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OJJDP Model Programs 1990

JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

Robert W. Sweet, Jr., Administrator

April 1992

Preserving Families To Prevent Delinquency

In accordance with the requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act (Public Law 93-415, title II, Section 207 (5)), the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Annual Report features "selected exemplary juvenile delinquency programs," with emphasis on community-based programs "that involve and assist families of juveniles."

The 1990 report highlights three programs found suitable for State and local replication and inclusion in OJJDP training and technical assistance programs:

- **Targeted Outreach**, a delinquency intervention program operated by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.
- **Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)**, to ensure the courts are familiar with the needs of any neglected or abused child.
- **Permanent Families for Abused and Neglected Children**, a training and technical assistance project of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ).

Targeted Outreach

Targeted Outreach is one of the latest developments in a series of progressive steps undertaken by Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) over the past 19 years to expand services to disadvantaged youth. In 1972, BGCA adopted the Youth Development Strategy, based on studies at the University

of Colorado. The strategy encouraged clubs to provide developmental programs for youth, rather than wait to address remedial or rehabilitative needs. Targeted Outreach, which grew out of this strategy, directs at-risk youth to positive alternatives offered by BGCA.

BGCA created its Task Force on Inappropriate Detention in 1981 with technical assistance provided by OJJDP. As a result of the task force's recommendations, the BGCA National Board of Directors unanimously adopted a program statement, "Inappropriate Detention of Juveniles." From this evolved an emergency response system called Targeting Programs for Delinquency Intervention—or Targeted Outreach—a comprehensive program of effective techniques and strategies that point young people in alternative, positive directions through BGCA programs.

Through a referral network linking the clubs with schools, courts, police, and other community youth-service agencies, the program recruits young people identified by clearly defined criteria as at-risk and directs them into core program activities designed to help promote:

A sense of belonging. The clubs provide a familiar setting where the individual knows he or she has a place and feels accepted by peers.

A sense of competence. Targeted Outreach provides youth with a feeling that they can do something well.

A sense of usefulness. Youth have the opportunity to do something of value for other people.

A sense of power or influence. The program provides boys and girls with a chance to be heard in order to influence decisions affecting their future.

The attainment of these goals can outweigh negative forces that often divert young people from positive social development. Causes of delinquency are complex. The Targeted Outreach program uses proven strategies to intervene and work with young people who appear to be headed for trouble.

The program's ability to reach out to youth in crisis reaffirms BGCA's founding philosophy and purpose. Eighty clubs in 10 metropolitan areas undertook BGCA's first Targeted Outreach program. They recruited 4,523 at-risk youth and established formal linkages with 335 community-based youth-serving agencies and organizations.

Under a continuation grant from OJJDP, Targeted Outreach has served more than 10,000 at-risk youth. Accomplishments include:

- Establishing a national advisory committee, comprised of knowledgeable professionals from BGCA and elsewhere in the field.
- Training of selected project staff at 30 clubs to develop gang prevention programs and recruitment of more than 1,050 participants between the ages of 7 and 11.

From the Administrator

In 1990 the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention began a program of recognition for model programs that have demonstrated their effectiveness in the juvenile justice and delinquency prevention field. The first round of consideration focused on delinquency prevention programs—particularly those that involve and assist families of juveniles.

As a longtime proponent of such family strengthening efforts, I am pleased to note that the three programs highlighted in our 1990 Annual Report, as well as in this special Bulletin, do just that.

Operated by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Targeted Outreach has served more than 10,000 youth between the ages of 7 and 17 who are at risk of joining or who have joined gangs. Responding to research findings, the program provides outreach services to the families of its participants.

In 1990 alone, 28,000 volunteers represented more than 91,000 children believed to have been abused or neglected through 436 programs developed by the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association. As we renew our commitment to the children of America, CASA is a proven way to ensure abused and neglected children who come before the courts safe, loving, and permanent homes.

Permanent placement is also the goal of the Permanent Families for Abused and Neglected Children Project, operated by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. More than a third of a million American children live in foster care. In accordance with mandates of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, the project seeks to prevent unnecessary foster care placements, to reunite children in foster care with their families, and to facilitate permanent adoptive homes where reunification is not viable.

Knowing that you share my support of strong families for a strong America, I trust this Bulletin provides you with effective ways of strengthening our families and helping our children. Your efforts toward these goals are appreciated.

Robert W. Sweet, Jr.
Administrator
Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention

- Training of selected project staff at 3 clubs to develop gang intervention programs and recruitment of more than 105 youth ages 12 to 17 who show initial signs of gang involvement.

