizations."  
RESULTS: These projects provided one or more types of services to approximately 20,000 youth in 118 target areas. Of these youth, 89% had not been previously serviced by these agencies.
- b. OBJECTIVE: "To increase the number and types of services available to youth in target communities through coordinative efforts among private and public youth-serving agencies."  
RESULTS: The OJJDP Program Announcement defined coordination as the process of working together to provide

a comprehensive non-duplicative service network.

- 1) A number of program grantees incorporated aspects of interagency coordination as an integral part of project operations by establishing collaborations of youth-serving agencies. Analysis of evaluation data indicates that coming together for the purposes of securing a grant did not facilitate interagency coordination or produce planning and action in any systematic and sustained manner.
- 2) Another strategy to improve coordination involved projects administered by central offices of national youth service agencies, with their local affiliates acting as service outlets. There is some evidence that the national offices improved their expertise and that local affiliates were able to provide additional services because of the prevention funds.
- 3) Although all grantees recognized the need to establish linkages with other relevant organizations, the formation of purposeful and continued external linkages was one of the least developed aspects of the projects. With few exceptions, this was particularly true with juvenile justice agencies. Given the nature of grantees' clientele (essentially non-delinquent youth), this is not surprising, since grantees did not see juvenile justice agencies as particularly relevant to their efforts.

c. OBJECTIVE: "To increase the capacity of target communities to respond more effectively to the social, economic, and familial needs of youth residing in target communities."

RESULTS: None of the grantees proposed a prevention project utilizing community development as the primary intervention strategy. None proposed, as even a component of their projects, a well-structured effort consistent with previous prevention efforts based on community development or with definitions of community development found in social sciences literature. Rather, community development was viewed by most projects as necessary to support or augment the grantee's direct services activities.

d. & e. OBJECTIVE: "To increase the capacity of national, regional and local youth-serving agencies to implement and sustain effective services to youth in target area communities." and "To increase volunteer participation and broaden community support for delinquency prevention activities".



RESULTS: With the exception of the coalitions and national agency efforts discussed under Objective b., few grantees identified separate project components that were specifically geared to build agency service capacity or to broaden community support for future programs. Most capacity building was seen as a means to increase or enhance service delivery in current grantee programs. Four capacity building approaches were attempted: coalition building, transportation, volunteers and staff training.

- 1) Coalition building. With the exception of one coalition project, coalitions were created principally for the purpose of applying for OJJDP funds. The formation of coalitions did not, as pointed out earlier, result in significant interagency planning and action.
- 2) Transportation services. Projects varied greatly in the need for and use of transportation, but in all cases where transportation services were provided they assisted in immediate service delivery, not future agency capacity building.
- 3) Volunteers. Project data indicate wide variation in the nature and extent of utilizing volunteers by grantees. While most sought to involve target area youth or adult residents in project planning and operations through advisory boards, with a few notable exceptions, these advisory boards provided little input into project direction. Advisory groups either failed to function at all, or when they met exerted minimal influence on program policies. Volunteers were used by many projects to supplement or assist paid staff through providing direct services, transportation or fundraising.
- 4) Staff training. Staff training was the least used capacity building activity. Although project administration verbalized the need for staff training, few project resources were budgeted for this purpose. A number of factors precluded effective use of training as a capacity building activity by grantees. These included: (a) preoccupation with program implementation and management issues (b) the lack of carefully designed programs with identified staff skill needs and (c) the separation of training needs assessment and the provision of training services from program design and operations. Training was provided through a separate technical assistance grantee but was not available until some six months after programs became operational.

National agencies, as well as others, increased their capacities to implement services to youth through OJJDP funds. National agencies were able to upgrade their expertise in juvenile delinquency and increase their capacity to provide technical assistance to affiliates. Whether affiliates will continue the special delinquency focus when OJJDP funds cease is very problematical but there is evidence that some national offices are attempting to institutionalize specific delinquency prevention approaches at affiliate sites. Continued local funding for most of the OJJDP prevention grantees seemed unlikely.

