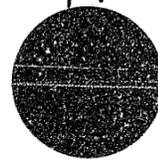


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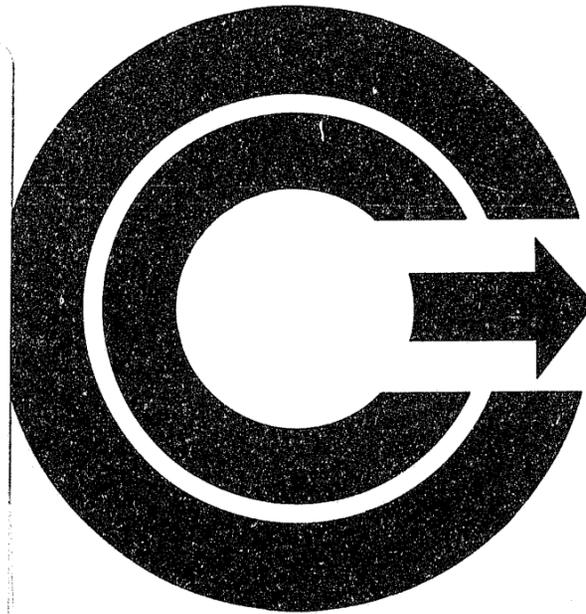
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**Innovative Approaches to**

**Juvenile Justice:**

**Executive Summaries of Four**

**Juvenile Diversion Project Reports**



**CONSULTATION CENTRE**

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## INTRODUCTION

This brochure comprises executive summaries of four diversion project reports. Because there was a two-year hiatus between the drafting of these reports and the publication of their executive summaries, an update section is included at the end of the summaries to make the reader aware of recent changes to the project models. The Ministry of the Solicitor General was involved in the funding, at some stage, of these projects.

If the reader wishes more than a precis, he may order the full project report, in English or French, free of charge from:

Communication Division, Programs Branch

Ministry of the Solicitor General

340 Laurier Avenue West

Ottawa, Ontario

K1A 0P8

FRONTENAC COUNTY DIVERSION PROGRAMME  
FRONTENAC RESTITUTION PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Frontenac County Diversion Programme, Frontenac Restitution Project is a report written in 1978 by Jim McCalla Smith. The report documents the historical development of the program, the program itself, and makes recommendations to other groups interested in implementing a similar program in their own communities.

This executive summary provides a brief account of A Research Evaluation of the Frontenac Juvenile Diversion Programmes by M.E. Morton, W.G. West et al. This evaluation, funded by the Research Branch of the Ministry of the Solicitor General, was completed in 1979. Because of the added perspective it provides on the Frontenac experience it was included in this summary for information.

The Frontenac County Diversion Programme and Restitution Project is a two-pronged approach which diverts young offenders from the juvenile justice system and facilitates restitution if restitution is to be made.

The diversion program handles young offenders who have been charged but who have not proceeded to court, and can refer to the restitution project for the development and completion of restitution agreements.

Historical Development

The historical analysis section is discussed in relation to the Court, the prosecutor, the police, the Juvenile Court Committee, the Restitution Project, committee training, lawyers and voluntary supervision.

The Court initially played a central role in developing the program's philosophy and guidelines for the Juvenile Court Committee. In the spring of 1977 a new judge was appointed for the jurisdiction. Although he did not become directly involved in the resolution of program issues he remains supportive of the project and participates in discussions of policy and direction. The program has therefore become more autonomous during this process.

The Crown Attorney for Frontenac County was initially concerned that the Juvenile Court Committee's involvement might constitute an attempt to obstruct the course of justice. He raised a number of points that were later resolved and the program now receives his continuing support.

The police were also a key factor in developing the diversion project. Because of their important role in laying charges, it was essential to involve them from the early stages of development. Discussions with them have emphasized their screening role, and the requirement that a charge must be laid for admittance to the program was often reiterated. In this way, the police would not place less importance on screening and therefore increase the ratio of charges in order to "help" young persons by referring them to the program. Both police screening and the diversion program aim to reduce the number of young people entering the juvenile justice system, and therefore must work together.

Because there has been less involvement of the Ontario Provincial Police there were, initially, problems of communication which have since been rectified through regular contact with the OPP.

