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Family Counseling and Diversion -
Planning and Implementing Programs for Juveniles

Final Report

Center on Administration of Criminal Justice
University of California, Davis

34171
READING ROOM

One of the most important current issues in the field of delinquency and juvenile justice is the proper handling of runaways, youths alleged to be beyond the control of their parents and other juveniles who are considered delinquent but who have violated no criminal law. These youths represent nearly one-third of the total referrals to juvenile court in California and high percentages throughout the nation. Many judges and probation officers have long felt these to be among their toughest cases and the least appropriate for handling through the juvenile court.

The Sacramento 601 Diversion Project began in October 1970 as an experiment designed to test whether juveniles charged with this kind of offense--the 601 or pre-delinquent offense--could be handled better through short term family crisis therapy at the time of referral than through the traditional procedures of the juvenile court.

The project had four basic goals, to:

- Reduce the number of cases going to court.
- Decrease overnight detentions.
- Reduce the number of repeat offenses.
- Accomplish these goals at a cost no greater than that required for the regular processing of cases.

Based on the project's first two years involving over a thousand cases handled by the project and by the comparison control group the project evaluation indicated that:

- The number of court petitions was reduced by more than 50 percent.
- The number of youths involved in repeat offenses of any kind was reduced by more than 14 percent.

--The number of youths subsequently becoming involved in criminal behavior was reduced by 25 percent.

--The cost of the new techniques was less than half the cost of the previous procedures.

In addition a later extension of the project to youths involved in some criminal offenses, including petty theft, drunk and disorderly conduct, receiving stolen property, possession of drugs and some auto theft, indicated decreases in court petitions and in recidivism as great as or greater than the decreases for 601-type offenses.

Because of the promise indicated by this approach the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice in February 1974 selected the Sacramento Diversion Project as an Exemplary Project, the first delinquency program to be so selected. In June 1974 the Institute awarded a grant to the Center on Administration of Criminal Justice, University of California, Davis, to hold a series of conferences designed to explain the approach to juvenile court judges, probation administrators and other leaders in the field.

This report describes these conferences and their results.

I. CONCEPTS AND RESULTS

A. Purposes

The purpose of the conferences was to make the family counseling approach more widely known and to assist communities in considering whether it might be useful in meeting their needs.

The first objective was therefore simply that of explanation. Once the basic ideas of diversion and family counseling were mastered, the conferences moved on to more detailed consideration of program mechanics and implementation. As juvenile justice systems

differ enormously from state to state both in their legal framework and in their administrative organization, the emphasis was on indicating the considerations involved and the solutions which had been adopted in other jurisdictions rather than on selling a specific approach to organizational and implementation issues. Participants were then encouraged to analyze their own situations and develop their own solutions.

B. Conference Schedule

Nine conferences were held as follows:

Region

V	Madison, Wisconsin	February 20-22, 1975
VIII	Denver, Colorado	May 15-17, 1975
II	Harriman, New York	June 13-15, 1975
I	Newton, Massachusetts	June 19-21, 1975
X	Maple Valley, Washington	September 28-30, 1975
IX	Pacific Grove, California	October 8-10, 1975
III	Warrenton, Virginia	November 11-13, 1975
VI	Dallas, Texas	December 4-6, 1975
IV	Atlanta, Georgia	December 11-13, 1975

C. Participants

As the purpose of the program was to assist communities in considering the utility of the family counseling approach to diversion, the conferences were aimed at persons who could make decisions as to whether programs should be started. Often this meant leaving out the persons likely to be responsible for implementing programs once started. The participation of those responsible for initiating programs was felt to be crucial, however,

both to getting new programs started and to insuring their success once underway. In most communities the most important decision-makers were felt to be the juvenile court judge and the chief probation administrator. In some jurisdictions other persons were felt to be more important. Generally the decision as to who the most important decisionmakers were was made by the state planning agencies under guidelines suggested by the conference staff and transmitted by the Regional Administrator. In all instances the nominations made by the state planning agency were reviewed by the Regional LEAA office and the conference staff.