Research indicates that successful gang prevention and intervention programs must:

- Involve youth after school.
- Provide outreach to the home and family.
- Coordinate with community agencies, particularly the police.
- Target youth about to become involved in, or already involved in, gang activities.
- Provide support and remedial strategies for youth failing in school.
- Exhibit a strong, structured, supervised approach.

BGCA provides manuals, materials, and technical assistance, including a minimum of two onsite visits. Other project activities include the clubs' role in gang prevention, a national symposium, and an inservice training manual.

Three Boys & Girls Clubs currently participate in the Targeted Outreach gang intervention program. Each received \$25,000 in Fiscal Year 1990 to offset the cost of developing and implementing the intensive delinquency intervention methods being field-tested at these sites. Eventually, Targeted Outreach will encompass the more than 1.5 million youth age 7 to 17 who belong to Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Court Appointed Special Advocates

Every day thousands of America's children suffer abuse. Survivors of abusive and neglectful homes may suffer again—in a system where the parents and the State are represented in court proceedings, but there is no one to represent the child, whose interests may be different. The system lacks the time, money, or people to listen to a child.

In 1990, more than 2.5 million allegations of child abuse and neglect were reported. This represents a 15-percent increase in child abuse and neglect charges over 1988.

Child abuse and neglect may contribute to some abused children becoming abusers and delinquents. Children may be shuffled from one temporary home to another. OJJDP deploys the JJD Act's discretionary funds to support programs that demonstrate effective approaches to reducing serious juvenile crime. One such program is Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). The program is supported by a 3-year cooperative agreement between OJJDP and the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (NCASAA). Since the original funding commitment for 1985–1989, OJJDP renewed its support in 1990 for an additional 3 years.

NCASAA was organized in 1982. Its founder, Judge David Soukup, describes the impetus:

As a judge, I had to make tough decisions. I had to decide whether to take a child from the only home he's ever known, or leave him someplace where he might possibly be abused. I needed someone who could tell me what was best for that child—from the child's viewpoint. That's what CASA does.

Court Appointed Special Advocates or volunteer guardians *ad litem* (GAL) have received specialized training in the juvenile justice system, State and Federal child abuse laws, child development, the social service delivery system, and the dynamics of child abuse and neglect. Intensive personal interviews and reference checks help screen volunteers, as do training sessions that include report writing and interviewing. In many States, volunteers' backgrounds are checked through child abuse registries and criminal records clearances.

A CASA volunteer is appointed by a judge to conduct an independent investigation of a child's circumstances and recommend to the court the placement and treatment most in

accord with the child's best interests. The volunteer continues to monitor the progress of the case, ensuring that court-ordered services are provided and reporting any changes in circumstances to the court. CASA volunteers provide the court with information unavailable in any other manner.

NCASAA provides training, technical assistance, program development, consultation, public education, resource development, and government relations services. As the United States Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect noted, CASA/GAL programs make the legal system more responsive to children. CASA recognizes that abused and neglected children need advocacy and optimal legal representation. As NCASAA's executive director Beth Waid affirms, "There is no more important work that any of us may do in this lifetime than what we do as volunteers in advocating for the best interests of the next generation, one child at a time."

Under a cooperative agreement, OJJDP provides 68 percent of NCASAA's funding. Additional funds are derived from foundation grants such as the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the Kappa Alpha Theta Foundation.

A 1990 survey of 316 CASA programs revealed two prevalent models. The predominant model, representing almost half the programs, consists of volunteer guardians *ad litem* who appear as parties in the cases they are assigned. Of the remainder, most appear as *amicus curiae* (friend of the court).

The average CASA program serves 193 children annually. The average CASA volunteer donates 116 hours a year. In 1990, 28,000 men and women represented 91,000 children as CASA volunteers. A recent study showed that 66 percent of CASA volunteers had earned a college degree. Eighteen percent have attended graduate school. The majority of volunteers are between 35 and 50 years old and hold full- or part-time jobs.

As social work caseloads across the country increase, CASA not only ben-

efits the children it serves but enables its volunteers to gain a close understanding of how the court system works to protect juveniles. Carrying only one or two cases at a time, CASA volunteers are able to thoroughly research the case, uncovering the "hidden" facts about a child's circumstances.