- f. OBJECTIVE: "To disseminate information regarding successful prevention projects for replication through national youth-serving agencies and organizations."

RESULT: Data collected on the ability of project relationships between nationals and affiliates to produce models for delinquency prevention are inconclusive. With the exception of two national agency grantees, other national agency staff felt that models worthy of replication were not produced by the OJJDP program. This is not surprising, since it was clear from the program proposals and the resulting programs that the focus was on increasing youth services of a broad nature rather than on specific models of delinquency prevention.

### III. CHAPTER SUMMARIES

#### Chapter 1 - Introduction

This report summarizes findings of an evaluation of a major delinquency prevention program funded by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). More than 20 million dollars went into the overall effort, with the bulk of the funds being used to provide services to more than 20,000 youth in 118 target areas within 68 cities around the nation. A total of 168 agencies received funds over a two year period beginning in 1977 as part of this federal prevention program. In addition, grants were awarded to the National Issues Center of the Westinghouse Corporation to give technical assistance to the service programs and to the National Council on Crime and Delinquency to conduct a national evaluation.

The final evaluation report describes the funded delinquency activities, profiling how grantees organized their youth

service efforts and the various theoretical and practical problems they faced. It also analyzes those activities in light of the stated objectives of the granting agency and existing theory and research in the field. Recommendations are offered for future delinquency prevention efforts and clarification of federal policy in this area.

Both the programs and the research were exploratory in nature. OJJDP wanted to learn about basic features of delinquency prevention programming that may inform future national policy. Ways of effectively and cheaply providing more and better services to disadvantaged youth through the work of private non-profit organizations were sought.

OJJDP spelled out objectives that aimed at several different levels of action. Direct services to youth emerged as OJJDP's main strategy for action. However, OJJDP connects this objective to activities that would help communities better provide for the needs of their youth (community development) and activities that improve agencies' ability to serve youth (capacity building).

The evaluation method called for consisted of two levels of analysis: an impact analysis, to measure the effects of prevention efforts on youth, communities and youth-serving agencies; and a process analysis, to describe how programs were conceptualized, planned, implemented, modified and ended.

## Chapter 2 - Philosophy and Practice of Delinquency Prevention

The history of delinquency prevention theory and practice in the United States has set no clear course for current or future efforts in the field. Although attention has been focused on youth crime since the early 1800's, no one school of thought as to its causes and the best means for prevention has gained pre-eminence. Various theories gained popularity during different periods, leading to a succession of programs ranging from placement in houses of refuge to reliance on child guidance clinics, to attempts to remediate social and environmental influences on youth. Two differing orientations on how to prevent or control delinquent behavior appear consistently: one advocates focusing on individual treatment or services; the other, on changing social conditions or institutions that may generate delinquent behavior.

Until the end of the 1950's, the federal role in delinquency prevention or research was limited in scope and intensity. Thereafter, a series of study commissions and delinquency prevention efforts were sponsored federally, leading up to the passage in 1974 of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. That Act established the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention within the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration,

and focused on prevention as the means for forestalling anti-social behavior among adolescents and young adults. However, neither the Act nor materials describing its legislative history provide a definition of "prevention", and the resulting ambiguity has yet to be satisfactorily clarified at the federal level. The OJJDP national prevention program, the subject of this study, must be viewed within this framework of conflicting theory, varied practical prevention efforts, and continuing lack of clear definition and policy direction at the federal level.

### Chapter 3 - Methodology

Designing and conducting a national evaluation of OJJDP's prevention programs required breaking new ground in many areas and frequent reassessment and redirection in response to many technical and administrative constraints. Neither overall OJJDP goals nor individual project objectives were well-defined, problems compounded by the broad scope and diversity of activities being undertaken. Furthermore, the designs or policies of many projects precluded the kinds of impact analysis originally intended.