The Juvenile Court Committee plays a pivotal role in the operation of the diversion project. The Committee, begun in May, 1974, comprised five persons who represented local juvenile justice agencies, plus a lawyer and a secretary. Their mandate was to try to resolve the charge without a court appearance by requesting that a charge be adjourned sine die (without a set appearance date). Subsequently, after consultation with a law school graduate who became involved with the committee, a submission for funding was sent to the Solicitor General of Canada. The proposal was for a three-year demonstration project embracing a philosophy of non-intervention and including developing a Restitution Project.

On May 1, 1975 the Solicitor General of Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services agreed to share the costs of the program equally.

In March 1976, the committee guidelines were revised to detail the procedure for a committee meeting with a young person. The resulting guidelines are still in use.

In June 1977, a training program was begun to prepare other persons to participate as committee members. Thus non-professionals have begun to participate as committee members and have added new ideas and energy.

The Restitution Project was developed to meet the needs of the Juvenile Court Committee. Many of the young persons meeting with the Committee were involved in offences involving property damage. Because the committee does not have the resources to work out restitution agreements and also because restitution is often agreed to at the committee meetings, a restitution project

was established to meet this need. In August 1975, the project began to accept referrals and now accepts referrals from the police and the courts.

The training program used for new committee members is also outlined in this report as is the role of lawyers in the Committee process.

#### Project Description

The Frontenac Diversion Programme's philosophy of non-intervention focuses on the offence, rather than the individual and attempts to be as unobtrusive as possible.

The program's objectives are: "To reduce the number of young people appearing in juvenile court and the number found 'delinquent'; to provide an informal, non-threatening, and non-stigmatizing means of dealing with young offenders; to generate in young offenders a sense of having been dealt with fairly; to be more effective than the juvenile court in limiting recidivism; and, to assist young offenders and their families to obtaining counselling and other treatment assistance if they wish."

The Juvenile Court Committee meets with young persons who have been charged with an offence, prior to their appearance in court. The Committee will also meet with the family to discuss the circumstances of the offence and what should be done. Once an agreement is reached, the Committee contacts the Crown Prosecutor and recommends that the charge be withdrawn. The meeting with the Committee is voluntary on the young person's part and is dependent on at least an admission of partial

responsibility for the offence. Only those offences which included serious physical injury or where a young person had previously been found delinquent are not eligible for the program (although the police may make exception to this last condition).

At the committee meeting the participants include the young person, the parents of the young person, a lawyer (duty counsel is provided) and three committee members. The discussion focuses on the offence and on finding a suitable solution which all participants feel is appropriate.

The responses may include: no further action, warning, curfew, no association with accomplices, regular school attendance, apology, restitution, matching with an adult volunteer (for supervision) and other responses directly related to the offence.

For the Restitution Project, the juvenile must be referred by the police, the Juvenile Court Committee or the Juvenile Court judge. She or he must admit responsibility for the offence, and must agree to participate in the project. There must be a victim of the offence and the offence must not involve serious physical injury or death.

The project staff holds a meeting with the juvenile and the victim where an agreement is developed. There is a follow-up to see that the agreement has been fulfilled. If the agreement is not respected then the case is sent back to the referring body but only if the referring body requests it and only for a maximum of six months.

There are two types of restitution agreements used. When money is to change hands, the agreement is between the young person and the victim; when the agreement is for work either for the victim or the community, then the agreement is between the young person and the Committee.

#### Statistics

A total of 224 people met with the Committee over the three years (the first year, however, refers to only a nine-month period). Of the 369 charges dealt with, 83% were property offences. Ninety per cent of those who met with the Committee had their charges withdrawn. The remaining 10% included cases where there were additional charges prior to the meeting, where the Committee did not believe the young person was sincere, where a young person and victim were not able to agree or where the committee felt a more severe sanction was required.

In the three years of operation, the victims attended the meeting in 18% of the charges for which there was a victim.

Fifty-five per cent of the 244 people referred to the Restitution Project over a three year period were referred by the Juvenile Court Committee; 30% were from the Court and 15% from the police.

The most common charge was break and enter (50% of the referrals). Twenty per cent were for mischief charges and the remaining were for various charges including shoplifting.

#### Funding

The initial three-year demonstration phase was funded by the Ministry of the Solicitor General, with in-kind funding from the provincial Ministry of Correctional Services. Since April 1979 the Ministry of Community and Social Services has provided all the funding.