The result of this process was an extremely good group of participants. Among the 365 participants were 72 judges, 2 referees, 85 chief probation officers and directors of court services, 14 other probation and court administrators, 22 intake directors and officers, 28 representatives of state agencies having major responsibility for youth or court services and a number of other persons holding important positions in their particular states such as state legislators or key private agency representatives. The judges included the chief judges of three large family courts --New York City, Rhode Island and Utah--and juvenile court judges from many major jurisdictions including Cleveland, Detroit, El Paso, Los Angeles, New Orleans and Tucson. The probation administrators included the chief probation officers for Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, Pittsburg, San Diego and the state of Connecticut. Forty-three state planning agency representatives and 27 LEAA representatives attended.

<u>Participants</u>	
Judges	72
Referees	2
Chief, Probation or Court Services	85
Intake Services and Other Administrators	36
Other Probation or Court Services	38
State Agency	28
SPA	43
LEAA	30
Other	<u>31</u>
Total	365

D. General Reactions

While there were a variety of specific reactions, the response to the conferences in general was very positive. On the key question as to what they would say if "a colleague in another state asked ... whether he should attend a similar conference there," 194 of the participants completing the evaluation questionnaire said they would recommend that he do so, and only one said no.

Many participants were highly enthusiastic:

- Very well structured and produced.
- One of the best conferences I have ever attended.
- Enjoyed the conference very much. I think the ideas I've gotten will be helpful in setting up our new unit.
- I am leaving refreshed and encouraged.
- I am grateful for the opportunity to attend this conference. Knowledge gained is of great benefit.

Over 85 percent of those responding to the evaluation questionnaire indicated that they had accomplished their main purpose in attending and most of the remainder said that they had partially done so. Of the five percent who said that they had not accomplished their purpose in attending it was clear that for most the problem was not the program but rather a desire for more information or training than was possible in the time available.

Many indicated that they would like to put the ideas gained to work. In particular 70 percent of those responding to the evaluation questionnaire indicated that the conference had affected their thinking about the handling of intake. At least two thirds of those who said that their thinking had not been affected did so because they already agreed with the ideas being advanced, and although they did not say so specifically it seems likely that this was true for most of the other persons who said their thinking had not been affected as well.

Some typical comments:

--I think we can do a lot for children and families who are referred to us, without the necessity of a trial procedure. So I am going to think and discuss how this project can be established in our county.

--In our particular setting I now see a great need for change in the policy of filing of petitions (which is mandatory in all cases). Also I see the need much more clearly regarding highly trained and skilled personnel at the intake level.

--It has helped me concretize some ideas for changing the intake procedure at our court, hopefully incorporating at least part of what the conference presented. Also it has introduced me to a new methodology of counseling with families at intake and training ideas.

--Will try to include elements of family counseling early in intake process to divert status offenses from juvenile court.

--Good new way to help kids without court.

--Have no intake procedure at all now--feel that adequate controls can be built in so that some intake procedure can and will be implemented.

II. ARRANGEMENTS

A. Scheduling and Location

Where suitable facilities existed in the general location preferred by the regional offices, conference sites in retreat-type settings were selected. It was felt that better group cohesion, discussion and concentration of attention on the conference program would be possible in settings away from the hustle-and-bustle of mid-town hotels. If an appropriate retreat-type facility was not available, then an attempt was made to select a hotel or motel away from the downtown area. In all settings, group meals were arranged to facilitate informal group interaction and discussion between the more formal conference sessions.

Generally the conferences were scheduled to begin on a Thursday evening and run through midday Saturday. In this way, although participants would have to give up some portion of their weekends, it was felt that more judges would be able to attend since they would only generally have to miss one or possibly one-and-a-half days' court time. In order to be able to use the Arden House facilities, however, the New York regional conference was scheduled entirely on a weekend and in order to use the Asilomar conference facilities in California, a midweek schedule was agreed upon.

B. Invitations

The participants were selected from lists supplied by the state planning agencies at the request of the regional offices. The number of slots reserved for participants from each state was decided in consultation with the regional offices and was determined generally by the number of states in the region and the size of each state.

A letter suggesting guidelines for the selection of invitees and alternates was drafted and sent to each of the regions to be sent out by them to the state planning agencies. Generally it was suggested that a mix between judges and probation or court services would be desirable and that, where feasible, having a judge and a probation or court services director from the same locale would be good.