OJJDP sought two kinds of evaluation: (1) a process analysis, that would describe how programs were conceptualized, planned, implemented, administered, and ended, and (2) an impact analysis, that would measure project effects on youth, communities, and youth-serving agencies. NCCD conducted process analyses at all project sites and gave primary attention to this form of evaluation. Impact analyses were attempted at eleven project sites designated for intensive study by OJJDP. NCCD also was able to combine the two types of evaluation data so that information about process could be used to shed light on why and how observed impacts came about.

A key accomplishment of the national evaluation was the refinement of an analytic model for process evaluation research in delinquency prevention. Process information was gathered and organized around the five elements of program development discussed in subsequent chapters of the report. Context (the set of conditions and assumptions which define the distinctive features of the program); Goals (the measurable outcome of program activities); Identification (the techniques and criteria used to define, select, and admit clients); Intervention (activities and services provided); and Linkages (the relationships of programs with other youth-serving agencies and social institutions). Data were collected on each element for each project. The process evaluation describes the interplay among these program elements, changes in the elements over time, and variations among projects with respect to these program elements.

Impact evaluation commonly refers to the measurement and

assessment of program outcomes. Its key purpose is to assess the extent to which a project achieves its specified goals and to demonstrate whether movement toward these goals actually resulted from the project activities. The conditions necessary to yield meaningful evaluations of this type are difficult to meet and few previous delinquency prevention efforts have been rigorously evaluated.

Virtually every type of constraint undermining rigorous evaluations was confronted in this OJJDP program. OJJDP's research guidelines presented very wide-ranging issues for evaluation, with little background information on the link between program assumptions and evaluation objectives. Grantees were not selected for funding because of their ability to provide meaningful data for research purposes. Even more importantly, the objectives specified for the evaluation did not mirror the program results sought. The most striking example of this disjuncture was the evaluation goal to measure impacts on delinquency even though most grantees did not interpret their mandate to include accountability for preventing delinquency.

There were also many practical obstacles to conducting the impact evaluation. Official crime data were one measure of delinquency recommended by OJJDP for use in the evaluation, but standardized crime data specific to the target areas usually could not be obtained. Self-reported delinquent behavior and the attitudes of participants also were identified as data to be collected, but only one of the 11 sites selected by OJJDP for the impact study was able to implement a Client Impact Questionnaire used by NCCD to measure these factors.

Impact evaluation clearly ran a poor second to providing services to youth among site personnel. The needs of the evaluators and the project staff's interests often were at odds; staff were confused about the purposes, goals, and methods of the evaluation, and sometimes asserted that assessment methods could be harmful to project participants. Data collection efforts suffered from lack of full cooperation from project staff.

The evaluation staff specified a number of major research questions that fit within one of the five elements of program development. Impact-related research questions fit neatly within the element concerning goals so that these questions actually addressed both process and impact evaluation concerns. Specific data collection procedures were developed for each research question. A Management Information System (MIS) was implemented at all sites producing data on clients and services. Much of the information was gathered through qualitative research techniques such as interviews, field observations, and review of records and documents. Quantifiable data on some issues were obtained from survey questionnaires. Data on all three levels of impact (youth, communities, and agencies) were collected and analyzed. The specifications of evaluation data needs and sources, methods, and

timing of data gathering were assembled in a 243-page Design and Data Manual (1978). Research instruments adapted from other studies were selected after a careful search and an assessment of their reliability and validity. Each new instrument NCCD developed was field tested in communities or youth agencies in the San Francisco Bay area.

The research was not able to answer all of the questions OJJDP posed, especially about program impact, for a variety of technical reasons and because of features of the overall program design. However, NCCD was able to refine a process evaluation model, and despite the many obstacles, process evaluation was conducted at all project sites. The wealth of data described and analysed in the report represents a rare base of detailed information on the status and workings of a significant number of prevention programs.

#### Chapter 4 - Context

Each of the programs in the OJJDP delinquency prevention program was shaped by its context. Three broad areas key to understanding project development are the history, background and orientation of the program; characteristics of the areas chosen as project targets; and the theoretical assumptions on which project staff based their activities.