#### Research Evaluation

The two principal researchers who conducted the research evaluation were from Queen's University and the University of Guelph.

The objectives of the research were "(a) to describe the functioning of a juvenile justice diversion program; (b) to measure the effects of this diversion program relative to its stated objectives; (c) to measure its effect on the traditional juvenile justice agencies and personnel; (d) to measure how the participants perceive the program; and (e) to compare the effects of juvenile court processing, diversion processing and simple maturation of non-apprehended juveniles regarding their self-reported delinquent behaviour."

The research was designed to compare juveniles assigned to court (control group) with those meeting with the Committee (experimental group). One in three persons who were eligible to be seen by the Committee were not sent an invitation and were allowed to proceed to court thus forming a control group. The research was done between December, 1976 to December 1977.

In addition, material gathered from official records of the court, the committee, restitution project and the police was examined. Participant observation in court and at Committee meetings supplied a perspective on the social history of the program. A self-reported delinquent behaviour survey of non-apprehended youths supplied a comparison group with the young persons apprehended. Finally victims were interviewed by phone especially about the restitution project.

The comparison between court cases and diversion committee cases revealed that: the Committee heard cases sooner; legal rights were protected in both settings; lawyers and police participants were more prominent in court whereas victims and witnesses were more prominent in the committee setting; there was no difference as to the number of facts revealed about the offence; the committee hearings took less time; the court's intervention resulted in more social service contact with families and that the Court's dispositions were more severe than those of the Committee even when controlling for plea.

Young persons appearing before the committee were more likely to feel that those present wanted to hear their story. They also were more likely to feel that the decision was fair.

The self-report survey revealed that although few had committed serious offences in 1977, a majority reported having committed an offence. Those charged reported more delinquent behaviour than those not charged. This is apparently comparable to similar studies.

The police in Frontenac were found to exercise a great amount of discretion and had a lower charge rate per 1,000 than

average Canadian metropolitan areas. The suggestion was made that the diversion project has made some impact on policing practices.

It was found that the Frontenac Diversion Project has successfully implemented its program philosophy and objectives. And while it did not reduce the offender's sense of stigma it had no worse effect than did the court.

#### Update

Since April 1979, the former Volunteer Probation Program has been transferred to the Frontenac Diversion Programme and is now named the Community Advocate Project.

This project has a wider referral base than did the Volunteer Probation Program, and receives referrals from the police, social agencies and the Juvenile Court Committee. Young persons referred to the project may be having various problems with their families, they may be truants or they may be referred by the Children's Aid Society.

Youths are matched with adults, who are trained to act as spokespersons for the young persons and to also provide friendship and guidance. In addition, adults and youths are matched according to sex.

There have been no further changes.

## THE ESSEX COUNTY PILOT DIVERSION PROJECT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Essex County Pilot Diversion Project: A Model Project Report was written in February 1979 by Thérèse Lajeunesse. Similar to the Hamilton and West Island reports, it documents the evolution and operations of the Essex County Project, presents issues and makes recommendations.

### Historical Development

In February 1975, a judge of the Windsor Family Court attended a National Council of Juvenile Court Judges Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. The agenda at this conference included discussions of pre-court diversion programs. Simultaneously, the John Howard Society of Windsor was also showing an interest in diversion. Shortly thereafter a diversion project planning group was called together which included the same judge of the Family Court, the Executive Director of the John Howard Society, a representative from juvenile probation, a representative from the Windsor Police Youth Branch and a case worker from the John Howard Society.

This planning group determined the project model. It designated eligibility criteria and agreed that the project should operate at the first formal point of entry into the justice system namely, at the post-charge level.

In keeping with the general philosophy of providing an alternative to the justice system a number of basic concepts were also identified.

The concept of a "compensatory task" agreement is integral to the program. Central to this is the notion that a young person must be held responsible for his or her actions. The "compensatory task" agreement is a restitution plan where work values for offences are developed based on actual monetary cost to the victim and community (police time) and the young person's age and work capacity. If the victims choose not to participate they are asked to suggest a community setting where the young person may work.

For those young persons who need more help than the diversion program can offer, the option of making a referral to a social agency was included in the program model.

With the program model developed and accepted, a probation officer was seconded and the Essex County Diversion Program became operational June 18, 1975.