Invitations co-signed by the Director of the National Institute and the Regional Administrator were sent to each invitee on the lists submitted. An insert and a pre-addressed, stamped envelope were included on which invitees could indicate whether or not they planned to attend. When they indicated that they would not, alternate invitations were issued.

For those who indicated that they would be attending, an additional mailing was sent out with a tentative schedule, information about conference arrangements such as travel reimbursement, lodging and meals, instructions on how to get to the conference site, and so forth. In addition, a copy of the National Institute

brochure "Family Crisis Counseling: An Alternative to Juvenile Court" was sent.

III. THE CONFERENCES

Each conference consisted of four segments: an introduction, a segment on the Sacramento project and the concept of diversion, a segment on family counseling, and a segment on implementation and problem issues. (A typical schedule is given in Appendix C).

The first evening of the conference was spent in getting acquainted (registration, a no-host social hour and dinner) and in introducing the participants to family crisis counseling. At most of the conferences this was accomplished by having a keynote speaker review some trends in juvenile justice and indicate the background of the problem. At three of the conferences, the participants set the background by introducing themselves and giving a brief statement of the nature of the PINS problem in their jurisdictions. At all of the conferences the first half hour of a set of training films which were prepared as part of the Sacramento Diversion Project was shown. This film showed two family therapists conducting portions of a counseling session and introduced the basic concepts of family counseling.

The second conference day was devoted to basic concepts. The morning session concentrated on the ideas involved in the Sacramento Diversion Project, what it was intended to accomplish, how it was initiated and implemented, and a brief review of the research results. The morning session always included a panel

with a representative from the Sacramento County Probation Department who was familiar with the actual operation of the diversion unit and who could speak from experience about the administrative problems involved.

The last hour of the morning the participants were divided into three pre-assigned groups for discussion. Participants were assigned to the groups by project staff who based the division on a mix of judges, probation and court services personnel, SPAs, and others. The groups were also divided with an eye toward balancing those from large and small jurisdictions. Where participants included two people from the same jurisdiction, they were always put into different discussion groups. Group leaders were selected after the staff had had a chance to get to know some of the participants the first evening. In addition a reporter was pre-selected for each group to assist the discussion leader. These group leaders were carefully selected so as to include both judges and probation or court services personnel. The discussion topic for the first morning was based on questions provided the leaders which related to what types of programs individual jurisdictions had and to a discussion of the Sacramento program.

The first two hours of the afternoon session consisted of an actual family counseling session with a family from the local area. The families were generally recruited through the help of the local probation or court services department. In all cases their participation was voluntary. The therapists who conducted

the sessions generally practiced somewhere within the region. Consideration was originally given to having one of the specially-trained probation officers from the Sacramento family counseling unit conduct the sessions, but a decision was made subsequently that it would be useful for participants to be "introduced" to a possible training resource person within their own geographical areas.

After the session itself time was allowed for the conference participants to discuss the session itself and to ask the therapist questions about what had taken place. In some instances the families remained for portions of the discussion.

Then the last hour of the afternoon was set aside for a second group discussion. The participants met in the same groups as they had in the mornings and the guidelines this time revolved around the concepts of family counseling.

In the evening there was an optional program which consisted of the fifth hour of the special training films. This film was an unedited family counseling session conducted by the two therapists who were in the introductory film the evening before.

The second morning began with a session which dealt with the organizational aspects of the family counseling approach. In particular some of the initial organizational problems were presented along with some of the solutions which had been used in the Sacramento project. Participants were given some insight into how these problems might relate to their own situations. The morning session usually also included participants from jurisdictions within the

region who had already initiated family counseling programs. These participants spoke about their own programs and the organizational aspects they had encountered.

About midmorning, another film which was developed specifically for the conferences, was shown. This film included portions of five different sessions actually conducted by probation officers from the Sacramento Diversion Unit and by officers from similar units in Richmond and Alameda County, California. This film was developed for two purposes: to show the specially-trained probation officers actually doing family counseling and to show a variety of families being counseled including minority-group families.

At the first two conferences, the last session was a small-group planning exercise with participants still in the same groups they were in the previous day. This exercise did not seem to work very well and was dropped during the remaining conferences. Instead, members of the discussion groups reported on the discussions which had taken place.