Historical Background and Organizational Setting. A diverse range of organizations was selected to participate in the OJJDP program. Agencies differed in the kinds of programs they had run previously, their financial bases and resources, organizational structures, and formal philosophies. Grant awards were made to three main categories of agencies: national agencies paired with their local affiliates; collaborations of agencies, mostly involving newly-linked organizations; and agencies with a rural or specific regional focus.

Although no common historical patterns among the grantees were apparent, two basic strains of program missions emerged: a number of agencies primarily provided recreational opportunities for youth, while another set of agencies had a broader social development mission. Few had run projects specifically designed to prevent delinquency. Instead, grantees were oriented toward the more general goal of encouraging "positive youth development".

The amount, timing, and duration of federal funding were issues of concern. There were ongoing complaints that too little money was provided to run the projects properly and that OJJDP had unrealistic expectations of the results to be expected for the available funds. Could a modest two-year project really be expected to reduce juvenile delinquency? Money flow difficulties, particularly troublesome at the outset, were a chronic problem that

led to uncertainty and frustration among staff. Most project personnel, particularly those emphasizing "one-to-one" direct services, believed they were understaffed. Most reported that low salary levels made it necessary to hire inexperienced and under-qualified personnel. Few programs budgeted funds for staff training. High staff turnover was a serious problem at many sites.

There is little question that financial considerations were a major factor in drawing projects into the prevention effort. Although the existence of these funds offered some new opportunities to youth service agencies, the money was regarded as a mixed blessing. Fears were prevalent that involvement with OJJDP would alter established agency images, jeopardize the continued participation of regular clientele or funding sources, and force attention to higher-risk and possibly more difficult clients.

Community Characteristics. Wide diversity in community settings was found between projects as well as within them. Grantees served some 68 targeted cities encompassing 118 target areas. The sizes and numbers of communities served ranges from multiple agency collaborations focused on target areas the size of New York City (target area population-2,000,000) or Dallas (70,000) to rural projects focused on several communities with total populations less than 6,000. As intended by OJJDP guidelines, the target areas did show clear evidence of social and economic deprivation: high crime and delinquency rates, high indices of various health problems and levels of physical deterioration, low income levels, and high unemployment. But these similarities blur important differences not adequately responded to by grantees in their planning efforts.

Although preparation of grant applications required that agencies assemble a considerable volume of information on their target communities, projects gave little attention in planning to the communities where they were based, either as service units or as contributing factors to delinquency. This may account for the fact reported in the Intervention chapter that there were few significant differences in the types of services offered despite the diversity in target areas where projects operated.

Attempts to alleviate the causes of broad social problems were not envisioned by the OJJDP program. No grantee adopted an approach that tried to directly confront possible causes of crime as a major strategy for preventing delinquency. Nevertheless, broad community social problems often played an unexpectedly large role in shaping project activities. For example, some project plans were confounded by the power of ethnic neighborhood lines and the client attitudes that this territoriality reflected. To further illustrate this point, most projects planning to deal with youth employment were constrained by a critical lack of job opportunities for adults or youth in the target area.

Theoretical Context. Goals should provide the framework around which program approaches and strategies are tailored. They

should be clear and measurable. However, most goals listed by projects in funding proposals were not clearly stated or easily measured. It was often difficult to see how stated goals were related to target area problems or to proposed activities and services.

Grantees did not base their efforts on explicit theories about delinquency or its prevention. The OJJDP guidelines did not require applicants to describe or even identify a theoretical basis for their programs even though the programs were presumably "demonstration" projects. Without an explicit statement of the reasoning behind project choices, what the project was "demonstrating" had little possibility of being clear.

OJJDP provided a Background Paper to potential grantees presenting three basic approaches to delinquency prevention: (1) working with individual youth, (2) improving the environment in which youth mature, and (3) changing the labeling process by which youth come to be identified and stigmatized as troublesome or delinquent. More attention was given to change that focused on individuals rather than on societal or institutional changes. Although OJJDP apparently considered the Background Paper to be simply informative, the paper's emphasis was taken as a signal by grantees that general attempts to offer direct services to youth was OJJDP's model of delinquency prevention.