CASA programs save the taxpayers and the courts millions of dollars. To comply with the mandates of the JJDP Act and qualify for certain Federal funds, State and county governments must provide a guardian *ad litem* for each case of child abuse or neglect that goes before the courts. In 1990, CASA volunteers acting as guardians *ad litem* spent an average of 57 hours per case, serving approximately 91,000 boys and girls. If they had been paid \$50 an hour (the rate usually paid to attorney GALs), that translates to \$216 million worth of advocacy for children. Calculated at *minimum* wage, CASA volunteers contributed the equivalent of \$18.2 million in services.

As OJJDP Administrator Robert W. Sweet, Jr., has observed, "As we move to strengthen our commitment to the children and strong families of America, CASA stands as one of the most effective ways of helping abused and neglected children find their way through the court systems to safe, loving, permanent homes."

Permanent Families for Abused and Neglected Children

During the 1970s, juvenile judges urged Congress to examine the child welfare system and find ways to respond to the needs of the abused and neglected. Children were often removed from their families for placement in foster homes or institutions. Once removed, few were ever reunited with their biological families.

An estimated 407,000 American children now live in foster care. Some children's childhood memories consist of a seemingly endless succession of foster homes.

The Permanent Families for Abused and Neglected Children Project seeks to prevent unnecessary foster care placements, to reunite children already in foster homes with their families, and to facilitate permanent adoptive homes when reunification is not practical.

A missing definition. Congress passed the Adoptive Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. It called for the judicial, executive, and legislative branches to work together to preserve families and, if necessary, build new ones. The Act required judges to determine whether "reasonable efforts" were made to enable children to remain at home before being placed in foster care. Judges were ordered to make "reasonable efforts" to reunite foster children with their biological parents, although no definition of such efforts was provided by the Act.

Since 1985, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) has focused its training efforts on child placement. During Fiscal Year 1990, NCJFCJ conducted 9 training programs involving approximately 1,875 participants. NCJFCJ's State-based training and technical assistance efforts promote timely judicial review for children at risk of placement and those already in foster care.

Model courts encourage judges to adopt new court rules, forms, and orders to ensure thorough hearings to determine whether reasonable efforts were made to enable children to stay at home. They identify community services available to children and families; increase cooperation among courts, social service agencies, attorneys, and community leaders; and encourage the provision of family preservation services and early appointment of a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

New effort for drug victims. Last year the project developed a protocol for preservation of families afflicted with drug abuse. The protocol includes model questions and factors for consideration in determining reasonable efforts for family preservation in drug-related dependency cases.

In cases involving substance abuse, courts often receive a request for emergency shelter care for a newborn infant hospitalized because toxicological screening has demonstrated the presence of drugs in its system.

When a drug-dependent infant has been placed outside its biological family, the court attempts to learn through subsequent hearings whether the mother's willingness and opportunity to undergo drug treatment hold forth hope for eventual reunification of her family.

OJJDP supports the new effort with discretionary grant funding. Other organizations also assist NCJFCJ activities. Cosponsors of the program's implementation guidelines include the Child Welfare League of America, the Youth Law Center, and the National Center for Youth Law.

Toward the Future

In selecting the preceding programs, the Model Programs Task Force used four criteria to identify model delinquency prevention programs:

- The program should reflect current theory or practice by appearing to be cost-effective, beneficial, effective, and suitable for incorporation into State juvenile justice systems.
- The program should have been implemented successfully, having

been established for a sufficient period of time to demonstrate that it is worthwhile.

- The program should incorporate advanced techniques in innovatively focusing on a neglected target group.
- The program effectiveness should have been demonstrated through evaluation.

To be designated as a model, ordinarily a program must meet all four criteria; however, under exceptional circumstances, the third or fourth may be waived. By using such criteria, OJJDP assures State and local policymakers that programs recommended for replication have demonstrated their worth in deterring youth from delinquency through building stronger and healthier families.

For Further Information

The following organizations can provide more information and help courts and communities interested in supporting these selected model prevention programs:

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
 U.S. Department of Justice
 633 Indiana Avenue NW.
 Washington, DC 20531
 Tel. 202-307-5911

Boys & Girls Clubs of America Targeted Outreach
 c/o Program Services
 771 First Avenue
 New York, NY 10017
 Tel. 212-351-5911

National CASA Association
 2722 Eastlake Avenue, East
 Suite 220
 Seattle, WA 98102
 Beth Waid, Executive Director
 Tel. 206-328-8588

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
 P.O. Box 8970
 Reno, NV 89507
 Attn: Robert Praksti, Project Director,
 Permanency Planning Project
 Tel. 702-784-6737

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse
 1600 Research Boulevard
 Rockville, MD 20850
 Tel. 800-638-8736

The Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, coordinates the activities of the following program Offices and Bureaus: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Office for Victims of Crime.

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