Throughout the conference, staff members encouraged participants to ask questions--both during actual sessions and by circulating between sessions, during the social hours and at meals. Also someone familiar with the Sacramento program, either the representative from the Sacramento County Probation Department or someone from the Center on Administration of Criminal Justice, sat in on the group discussions to be available as a resource person if specific questions were raised about family counseling or the operation of the unit.

IV. SPECIFIC REACTIONS

A. Reasons for Attending

Most participants came to learn about the program or because of the opportunity to talk with others about it. Of 200 persons who responded to the evaluation 125 indicated that they came because of "the opportunity to learn about an interesting program." Another 71 said that it was "the opportunity to talk with colleagues about an important problem." A sizeable proportion--roughly one in four--said that they were already considering diversion programs in their jurisdictions. At all of the conferences, there were some participants who already had some variation of family counseling as a part of their local programs. This was particularly true of California and Arizona.

When asked what they most hoped to gain from the conference, the participants' answers ranged from very general to very specific:

- New insights
- Interaction with other professionals in the field
- I was open, no expectations
- Knowledge about the Sacramento program and how to adapt it to our area's needs
- Learn about the Sacramento project so that we could replicate it without making errors or starting from the beginning
- The most important goal was to gain a better understanding of family counseling techniques

B. The Program

The reaction of the participants to almost every part of the program was very good. With the exception of the small group discussions and a planning exercise which was dropped after the

first two conferences, 70 to 80 percent of the responses to individual parts of the program were either good or excellent. Particularly high marks were given to the portions of the program dealing with family counseling, indicating among other things the attractiveness of the approach. While even highly positive participants generally ranked specific programs good, nearly two thirds of those completing the evaluation ranked the family counseling demonstration as excellent. The group was also highly enthusiastic about the film "Probation Counseling" which was made specifically for the conferences and which demonstrated that these techniques could be used by probation officers and with minority families.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
Keynote address	35	68	23	3
Film--first 1/2 hour of "Children in Trouble; Families in Crisis"	67	107	25	0
Panel on the Sacramento program	50	126	28	3
Counseling session with the family	121	68	14	2
Filmed counseling session	61	69	16	4
Small group discussions	38	96	55	17
Film--"Probation Counseling"	79	83	21	2
Planning exercise (two conferences only)	4	17	19	7

When asked what subjects they would have omitted or reduced, or what subjects were not covered that they would have liked to have had covered, many participants said they would not have changed what was covered or added anything more. Many of those who wanted subjects added wanted more information about how to start a family counseling project:

--More emphasis on the importance of training individuals to be family therapists and where to make the contacts to find the appropriate person(s) to do the training.

--Methods in detail for obtaining attendance by families at counseling sessions.

--Budgets--and more detail in implementation of the program.

--I would like to have had a little more time to learn more about family counseling techniques.

Since one of the purposes of the conferences was to stimulate discussion and exchange of ideas, the participants were asked if they felt they "had an adequate opportunity to discuss...ideas with others." Over 90 percent said that they had. They were also asked if they felt they had an "adequate opportunity to ask questions and gather information." On this question, 97 percent felt that they had.

With as mixed a group as was present at the conferences, there was the possibility that participants might feel that the sessions had been slanted toward one particular group or other, but when asked about this there appeared to be no particular bias: 158 participants said that the conference was about right while nine thought it was slanted toward judges and 15 that it was slanted toward probation or court services.

As with any program, of course, there were negative comments and criticisms as well. Many of these counterbalanced each other-- some participants (12) would have preferred a shorter conference, but others (27) wanted a longer one. Some (8) thought the breaks were too long while an equal number thought the breaks were too short; two said there were too many breaks but three people thought there were not enough. Not evenly divided were the opinions about the size of the discussion groups. Although 167 thought they were "about right," 21 thought they were "too large" and only one said "too small."

Some participants were critical of particular speakers or presentations:

- Tighten up program (shorten either by cutting out evening sessions or cutting out half day).
- Small groups not productive.
- Too much film presentation and minimum time to evaluate and react.
- Absence of the remainder of the films.