#### Project Description

Generally, non-violent first offenders are eligible for the diversion program. Those offences which are excluded from the program include murder, rape, armed robbery and assault causing bodily harm. A six-month pilot project was undertaken with repeated offenders but the project has in the past concentrated on first offenders.

As the project operates at the post-charge level, suitable cases are picked up by the Project Administrator who scrutinizes all charges laid. A letter is then sent to the parents and to the young person stating that the youth qualifies for the diversion program. If the diversion program's secretary has not heard from the parents within 48 hours of when it is anticipated

that they should receive the letter, a telephone call is made to the parents. If the parents or young person are not interested in diversion, the matter proceeds to court.

Once the diversion office is contacted by the parents, an "intake" interview is arranged with a diversion worker. At that interview a duty counsel is also on hand to advise the parents and the young person of the legal implications of both the diversion program and the court process. Once the implications are clear and the parties understand the diversion program, they are able to choose how they would like to proceed.

If the parents and young person choose the diversion program they are asked to sign a general admission of facts and a release of information. One of the conditions of entry is acceptance of responsibility for behaviour alleged in the charge. The release of information gives the diversion worker authority to obtain information about the young person and family.

The diversion worker may return the young person to court at the conclusion of intake if she or he considers that it is essential to the well-being of the young person. This is done if the youth refuses a social service referral or a placement recommendation regarded as essential; if the juvenile's behaviour is generally out of control; or if a voluntary placement cannot be arranged because of resistance from the placement resource.

The diversion worker prepares a social profile which outlines the young person's relationships with his or her parents and siblings, his or her school and his or her community. Based on this social profile, it will become clear if a child is

experiencing problems which may require a referral to a social service agency for more intervention.

The diversion worker phones the victim of the offence to find out if the victim would like to meet with the juvenile and participate in working out a compensatory task agreement. If the victim refuses, then, arrangements are made for the youth to work in a community setting.

The diversion worker remains in contact with the youth, the placement resource and social agency if a referral was made.

The charge remains pending until she or he fulfills the requirements of the agreement. Agreements can never exceed nine months or include more than 40 hours of work. When the young person has fulfilled his or her agreement, and upon recommendation of the diversion worker, the charge is withdrawn. The process is thus completed and a closing letter is sent to the police officer who laid the charge, to the young person and to the social service agency if there was one.

The program is overseen by the Diversion Committee which "scrutinizes and controls" the diversion program. The committee comprises eleven individuals from different walks of life and meets once a month.

Included in this report is a brief section on what is known as the Support Service for the Windsor Police Youth Branch. This is a program which has grown out of the diversion project and uses all of the same concepts. It is at the pre-charge level and is therefore considered a prevention program. It also falls under the aegis of the Diversion Committee. The Sellin-Wolfgang index is used as a point system to measure the

level of delinquent behaviour. This is then used as the criteria for admission to the program and for direct funneling through the justice system. Further information on the Sellin-Wolfgang index is included in the report.

#### Statistics

In the three year period from 1975-78, 53% of the cases scrutinized were considered suitable for referral to the diversion project. After intake 1.8% of these cases were returned to court for normal processing and 3% were orally cautioned with no further action. Of those 53% referred to diversion, 85% were accepted in the program. The 15% differential also includes those who decided not to participate and 11% who proceeded to a not guilty plea in court. After completion of the program 18.7% young persons were charged with new offences. The total non-success rate is estimated at 20.6% which includes new offences plus general non-success of the program resulting in non-completion.

#### Funding

Funding for the diversion program is provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and by the Ministry of the Attorney General. This funding is roughly broken down into 70% contribution by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and 30% by the Ministry of the Attorney General. The Attorney General's contribution provides for office space and facilities for the project; whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services contributes the Project Administrator's salary and contracts with the Catholic Family Services Bureau for provision of service.

Discussion

The report also includes a "reflective analysis" section which is a synthesis of the perceptions of persons involved in the project with an analysis of the problems raised.

The statistical information provided earlier in this report does indicate that the project has a capacity to provide a viable alternative to the court process. There has been a reduction in court flows and a sizeable group does choose diversion over the more formal justice system process.

For a great number of young persons, one of the outcomes of the diversion option is that there is no finding of delinquency, which can only be considered a positive effect.

The responsibility principle in the concept of task agreements, where the young person is held responsible for his actions in a fair fashion, is a very healthy one.