Most grantees, lacking explicit goals or articulated theory to guide them, eventually resorted to their traditional service methods rather than engaging in new endeavors. Grantees generally saw themselves as practicing primary prevention: they provided services to youth with no previous or existing contact with the juvenile justice system but whose immediate environment put them at risk of becoming delinquent. Thus, program goals centered around expanding services to youth, increasing use of services by youth living in target communities, and increasing agency capacities for service provision. Although grantees tended to believe that delinquency was caused by social and economic problems, such as poverty and unemployment, prevention strategies were oriented toward changing personal attributes or attitudes of youth.

## Chapter 5 - Goals

Inadequate goal-setting crippled the OJJDP delinquency prevention program and profoundly frustrated evaluation efforts. Many agency goals were unmeasurable in nature, or not specific enough to measure. Where specific goals did exist, they often were generated without a sound basis or were unrealistic given the agency's capabilities and limited resources. Further, project goals rarely reflected the deliberate incorporation of delinquency theory.



The value of specific, realistic, achievable goals for directing program development was not fully appreciated by project staff or OJJDP. Project staff were unsure of agency goals and how their own activities would help achieve those goals. They were thus deprived of measures to assess their accomplishments or to help plan future program directions. For agencies new to delinquency prevention, unambiguous, well-understood goals could have been critical. Goal-setting in many cases was seen more as part of the "grantsmanship game" to obtain funds than for practical or theoretical value to the projects.

OJJDP's guidelines and reporting requirements were not adequate to guide projects in establishing or refining goals. OJJDP's goals were very general, were not directly tied to reducing delinquency, and left unclear what standards would be employed to assess goal achievement. OJJDP wanted to:

- increase the number of youth from target communities who use youth-serving agencies
- increase the number and kinds of services for youth in target communities through better agency coordination
- enable target communities to respond more effectively to the needs of their youth
- enable national, regional, and local youth-serving agencies to serve youth in target communities better (capacity building)
- increase volunteer participation in and broaden community support for delinquency prevention activities
- to disseminate information about successful prevention projects for replication through national youth serving agencies.

That the goal of preventing or reducing delinquency is missing from this list signals the federal program's overall outcome.

A number of agencies simply took OJJDP's list of desired results as their own goals, without qualifying them, tying them to any particular strategy, or grounding them in any program models. It seems apparent that many grantees did not consider their role to be planners and practitioners of carefully thought out experimental programs to reduce delinquency. Rather, they considered the basic "blueprint" for theory and models to be in OJJDP's hands, with their role to deliver the program to OJJDP's specifications. Accordingly, there are few signs that participation in the OJJDP effort produced lasting effects among the grantees such as re-orienting grantee goals, philosophy, or priorities with regard to delinquency. That few prevention projects will survive the termination of OJJDP funding is a reflection of this observation. It is probable that agencies' goals remained largely in tune with their traditional agency missions.

From an evaluation standpoint, many projects floundered throughout the life of the grant without adequate goals to guide them.

Neither OJJDP nor the grantees themselves saw goal-setting as a priority issue; few technical assistance requests for help with setting or clarifying goals were made.

The lack of clarity of program goals and OJJDP's limited reporting requirements meant that programs provided OJJDP with minimal information on project directions. Projects supplied figures for the numbers of youth served and the number of projects offered, but no standard definitions existed about units of service or service intensity. Grantee reports consisted of general, descriptive discussions of how project activities related to OJJDP goals.

It was apparent that reducing or preventing delinquency was not the primary concern of grantees: positive youth development was. Although most projects identified fundamental social problems like poverty and unemployment as probable causes of delinquency, project goals did not focus on these problems.

