

AN EVALUATION
OF THE
TOWN OF TILTON
"YOUTH ASSISTANCE - COURT DIVERSION PROGRAM"

GRANT NUMBER
78-II-A2229 D02

PROJECT PERIOD
June 2, 1978 - June 30, 1979

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BACKGROUND

In March, 1975, the New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Crime and Delinquency approved a grant to the Town of Tilton for the establishment of a "Youth Assistance - Court Diversion Program", known as "YAP". This program serves the tri-town area of Tilton, Sanbornton and Northfield providing juvenile offenders with an alternative to adjudication. It has been renewed three times; February, 1976, March, 1977 and June, 1978. The current project runs from June 2, 1978 to June 30, 1979.

Total funding approved to date is:

	<u>LEAA</u>	<u>NEW HAMPSHIRE</u>	<u>LOCAL</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
74-A-374 D01	\$8,487	\$472	\$ 750	\$ 9,709
74-A-1080 D01	1,000	58	395	1,453
75-A-1080 J06	6,700	379	2,653	9,732
76-II-A1080 D02	7,538	409	3,053	11,000
77-II-A1682 D02	6,629	356	6,900	13,885
78-II-A2229 D02	<u>3,791</u>	<u>211</u>	<u>12,005</u>	<u>16,007</u>
	\$34,145	\$1,885	\$25,756	\$61,786

During the course of this project Northfield withdrew its share of matching support for one year. It was, therefore, not eligible for direct program services. The following year Northfield rejoined the program.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As described by the sub-grantee in the funding application, the Towns of Tilton, Northfield, and Sanbornton comprise an economically depressed area, characterized by minimal education background and high school dropout rates, a large number of low-income families and broken homes, an extremely high rate of alcohol and drug abuse, and a resulting juvenile problem in the tri-town area.

Some of the factors contributing to delinquency in the area are: low income, negative educational attitudes, lack of cultural activity, lack of public transportation, lack of healthy pastime activities (e.g. basketball and tennis courts, theaters and bowling alleys), and lack of proper adult supervision in many of the homes.

The Youth Assistance Program has five main goals to achieve for the youth of this tri-town area.

- A. Court Diversion - To provide juvenile offenders with an alternative to adjudication.
- B. Preventative counseling and referral services - To provide troubled youth and their families with the necessary information enabling them to obtain needed services.
- C. Crisis homes - To provide temporary homes for youth.
- D. PEOPLE Program - To provide one to one positive adult attention for juveniles.
- E. Community Awareness - Education and involvement with the juvenile situation in the tri-town area.

The program employs two people, a Director and an Assistant to carry out the program. The main duties of the Director are to insure that the objectives are met. The Assistant Director's main functions are with the day-to-day operations of the office including, but not limited to: bookkeeping, processing of financial reports, correspondence, scheduling and coordinating various meetings.

PROJECT OPERATION

The first Director of the project, Mr. Thomas Fulweiler, resigned in May, 1976 for another position. He was replaced in June, 1976 by Ms. Lily Gulian who served until September, 1977. The Assistant Director, Mrs. Mariann Clark, was appointed Acting Director in September, 1977, by the Tilton and Sanbornton Selectmen. The hiring committee to select a permanent Director consisted of a representative from each town's Board of Selectmen, the chiefs of police, representative members of the Juvenile Review Board, laypeople from the respective towns and the Acting Director. The position was advertised and forty-four applications were received. Mrs. Jean Snyder was selected as the new Director on October 26, 1977 by the selection committee.

Mrs. Snyder graduated from Niagara University in May, 1976 with a B. A. degree in Sociology. Previous to this job, she was employed by Spaulding Youth Center in Tilton as a Cottage Teacher. She was responsible for the management of the boys in a cottage run on a tightly structured behavior program, family treatment work and the planning of cottage programs.

The position of Assistant Director has also had some instability. The original person, Ms. Vicki Marshall, resigned in June, 1976. Mrs. Ginger Williard, wife of the then Tilton Police Chief, replaced her until she resigned in March, 1977. Mrs. Mariann Clark, who presently serves, was hired in June, 1977.

Mrs. Clark has a B. A. degree in Psychology from Utica College. She is the mother of six children and has had several years experience teaching and working with youth.

A Board of Directors has been set up for the Youth Assistance and PEOPLE program. It is made up of the following:

- a) One member representing the Police Department of the three towns.
- b) One member representing the Boards of Selectmen of the three towns.
- c) One member representing the Juvenile Review Board.
- d) Members a, b, c should be selected to represent different towns.
- e) One member each from the three local public schools (Union-Sanborn Elementary, Winnisquam Regional Middle School, Winnisquam Regional High School).
- f) Three community members at large.
- g) Of the total membership of the board, there should be at least two members from each town.

Members serve three year terms set up so one-third of the board is re-elected annually with individuals limited to serving two consecutive three-year terms. Meetings are held monthly. The board has a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a Secretary/Treasurer. The Chairman is charged with presiding at the meetings to preserve order and to make parliamentary decisions and rulings.

The "Youth Assistance - Court Diversion Program" is designed to provide two distinct services; those of court diversion and preventative services. Each of the five goals of the project is described as follows:

I. Court Diversion:

The purpose of this program is to prevent the youth from entering the criminal justice system for first time minor offenses. It attempts to provide speedy, meaningful consequences which will aid in making the offender more aware of his actions. Exposure to the complex, sometimes slow proceedings of the court system can often be a discouraging experience. On the other hand, if the first-time offender is released with no consequences, no deterrent affect will occur. The main thrust of this objective is to attach meaning to the encounter.