The impact on the social service community has undoubtedly been good, where, it can be assumed, not as much attention was given to juveniles in trouble with the law as is now the case.

There is no doubt that any client benefits from a program that takes into consideration the human factors of his actions as well as the implications of breaking the law.

It was reported that although the Windsor Police Department is very supportive of the diversion project and more specifically the Support Services Program, there has been reluctance on the part of the other county police forces both to support the project and to become more involved in it. It has

It has also been reported that their early perceptions of the program were that the program overruled what was their original decision to charge. Because the point of entry of the project occurs after a charge is sworn, it becomes a county project and many young persons from outside the actual limits of Windsor are referred to it. The lack of support may be an indication of a weakness in the project, but as it does not pose serious problems to the operation of the program, it cannot be considered a major issue at this time.

A few persons voiced some concern over leaving the charge pending. An earlier report, a social work thesis done for the University of Windsor on the Essex County Project also reiterated the same issue. The point was made however that the police would not likely support a diversion program if there was no enforceability or consequences upon non-completion. Because it was voiced as a concern it is included in this report as an issue.

The problem of enforcement has also surfaced concerning agreements to obtain treatment. What happens if a person completes the task agreement but refuses to complete the agreement to obtain services from a social service agency? The program model suggests that the complete diversion agreement would not be fulfilled, therefore this person could be returned to court. There is a need for clarification of this issue which may include a decision to not return someone to court who refuses further arrangements than the task agreement.

The analysis in this report includes various comments in the Support Services Program and a recommendation that a closer look be taken at the implications of the Support Services Program on the Diversion Program. If a youth successfully completes the

Support Services Program and commits a new offence does that mean that he will not be considered for diversion but be sent to court? Also along the same lines, a more indepth analysis should be made of the effect of the diversion program on the juvenile justice system.

One of the major problems experienced by the diversion program in its three year operation seems to be what can be referred to as inter-agency conflict. Because workers come from a number of social agencies it is difficult to supervise the quality of work and to develop standards. Roles have been unclear, networks of communication bogged down and friction has caused problems in program operation. It was recommended that either the practice be discontinued or that a rotating commitment be obtained from the agencies where workers would participate on a full time basis for block periods of time. Quality and continuity of service would be ensured by full time staff.

The report concludes with research questions.

#### Update

A similar program has recently been set up in the neighbouring town of Essex. A resident steering committee is presently developing a project named the Neighbourhood Accountability Panel. A mediator in this program would play the same role as the diversion worker in the Essex County Diversion Project. The program would operate at the pre/post-charge level and would be tied into the Essex County Project. The pre-charge program would also apply the Sellin-Wolfgang index used in Essex County.

As of October 1979, the John Howard Society is no longer involved in the Essex County Diversion Project and the two part-time workers loaned from agencies are now replaced by a full-time person from the Catholic Family Services Agency.

The Support Services Program is now re-named Project Intervention.

THE HAMILTON ATTENDANCE CENTRE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hamilton Attendance Centre: A Model Project Report was written in July 1979 by Thérèse Lajeunesse. It discusses the development and operations of the Attendance Centre in Hamilton, and makes recommendations to other groups interested in the attendance centre concept.

Historical Development

The concept of attendance centre programs originated in England where the first program began in 1950. The purpose was to provide an alternative method of treatment for the offender who seemed to be heading towards detention.

In November 1973, a planning group made up of John Howard Society representatives, probation officers and a Family Court judge was organized to consider creating alternatives to group home placement or training school in Hamilton. The idea was to establish a community program for the more serious male juvenile offenders where further delinquent behaviour might lead to institutionalization or removal from the home environment.

The first proposal for an attendance centre was submitted to the Ministry of the Solicitor General and funds were obtained in November 1974.

The aim of the attendance centre is to occupy the youths during what is considered to be the peak period for delinquency; that is after school hours.

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The Attendance Centre Project is sponsored by the John Howard Society of Hamilton. When the Hamilton Attendance Centre first opened, it received both boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 15. In the early planning stages it had been decided that referrals would be made by the court through a condition added to the probation order. It was also decided that the program would include the setting and working towards goals, so that the youths would have certain expectations placed on them during the program. These aims of the program could be broken down into roughly four areas: the development of social skills, the improvement of school performance in relation to vocational goals; the development of constructive leisure activities, and the development of an understanding of the social system and its mores.