## Chapter 6 - Identification

Three kinds of clients were possible. Youth were clients of direct services: the target community was the client of community development activities; and grantees themselves and other agencies serving target area youth were clients in capacity building. Most programs considered youth to be the main targets of their services. Although many proposals cited the importance of socio-economic and structural factors in delinquency causation, most programs limited their approach to change to working with individuals. How the grantees defined the kinds of direct service clients they wanted to serve, and how they set about recruiting and selecting youth who fit program criteria are the main issues in client identification.

Projects set up broad and ambiguous definitions for target youth. On the assumption that a "little prevention goes a long way", projects tried to reach as many new clients as possible. In this they were successful: 89 percent of the youth reached under the OJJDP program were new clients of these agencies.

Socio-demographic information about clients shows that youth of low socio-economic status were receiving services, as hoped for by OJJDP. Projects served a wide range of youth, from a project with a mean client age of 10.5 years to another with a mean age of 16.5. Most clients were full-time students rather than drop-outs or truants. An unemployment rate of 83 percent for youth over 16 illustrates the need for services related to employment.

Few projects possessed criteria for accepting or rejecting clients. Screening, if conducted at all, was informal; most programs were accustomed to a philosophy of opening their doors to

virtually all youth, and special procedures for attracting youth likely to be delinquents did not emerge. With a few exceptions, programs did not develop diagnostic procedures to identify specific client needs. Usually, youth decided for themselves whether to participate in the project and choose for themselves what services they wanted.

In effect, the projects chose by default a "passive" selection system by which youth chose the project rather than the reverse. Such identification procedures meant that grantees were not effectively reaching youth most at risk of engaging in delinquency (skimming). For example, average client age was quite young, (13.3 years), not surprising because the most commonly offered service, recreation, was most appealing to the younger clients. Clients in older age groups were more interested in employment and vocational services. This suggests that to reach the older youth who are more likely committing delinquent acts, (1) programs need to recruit older clients than they traditionally had, (2) shift the emphasis of their services and (3) contend with an age group that staff considered to be harder to work with and control.

A passive selection system also allowed informal or unintentional selection criteria such as agency image, program accessibility, or race or class differences, to strongly affect what kinds of youth approached the projects. The fact that very few truants or drop-outs sought project services may reflect this problem. Although problems in school were considered by many program staff to flag the need for project services, few special outreach efforts were made to recruit youth experiencing difficulties in school.

Only 4 percent of clients were involved with the juvenile justice system upon entering the projects. Data indicated that these youth were more similar to officially delinquent youth than were the other project clients as a whole, again raising questions about skimming.

The kinds of clients selected for project services influences potential program impact. Recent research suggests that only a small percentage of youth in urban areas are chronically delinquent and are responsible for a major share of the more serious delinquent acts. Their findings imply that direct service programs would be more effective in preventing delinquency if they reached those youth instead of the much larger group of youth not involved in chronic delinquency. Since limited resources enable agencies to serve only a small percentage of target area youth, identifying and recruiting the appropriate target population to maximize program results seems particularly important.

## Chapters 7-8 - Intervention: Direct Service, Community Development, and Capacity Building

Three kinds of intervention strategies (delinquency prevention activities) were available under the OJJDP program: direct services, community development, and capacity building. Direct service delivery was the dominant prevention strategy chosen by the grantees. Community development and capacity building, when tried, were used mainly to support direct services.

OJJDP offered only very general guidelines allowing grantees considerable freedom in choosing their project activities. Lacking explicit prevention theories or federal guidelines to direct their efforts, the grantees delivered the same kinds of services they had been providing for years, but called it delinquency prevention. Grantees' inclinations to rely on traditional services were implicitly encouraged by OJJDP. In its planning and reporting requirements, and background information, OJJDP emphasized the direct service approach and paid relatively little attention to community development and capacity building approaches.

Most grantees proposed using a broad multi-service strategy for providing direct services, rather than narrowing their focus to single services to counter particular delinquent behaviors or causal factors. Most direct services fell in four categories: recreation, education, employment and/or vocational training, and counseling.

