

City of New Orleans

The Mayor's Criminal
Justice Coordinating Council

A CLOSE-UP REPORT ON THE ORLEANS PARISH JUVENILE AWARENESS PROGRAM

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ACQUISITIONS

A CLOSEOUT REPORT ON THE ORLEANS PARISH JUVENILE AWARENESS PROGRAM

Prepared by

THE MAYOR'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE
COORDINATING COUNCIL

DECEMBER, 1979

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THE MAYOR'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE
COORDINATING COUNCIL
MAYOR ERNEST N. MORIAL, CHAIRMAN

MAYOR'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL

CLOSEOUT REPORT

PROJECT: Orleans Parish Juvenile Awareness Program

PROJECT NUMBER: 78-J9-9.1-0174

SUBGRANTEE: City of New Orleans

SUBGRANT PERIOD: January 1, 1979 - August 31, 1979

DATE OF REPORT: December, 1979

PREPARED BY: Jack L. Ashcraft

CLERICAL ASSISTANCE: Jo Ann Crasto

CUMULATIVE GRANT AWARD:	SLEPA	\$3,670.82
	SUBGRANTEE	407.87
	TOTAL	<u>\$4,078.69</u>

PROJECT PERSONNEL: David A. Reed
Project Director

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Ernest N. Morial
Mayor

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OVERVIEW

In January, 1979, the Orleans Parish Family Court implemented the Orleans Parish Juvenile Awareness Program (hereafter, the Program). Operated by the Orleans Parish Juvenile Probation Department, a division of the Court, the Program was a local version of the one developed at Rahway State Prison in New Jersey and, more recently, celebrated in the television documentary, "Scared Straight." In an attempt to demystify the realities of prison life, the Program took juvenile offenders inside the State Prison for person-to-person encounters with inmates serving life sentences. It was anticipated that this glimpse of prison life would considerably reduce the likelihood of the juvenile returning as an inmate.

While early reports (including "Scared Straight") regarding the effectiveness of the Rahway Prison Program had been favorable, the first rigorous evaluation of the program cast doubt on its effectiveness. In the May 7, 1979, issue of the Criminal Justice Newsletter an article on the research conducted by Professor James Finckenauer of Rutgers University for the New Jersey Department of Corrections was published. Before concluding that the New Jersey effort was surrounded by "unrealistic goals and expectations", Finckenauer reported that recorded delinquent behavior was higher among those who had been exposed to the Rahway Project than among a control group. It was shortly after the appearance of this article that the Orleans Parish Program was notified that there had been a "temporary" shut-down of the Juvenile Awareness Program operated at the Angola State Prison.

THE ORLEANS PARISH PROGRAM

The Juvenile Awareness Program was funded through a Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) grant, number 78-J9-9.1-0174, in the fall of 1978. Approximately 57% of the federal funds were for the salary of the program coordinator who was hired in January, 1979, and worked half-time. The balance of the funds were for other operating expenses. The first request for funds was for the period January-March, 1979.

In the grant application, the Court had proposed to prevent juvenile delinquency by demonstrating the negative aspects of prison incarceration and the consequences of continued criminal activities. To accomplish this goal, it was anticipated that the Program would provide bi-monthly trips to Angola for ten to fifteen youths per visit. Table 1 provides a monthly distribution of the trips taken by the Program.

TABLE 1
MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION OF TRIPS TAKEN BY THE ORLEANS
PARISH JUVENILE AWARENESS PROGRAM
(JANUARY-MAY, 1979)

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>NUMBER OF TRIPS</u>	<u>TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</u>
January	2	27
February	-no trips due to police strike - ^a	---
March	2	29
April	2	20
May	2	14
Total	8	90

^aNo other explanation why no trips were taken.

As can be seen in Table 1, the Program was generally (i.e., with the exception of February) providing the trips believed necessary to accomplish the goal stated in the grant.

Apparently, in early June, 1979, prison authorities decided to discontinue the Juvenile Awareness Program. After that time, the program coordinator continued screening potential participants. Also, several follow-up sessions were organized and held for juveniles who had already made the trip.¹ By the end of August, 1979, the program coordinator had been terminated and the Program officially discontinued.

IMPACT

Although the Program was implemented without the establishment of a control group or some other method with which to assess program impact, an assessment of the arrest records of program participants may nevertheless be informative. The stated, long-range goal of the Program was "to prevent juvenile delinquency."

¹Since all the juveniles who made the trip during the months January-May, 1979, had been referred by the Probation Department, the Program was in compliance with the stipulation that 51% of the participants had prior contact with the juvenile justice system.