In October 1975, the program was changed to admit boys only and the age was changed to include 13 to 15 year-olds. Very few girls had been referred and the few who were referred had some difficulty adjusting to an almost totally male group composition. The same process occurred with the age criteria. The 11 and 12-year-olds referred to the project did not function in the group as well as the older boys.

By October 1976, the number of boys referred to the project had tripled and by April 1976 the credibility of the centre with guidance counsellors and area school boards was firmly established.

Although initially the centre was perceived as a direct alternative to training school; it is now viewed as an additional condition to probation for those serious delinquents who need more than regular probation supervision but who don't necessarily have to be sent to training school.

#### Project Description

(Although this section is in the present tense because it is a summary of the original report, it is not a description of the Hamilton Attendance Centre today. The Update Section will provide further information.)

A referral is initiated by the probation officer who consults with the attendance centre staff to determine if the candidate is suitable. If it is decided that the candidate is suitable, the probation officer will make a recommendation before the Family Court Judge, who will then order the youth to attend the centre as a condition of probation.

The program is staffed by one programmer responsible for the over-all planning of the program and one counsellor who acts as a probation officer. The Centre is located in an old school in downtown Hamilton.

The counsellor meets initially with the boy and his parents during the first week, which is called the assessment week. During this period specific and concrete goals are formulated and embodied in a contract which the boy and his parents sign. The goals specify what the boy is expected to accomplish during the program and can include such activities as remedial studies (reading and mathematics) and a wide variety of other life skills such as learning chess, athletic interests, community involvement, driver preparation and career planning. Other activities include group recreation and discussion, weekly outings and occasional counselling sessions.

Once these goals are met, regular participation at the centre is considered and completed. Generally the program runs between eight and fifteen weeks (average is 12) on Mondays to Fridays between 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

When the contract has been fulfilled, part-time attendance at the Centre begins (minimum one night per week for two weeks). Days added as a consequence of non-attendance are made up during this time.

After successful completion of the total program, if there are no further police occurrences, the judge is notified and a recommendation for termination of probation is made (which is estimated at about 90% of the cases). The others continue on regular probation or some other appropriate program is found, such as training school.

#### Statistics

In the year 1976-77, there were 25 court orders to the program with 22 contracts negotiated, 18 programs completed and 11 probation periods terminated. Twenty to 22 court orders a years seems to be the average.

To gain an idea of what happens if a youth does not complete the program, the Centre looked at the 52 young persons who participated in the Centre during the three year demonstration phase\*. Of the 52, seven did not complete the program. Of these seven, four went to a group home, one had psychiatric problems which necessitated hospitalization, one went to training school and one ran away from home.

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\*The first few years, the Centre received lower than its present rate of yearly referrals.

#### Funding

Although initial funds for the demonstration phase were obtained from the federal Ministry of the Solicitor General, present funds are provided by the Children's Division of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the United Way of Hamilton.

#### Discussion

Because this program occurs at the sentencing level through a court order, representatives of three major groups were interviewed for comments and suggestions about the program. These persons represented the two local Boards of Education, probation officers and judges.

As the boys participating in the program are usually experiencing problems in school, the schools often can assess the impact of the program on behaviour in schools. There is direct involvement between the individual teacher of the boys and the staff at the Centre concerning remedial work done by the boys at the Centre.

The school representatives were highly impressed with the Centre's program as it exists and commented that if anything, there is a strong need for expansion of the program either to an afternoon program for young persons who are chronic non-attenders (truants) or through the establishment of an alternative school program. The Centre is seen as offering a community alternative to more dramatic intervention such as training school.

The probation officer has been involved since the early planning of the program and is the major source of referrals. Probation officers believe that supervision and accountability are increased by the Centre's program and they are pleased with the goal-setting model. The model is perceived as encouraging boys to be responsible for their improvement.

The major advantage to the probation officer of the Centre's program is that it relieves the probation officer of some of the more seriously delinquent youths from his or her caseload. Thus more time is spent with those young persons who can benefit from ordinary probation supervision.

The Family Court Judges interviewed also were pleased with the program. The youths are kept occupied during peak hours, which seriously curtails the possibility of further delinquent activity in the evening hours. When one judge was asked why he would send a youth to the Attendance Centre, he replied that it is an attempt to accentuate the positive factors in a young person's environment. Those sent to the Centre are usually capable of relating to some and the home environment often indicates that the possibility for communication and supervision still exists.