There was also something of a problem, particularly in the earlier conferences, as to the focus of the conferences. Some participants thought they would deal with more kinds of diversion projects:

- More consensual feelings about diversion, juvenile intake and juvenile court jurisdiction. Treatment versus nontreatment methods.
- Concentrate on diversion concept and not the treatment method.
- Include other programs that have been used that worked.

This problem was not a very serious one, however, and does not appear to have dampened the overall interest of the participants in the conferences. In later conferences the invitation letter and the program introduction were altered to make the program focus clearer.

C. Training Materials

A training manual concerning program operation and techniques was given to each participant at registration.

While the manual was intended primarily as a future resource rather than a component of the conferences, most participants (113) indicated that they had found it "very" helpful. Another 37 said "yes, somewhat," while one said "not particularly." Generally the participants (181) expected that the materials would be helpful later. Twenty-two participants felt it was too early to tell yet. Many of the participants said they would have liked to have had the training materials mailed in advance of the conference so that they would have had time to be better prepared for the sessions.

D. Arrangements

The comments concerning arrangements were also generally quite positive. Participants particularly liked the immediate reimbursement for travel.

Evaluation of Arrangements

	<u>Positive Comments</u>	<u>Negative Comments</u>	<u>Positive & Negative Comments</u>
Food	190	7	4
Accommodations	174	9	11
Arrangements concerning travel and reimbursement	192	2	1

Appendices

- A. Locations of Conferences
- B. Participants by Conference
- C. Sample Schedule

Appendix A

Locations of Conferences

Region

I	Boston Marriott, Newton, Massachusetts	June 19-21, 1975
II	Arden House, Harriman, New York	June 13-15, 1975
III	Airlie House, Warrenton, Virginia	November 11-13, 1975
IV	Riviera Hyatt House, Atlanta, Georgia	December 11-13, 1975
V	Lowell Conference Center (University of Wisconsin), Madison, Wisconsin	February 20-22, 1975
VI	Royal Coach Motor Hotel, Dallas, Texas	December 4-6, 1975
VIII	Writers' Manor Inn, Denver, Colorado	May 15-17, 1975
IX	Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove, California	October 8-10, 1975
X	Lake Wilderness Conference Center (University of Washington), Maple Valley, Washington	September 28-30, 1975

Appendix B

Participants By Conference

	<u>Judges</u>	<u>Referees</u>	<u>Probation and Court Services</u>	<u>SPA</u>	<u>LEAA</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Madison	15	1	15	4	5	4	44
Denver	10	-	12	5	5	7	39
Arden House	15	-	18	4	2	4	43
Boston	5	-	21	7	2	13	48
Lake Wilderness	2	-	20	4	2	4	30
Asilomar	7	1	21	3	1	5	38
D.C.	7	-	19	4	3	13	46
Dallas	6	-	16	6	3	2	33
Atlanta	<u>5</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>44</u>
Total	72	2	161	43	27	62	365

Appendix C
Sample Schedule

CONFERENCE ON
FAMILY COUNSELING AND JUVENILE DIVERSION
Arden House
Harriman, New York
June 13-15, 1975

Friday, June 13

4:30 p.m.	Registration
5:30	Social Hour
6:30	Dinner
7:30	Welcome
	--William Modzeleski - Corrections and Juvenile Justice Specialist, LEAA Region II
	Delinquency and Diversion--Some New Approaches
	--Ted Rubin - Institute for Court Management
	--Roger Baron - Center on Administration of Criminal Justice

Saturday, June 14

7:30-8:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00	Exemplary Projects and Delinquency Prevention
	--Louis Mayo - National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
9:15	The Sacramento Diversion Project:
	Its History, Organization and Results
	--Roger Baron - Center on Administration of Criminal Justice
	--Floyd Feeney - Center on Administration of Criminal Justice
	--Ray Roskelly - Director of Court Services, Sacramento County Probation Department
11:15	Small Group Discussions
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30	Family Counseling Theory and Practice
	--Saul Pavlin - Family Therapist, New York City
3:45	Small Group Discussions
5:00	Recreation and Social Hour
6:30	Dinner
8:00	Techniques of Family Crisis Intervention (Optional)

Sunday, June 15

7:30-8:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00	Some Organizational Issues
10:15	Planning for Change
11:00	Small Group Discussions
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
2:00	End of Program