Since all program participants were referred by the Court, it may be inferred that the goal more appropriately might have been to prevent recidivism. Without entering the debate regarding the definition of the word recidivism, this report will count formal contacts with the criminal justice system and measure the change in the number of such contacts before and after participation in the Program. For the purposes of this report, these contacts will be those recorded offenses serious enough to warrant referral to the Family Court. Also, if more than one offense was recorded on the same date, the most serious was noted and the entire incident was recorded as one juvenile justice contact.

A review of the records on file at the Juvenile Division of the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) provided the data for this assessment. Of the ninety total cases,² records were found for eighty-two. The identifications within eight of the records were questionable and, therefore, those cases were deleted from the analysis - leaving seventy-four cases.

Finally, before the analysis could begin, it was necessary to establish some time-period outside of which arrests would not be counted. It was decided, rather arbitrarily, to discount any arrests before January, 1978 - one year before the implementation of the Juvenile Awareness Program. Using this cut-off date, five cases no longer had previous offenses and were deleted from the analysis, leaving sixty-nine cases (77.5%) for the assessment of program impact. Thirty-nine of the program participants had arrests during the pre-cut-off period which totaled 101 separate incidents. Seventeen had one arrest, five had two, six had three, five had four, two had five, and four had six or more.

Table 2 presents data indicating the number of offenses before and after program participation. In all but seven cases, the program participants had fewer arrests after the program than before. As can be seen in the Table 2, a total of six participants had the same number of arrests before and after; five had one before and one after; and, one had two before and two after. In only one case did the number of arrests increase after program participation, from one before to two arrests after. However, it should be noted that in this one case the offenses increased in seriousness from an initial arrest for shoplifting to simple battery to attempted murder.

²Because one person had been on two trips, this number is different from the total presented in Table 1.

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF ARRESTS BEFORE AND AFTER PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

	NUMBER OF OFFENSES	BEFORE								TOTAL
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
A	0	18	16	7	1	2	2	0	0	46
F	1	5	2	6	2	2	2	0	0	19
T	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	4
E	TOTAL	24	19	14	3	4	4	0	1	69
R										

Table 3 presents the same arrest data by the month of program participation. As indicated by that Table, there was a total of 168 arrests before and 27 after participation in the program, approximately an 84% decline. A comparison of the numbers in the after column with the number of cases represented by the corresponding row indicates that the majority of participants had no arrests after program participation.

Since the time periods involved in the before and after tabulation are not equivalent, an adjustment should be considered. The maximum time in the before period for any participants was just less than eighteen months while, on the other hand, the minimum time during which arrests were counted in the after period was six months (i.e., May-November). Assuming everything else equal, the number of arrests in the before period may be divided by three (six months being a third of eighteen). With this adjustment there would be a total of fifty-six arrests during the before period, with the twenty-seven arrests of the after period representing a 52% decrease.

TABLE 3
ARRESTS (BEFORE AND AFTER) OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BY MONTH OF TRIP

	BEFORE	AFTER
JAN (N=20)	54	8
MAR (N=23)	48	6
APR (N=18)	49	12
MAY (N=8)	17	1
TOTAL (N=69)	168	27

Tables 4a and 4b further refine these data and indicate the average number of arrests per participant and the average number of arrests per participant per month, respectively. The percent change indicated in each of these tables further demonstrates the decline in arrests after participation in the Program.

TABLE 4a
AVERAGE NUMBER OF ARRESTS PER PARTICIPANT
AND BY MONTH OF PARTICIPATION
ARRESTS

MONTH	BEFORE	AFTER	PERCENT CHANGE
JAN (N=20)	2.70	0.40	-85.2
MAR (N=23)	2.09	0.26	-87.6
APR (N=18)	2.72	0.67	-75.4
MAY (N=8)	2.13	0.13	-93.9
TOTAL (N=69)	2.44	0.39	-84.0

TABLE 4b

AVERAGE NUMBER OF ARRESTS PER PARTICIPANT PER MONTH^a AND BY MONTH OF PARTICIPATION

MONTH	ARRESTS		RECENT CHARGE
	BEFORE	AFTER	
JAN	.208	.040	-80.8
MAY	.139	.033	-76.3
APR	.170	.096	-43.5
MAY	.125	.022	-82.4

^a This is another method of standardizing the varying amounts of time for the different participants. Taking, for example, those participants during the month of January, there had been at most thirteen months during which they could have had arrests counted for the before period. Similarly, there were ten months after participation when arrests were counted. The figures in this table represent the corresponding figure from Table 4a, divided by the appropriate number of months.

Given the limitations of the data, all the tables have indicated a substantial decline in number of arrests after participation in the Juvenile Awareness Program. Although not with the degree of certainty that the use of a control group design would have afforded, this analysis suggests that the Program was having the desired impact.

END