The conviction is held by all groups that the Centre does help to alleviate accelerating delinquency by intervening at a time which is most critical; that is, when a new charge occurs while on probation.

In a final part to this report, a description of the John Howard Society's Community Disposition Programme is included. This victim compensation program for youthful offenders provides for use of restitution in repayment to the victim. The description was included as it is an adjunct to the Youth Services Branch of the John Howard Society of Hamilton.

#### Update

Since the completion of the Model Project Report, there have been some changes in the program of the Attendance Centre.

The facilities for the Attendance Centre have now moved to the basement of the John Howard Society. Because of this, Attendance Centre workers are available during the day and graduates of the Centre may call or drop-in on a voluntary basis for counselling or guidance.

The hours of the Centre have been expanded from 6:00 - 8:30 p.m., to 4:00 - 8:30 p.m. There are two separate groups occupying the Centre during these hours. The earlier group from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. is composed of a younger group, whose average age is 12. These young persons usually are on their first term of probation but have a number of police report occurrences and are experiencing problems with school, (most are from special educational classes), family or are having problems relating to other people. The probation officer may have felt that this type of youth was headed for more trouble and thus initiated a referral by court order.

A third change is that the number of referrals for girls has increased. Because of this there has been some experimentation at the Centre to see if the girls function better in mixed groups or in separate groups. As of this date, the aim will be to try separate groups.

There is at this moment a program for the various graduates of the Centre. The program runs two nights a week, voluntary and concentrates on recreational sports and crafts. There is an average turnout of between 25 to 30 young persons per week and they may return for as many nights as they wish. This program provides the opportunity for young persons who are still getting into trouble to seek out help and counselling on a voluntary basis.

Finally, a parents' groups is being organized on a trial basis. These parents have children who are or were participating at the Attendance Centre. Moral support and information on the court process and the juvenile justice system is provided during these sessions.

THE WEST ISLAND JUVENILE  
DIVERSION PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West Island Juvenile Diversion Project: A Model Project Report written in May 1979, by Thérèse Lajeunesse, documents the history, development and operations of the West Island Juvenile Diversion Project and includes a section on issues and recommendations.

Historical Development

The West Island Juvenile Diversion Project is a program administered by the Community Services Branch of the West Island YMCA. Begun in 1974, the program was originally modelled on a YMCA initiative in the United States called NYPUM (National Youth Project Using Minibikes). These programs in the U.S. incorporated the idea of organizing minibike riding activities for youths who did not seem to join other kinds of formal activities and who were often getting into trouble with the law. The planning group of the West Island Juvenile Diversion Project took this model and combined it with an approach of its own.

The project's approach is based on a number of theoretical beliefs. The first is that there is a tendency for young persons to commit delinquencies in a group situation. For a young person, self-concept is closely tied into what his or her group of friends think. For a youth with a weak self-concept she or he will find it difficult to be independent of the group and will

often conform to the group's pressure. The project therefore focuses on this reality and provides a support group for the young person.

Also, it is believed that if youths are involved in challenging activities, destructive behaviour will decrease. Along the same line of thought, it was felt that most clients referred to the project have a need for a strong adult relationship. The program model therefore provides for the development of this kind of relationship with the individual youth workers in the project.

Another principle of the project is that individual communities must become responsible for all young persons in their midst, including those youths who are having various social and legal problems. Alternatives to the justice system must be found where young persons can resolve their conflicts in their own communities.

The object of this project is to provide such alternatives for offenders or potential offenders by providing support, guidance and a forum for encounter.

#### Project Description

The general format of the West Island Juvenile Diversion Project includes a group discussion and a group activity in each session. The group activity has been widened from the original minibike idea to include survival camping, horseback riding, sailing, auto mechanics and others. Members of these "clubs" meet for an average of ten hours per week which is broken down into two after-school evenings and three hours on Saturday.

Clubs generally run for a period of six months. Discussions are directed at the development of responsibility, commitment, decision-making and other life-skills, and may include role playing, field trips and guest speakers.

Young persons are referred to the project by the schools, the police, social workers or friends. A meeting is arranged between the project worker and the youth and the program is described to the youth at this point. Participation in the project is voluntary and it is essential that the young persons understand what involvement in the project means.