This objective is achieved through the following process. A juvenile who has been arrested, with no prior arrest record, is referred to the Police Chief who meets with the Program Director to determine if the program would be appropriate for this youth. A meeting with the offender and his parents is set up; this alternative is explained to them and if they agree, the offender is required to sign a "Voluntary Participation Contract" in which he admits his guilt and the parent/guardian signs a "Permission for Release of Information". An appointment is set up for the offender to appear before a Juvenile Review Board. This is a committee composed of ten to fifteen residents of the three communities chosen because of their interest and involvement with local youth.

The YAP Director first compiles a social history on the youth. This includes relevant educational, psychological and medical data. Once completed, a brief summary is provided to those Juvenile Review Board members who will hear the case. The hearing is scheduled and all parties are notified. The hearing is normally limited to six board members, the Project Director, the youth and parents.

The informal hearing is aimed at determining the circumstances of the offense, the motive and the appropriate consequences. After the discussion, the Board and Director meet privately to make their decision. They then return and present this decision to the family and offender.

The function of the Board is to offer timely and appropriate action suited to the severity and circumstances of the offense. The action may include financial restitution, assistance to public service agencies or to provide some service to the victim. The intent is to make the juvenile responsible for his behavior.

Follow-up on each case is completed by the Director. Records of each case are maintained in a locked file cabinet and access is restricted.

From project inception in March of 1975, until November, 1977 (32 months), twenty-nine cases appeared before the Juvenile Review Board. From November, 1977 to November, 1978, twenty-one cases have appeared. The main reason for this increased rate has been the increased confidence in the system by the local chiefs of police.

II. Preventative Counseling and Referral.

This is the part of the program that attempts to deal with the causes of problems. Preventative counseling and referral includes: one-to-one counseling using a combination of reality therapy and behavioral techniques; employment assistance; drug and alcohol awareness and referral; sex education and family planning referral; and family counseling and referral. Cases that need intensive family and/or individual therapy are referred to appropriate resources. Some of the services which YAP has used for referral are:

- Twin Rivers Mental Health Clinic
- Spaulding Youth Center Diagnostic Clinic
- New Hampshire Division of Welfare
- New Hampshire Legal Assistance
- Lakes Region - Twin Rivers Human Services Coordinating Council
- Alcoholic Anonymous
- Hassle House
- Alcohol & Drug Abuse Center

This portion of the program has been receiving an increasing amount of community awareness and confidence. For the entire year of 1977, 104 referrals were made. From January 1 through October, 1978, there were 204 referrals. In

1977, the Director spent 270 hours counseling, from January, 1978 through October, 1978 she spent 317 hours counseling. The Director, for calendar year 1977, attended 143 meetings. From January, 1978 through October, 1978, she has attended 345. This additional work has increased the community awareness and provided increased services for the community.

III. Crisis Homes

The purpose of crisis placement is to provide temporary shelter for youth in a time of crisis and to create a buffer space of time during which the YAP and other helping agencies can work together with the youth and the family.

There are presently four homes set up. There are two prospective ones. There is some prescreening of potential homes, including a police check. People chosen are teachers or other respected and well-known people in the community. There is no licensing requirement. The Selectmen participate in making the decision of sending a youth to a crisis home. To date, this component has been used with low risk juveniles who might otherwise have been sent to the Youth Development Center.

IV. PEOPLE Program

The establishment of a Big Brother/Big Sister type program has been an objective of the Youth Assistance Program since its inception in March, 1975. In early 1978, the PEOPLE program began to take shape. Adult volunteers were sought who would guarantee at least a one year commitment. The purpose of this program is to provide an exemplary adult role for the juvenile. In May, 1978, the first PEOPLE program orientation was held. Operating guidelines have been drawn up.

This program has 16 trained volunteers. Training was accomplished by orientation with Rich Maxson, Director of the Concord Friends program. The main problem they have encountered so far is in attracting area youth. To date,

three matches have been made and two are in the process of being made. An adults vs. kids softball game and a hike up Belknap Mountain were done to increase interest in the program. The program has offered to re-open a recreation hall which is located on the second floor of the Tilton Town Hall. Approval has been obtained from the Tilton Selectmen and the town Recreation Committee. Monthly activities are planned.

Several local businesses have been contacted and have agreed to donate services to the program. They are:

- The Alpine Slide at Alpine Ridge
- The Brickyard Mountain Inn Resort
- Meredith Bowling Lanes
- The Tilton 500 Go-Kart Track
- McDonalds - Franklin
- Weeks Dairy Bar and Restaurant
- Pizza Hut

V. Community Awareness

The Project Director has worked hard to increase the community awareness of this project and to stress the need for community support to its youth. Activities of the program have appeared in local newspapers; the Director has appeared on the local radio station, has addressed meetings of civic groups and taken her cause to the three town's annual town meetings. The response of local businesses supporting the PEOPLE program, townspeople willing to be members of the Juvenile Review Board, availability of crisis homes, all show evidence of support of this effort.

COMMENT

This program has been evaluated several times in the past. The general consensus has been that the program is a good one but that the majority of objectives were not being met. This writer's observations were that activity is now ongoing in all the areas addressed in the grant application. Court diversion, once the main thrust of the program, has been overtaken by the other

objectives of the program, especially the PEOPLE program. The program has been able to take three towns and combine resources to attack a common problem, thereby maximizing utility of resources. This is not always easy in a state where the cry of home rule is frequently heard. But the towns at their town meetings have voted an increasing amount of funding each year to continue this program. The staff has worked hard and the results are visible.

Many of the surrounding towns have expressed interest in the court diversion program; Laconia is moving to set up a program similar to it, based on their appreciation of this program.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this project has successfully addressed the stated objectives. The Court Diversion Component is especially noteworthy and has the obvious support of townspeople, police and other area officials.

This is the fourth year of project funding through this agency. There are no plans to apply for future Commission funding assistance.

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