Recreation was the backbone of project services. Grantees considered recreation their best drawing card to get youth through the door. Some projects, especially national agencies, considered that through teaching adult models and leadership, recreation was an intervention strategy in its own right. Although recreation successfully attracted clients, especially younger clients, it was not a prelude to involvement in other project services. Grantees apparently were filling a community need for recreation services in many instances, especially in rural areas. But, a substantial body of research shows no link between recreational services and the prevention of delinquency.

Educational services, the second most commonly offered service, included tutoring and remedial education, workshops on specific subjects, youth clubs, leadership training, and special programs. Problems associated with educational services included limited staff resources and training, and inadequate assessment of client needs.

Employment and vocational services stood out as the best designed and executed services in many projects, including job development, placement, skills training and counseling. Many programs' hopes for helping youth acquire jobs were frustrated; private sector jobs were scarce and available publicly funded

jobs (through CETA or other special employment programs) were often short-term, menial, low-paying and without career possibilities. Grantees dealt with individual youth trying to break into economically depressed job markets; advocacy work to open up new jobs for youth was rarely attempted.

Age was the strongest variable in predicting services that youth would receive. For the young, this was recreation; for older youth, employment; for those in the middle, counseling.

Clients spent considerable time involved in project activities: youth attended an average of nine activities per month for an average of two hours each.

Assessments of client improvement due to program participation were made by both staff and clients; staff were consistently more sanguine about project impacts on youth.

Community development was not employed by any grantee either as a primary focus or as a major part of an overall program strategy. Proposals rarely contained full explanations as to (1) the significance of community involvement goals in delinquency prevention, (2) strategies to reach those goals, or (3) specific functions to be performed by community participants. In practice, efforts to draw community participants into program planning often broke down or proved ineffectual. Staff attributed these failures to such factors as community apathy, agency image in the community, and lack of staff expertise in ongoing community organizing. Grantees' hopes for involving youth in program planning and other non-service activities also were often disappointed.

The third intervention strategy, capacity building, was the least well-developed of the three. Capacity building was realized through four approaches: coalition building, transportation services, volunteer recruitment, and staff training.

OJJDP did fund a number of agency coalitions on the assumption that agencies joined by common interests could reduce duplication of effort and conflict over funds, clients, or "turf". Research data showed that agencies were joined mainly by common fiscal interests, which were not sufficient to overcome inter-agency strains, particularly in these new and collaborative arrangements.

Transportation services were provided at a number of sites, principally to bolster direct service delivery.

Efforts to increase volunteer participation were found to require considerable effort in recruiting and training volunteers. Volunteers were involved in providing transportation, direct services, and fund raising.

Little staff training was done, although the need for it was often expressed. Staff preoccupation with immediate service

delivery problems, lack of clearly identified staff skill needs, and delays in the provision of technical assistance, were among factors that prevented full use of this capacity building technique.

## Chapter 9 - Linkages

The world of youth-serving agencies suffers from fragmentation; programs are run in isolation from one another, with little sharing of clients, ideas, facilities, or services. In fact, agencies often are in competition with one another for funds and clients. It was hoped that the OJJDP delinquency prevention effort would help the grantees overcome these trends by encouraging grantees to set up better linkages with other agencies.

Two kinds of linkages were dealt with: (1) intra-project linkages between member agencies of collaborations, or between local affiliates and their national-level agencies; and (2) external linkages, between grantees and other agencies or social institutions working with target area youth.

In most cases, grantees fell prey to old patterns of fragmentation. Although all the projects saw the need to set up relationships with other agencies, few formed systematic connections that were sustained. Little was done to reduce duplication of services or to develop ways of routing youths with particular needs to agencies best suited to fill those needs. The OJJDP program left little legacy of better understanding and cooperation among agencies.