The parents are contacted by telephone, letter or both, so that they too understand what activities the West Island Juvenile Diversion Project offers. The project workers remain in regular contact with the parents and the referral source so as to be kept informed of any developments or further problems the young person may be having. In addition, the project workers remain in contact with the parents and the young person for a period of three months after the youth leaves the project.

As well as running the "clubs" the youth workers are involved in community work and advocacy work for their clients. The advocacy role can include providing individual support of the young person at school and providing counselling at home with the family when problems occur. Because some of the young persons must deal with institutions either for social, educational or other services, the worker may often advocate for more effective contacts with those institutions.

Because of the West Island's community base and its commitment to citizen participation, the West Island Project is represented in citizens' groups which focus on awareness of justice processes and services for youths. These groups are also designed to act as lobbying groups to improve the quality of service available to the young people of West Island. The West Island Project provides for the participation of volunteers in its program.

#### Statistics

In the calendar year of 1978, 167 young persons were referred to the project. Of these 167, 72% were either 14 or 15 although the range in ages was between 12 and 17. Seventeen per cent were female and the schools were responsible for 69% of all referrals made.

Of these same 167 persons, 19% had been adjudicated delinquent by the court and an additional 53% had had previous contact with the police. The total number of young persons falling into these two categories represent 73% of all youths participating in the project.

#### Funding

The early development of the West Island Project was facilitated by several Local Initiatives Project (LIP) grants.

In September of 1976, the project obtained funding from the Ministry of the Solicitor General for a three-year period. Also the Ministère des affaires sociales of Quebec has contributed since 1976 and continues to do so.

The West Island YMCA provides support through in-kind funding which includes general administration of the project; that is, bookkeeping, purchasing, auditing and budget administration.

The present funding consists of 80% community funding from the seven municipalities of Baie d'urfé, Ste Anne de Bellevue, Beaconsfield, Dollard des Ormeaux, Kirkland, Pointe-Claire, Senneville and 20% from the Ministère des affaires sociales.

#### Issues and Discussion

To gain additional insight, the author of the West Island Juvenile Diversion Project: A Model Project Report also interviewed a cross-section of persons involved with the diversion project. The police reiterated that idleness and boredom are indeed problems for the youth of West Island. They were generally quite happy with the project and the program model. It was stated that there is a lack of concern for victim compensation and for understanding the implications of property damage. Although no specific suggestion was made for incorporating this principle in the project itself, it was mentioned as a general thought.

The school representatives were very positive about the project and noted that it should be expanded to better serve females and francophones. They tended to refer youths who are not involved in other activities, who are aggressive and get into trouble at school and elsewhere. Usually the peer group plays an important role. All of the school representatives felt that the preventive aspect is of major importance.

As the project has been more identified with male referrals there was agreement that it should expand to include girls, with a program activity geared towards girls' interest. Also because there is a need for francophone services in the West Island community, the same holds true for the establishment of a francophone club within the project.

It was also suggested by a number of those interviewed that the present steering committee should be enlarged to include an advisory board with more community involvement. Since the completion of this report, such a board has indeed been established.

There were very few negative comments made about the juvenile diversion project. Not only is the consensus that the projet is a very useful resource for the type of youth heading for trouble, but also that the present program should be expanded to include other clients.

#### Update

Since the completion of this report, the West Island Juvenile Diversion Project has undergone some noteworthy changes.

Two new programs have been added to the project: Entente and Learning Places. Entente is a restitution program where the young person can repay the community for any harm done. Youths are referred by the police or the social service centres after

admitting responsibility for an offence. These referrals are often part of a voluntary measures agreement (provided for) by the Youth Protection Act of Quebec, Bill 24. Trained volunteers work with the young person throughout the restitution process.

Learning Places is a program for students who have dropped out, been suspended or expelled from secondary school. Referrals come from three school commissions in the West Island area and from the social service centre.

A trained volunteer is paired with the participant and develops, along with the project director, four or five learning projects for the individual. Each learning project involves a different resource volunteer; thus the young person works with five or six volunteers.

Because of the relationship between school failure and delinquency, the program is considered preventive and a legitimate alternative to traditional schools.

All of the programs are now bilingual and girls are being referred to the various programs at an increasing rate.

Since the addition in funding from the seventh municipality, the Diversion Club now has four staff members.

**END**