Ambiguous or untenable management structures of coalitions receiving funding and OJJDP's funding structures were the main factors leading to power struggles, disagreements, and misunderstandings among coalitions. These barriers were difficult to overcome. OJJDP funded a number of coalitions or youth-serving agencies on the assumption that their working together would accomplish more than separate efforts. The projects never really tested this assumption. Agencies had joined together mainly to secure funding, and their very general consensus as to philosophy, goals, and strategies often broke down in practice. The haste with which the new collaborations were formed to qualify for grants may partially account for this dilemma.

Each of the collaborations proposed that an expansion of services available to target area youth should result from project operations, without making clear how this would come about. Some service gaps for target area youth were filled by the OJJDP effort because grantees recruited clients for their standard services from youth populations they had not previously reached. However, it appears that these results stemmed more from the influx of money to the agencies rather than from increased cooperation among

agencies. Overall, collaborations did not have a significant impact on the service operations of their members.

Another means of improving coordination was the development of model programs by national agencies for replication at local sites with technical assistance by the national. In addition to funding local affiliates' program activities, OJJDP provided the national agencies with an opportunity to establish an explicit delinquency function.

The national offices were able to upgrade their expertise in juvenile delinquency, and increase their ability to give technical assistance to their local affiliates. This new expertise appeared to stem from exposure to research and consultants rather than as an outgrowth of close work with the experimental projects at local affiliates.

Establishing links between grantees and other organizations dealing with youth was one of the least developed aspects of the projects. Contacts were quite scarce and mostly informal; few were developed systematically or sustained over time. Most of the links were made to obtain facilities or to gain client referrals. Schools were of critical importance in both areas; they supplied space and resources to many projects, a means to publicize the program to youth, and, often, helped foster community acceptance.

Important links were made with other organizations such as public housing agencies, churches, and government-funded employment agencies. Such linkages were not without costs to the programs; some staff reported making serious compromises to accommodate policies of other agencies that were central to project success.

Few projects made more than peripheral linkages with the juvenile justice system, as they were reluctant to serve youth from that system. Many staff were under the impression that OJJDP did not want them to deal with already delinquent youth. Many staff felt that their limited resources would be used up by the more extensive needs of delinquent youth. Ironically, staff believed that delinquent youth had access to services through the juvenile justice system. Other staff were concerned that working with delinquent youth would hurt their agency's image.

## Chapter 10 - Policy Implications for Delinquency Prevention

The idea of preventing delinquency is excessively ambitious if not pretentious. There is a growing gap between policy-makers' hopes and what can be accomplished under this notion. Social scientists have not isolated the causes of juvenile delinquency and even if these were known it is not obvious that anything could be done about them. Many writers argue that delinquency is associated with industrialism and other social trends (e.g.

poverty and racism) of such scope that they cannot be easily sorted out or remediated. Given this perspective it is naive to believe that highly generalized youth service programs introduced into heterogeneous target areas will significantly curtail delinquency.

What is needed more than jumbo federal programs are policy and administrative procedures to encourage innovations in delinquency control through research and development on a modest scale. In particular, future prevention efforts should be tied to the goal of reducing rates of official delinquency in clearly defined target populations. Primary prevention is too vast a goal for OJJDP to accomplish through its own direct funding. OJJDP's role should be to help other federal agencies understand how to best direct their resources and policies to have an impact on youth crime.

Direct service prevention efforts should focus on youth already enmeshed in the juvenile justice system. Prevention programs must develop better systems of referrals with the juvenile justice system, schools, and family service agencies.

Community development strategies should be attempted that incorporate planning and advocacy approaches that leverage existing youth service resources to delinquent youth. Community-focused programs should attempt to alter policies, practices, and procedures that propel youth towards the justice system. Capacity building efforts should emphasize training and staff development among youth workers. All future OJJDP prevention programs should mandate and provide support for resident and youth involvement in program planning and management.

There is scant evidence that small-scale programs to provide economic and cultural opportunities for under-privileged youth actually prevent delinquency. But it is a sad commentary on our society that such programs have to be justified as a means of preventing delinquency. A far better rationale is that all children and youth are entitled to positive growing-up experiences.