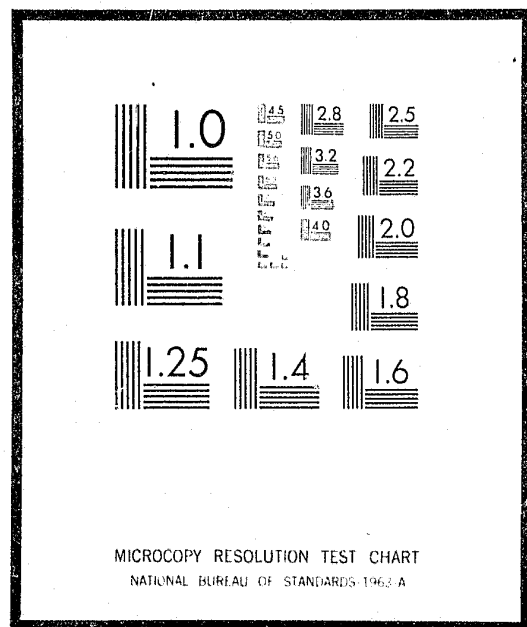


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PDYS Evaluation

of

Project CREST

NCJRS

FEB 18 1977

ACQUISITIONS

PDYSP
July 29, 1976

Project CREST

Project CREST (Clinical Regional Support Teams--Juvenile Delinquency) was originally designed, and funded by LEAA, to provide the Florida Division of Youth Services (now Youth Services Program Office-YS) with professional counseling and related services for delinquent youth, largely probationers, who were experiencing unusual developmental problems.

The project was first funded June 15, 1972 and began providing treatment services in October of 1972. It operated through August 1975, then had a four-month interruption of service due to loss of LEAA funding. Services were resumed January 1, 1976 with another six-month LEAA grant. A contract for DHRS-YS funding (\$52,000) will provide for FY 76-77 operation.

Project CREST has been exceptionally accountable, thoroughly documenting operations and results since its inception. Objectives are clearly stated in operational terms, and the data necessary to monitor their accomplishments are systematically collected and submitted, in a timely manner, to the granting agency. Reports on the project, in the form of scholarly journal articles, descriptive summary papers, and quarterly LEAA progress reports, have been reviewed for this evaluation and provide the basis for the conclusions. The project director and assistant director were also extremely cooperative in providing additional materials and giving straightforward answers to questions concerning minor gaps in information which were not covered by the written matter. A critical analysis of these materials and discussions leads to a very favorable evaluation of the project. The pages which follow briefly describe and review the evidence upon which this judgment is based.

ERIC

Description of Project CREST:
Staff, Services, Budget

STAFF

Over a three-year period, eight paid half-time doctoral students in psychological counseling at the University of Florida were organized to head up teams of volunteer graduate counseling practicum students and undergraduate volunteers (total of 129 volunteers)¹ to provide weekly services to four-to-six counties². In addition to these counseling specialists who were project team leaders, paid staff consisted of a research specialist and an educational specialist, both part-time, plus a full-time director and secretary. One of the counseling specialists has doubled as a team leader and project testing specialist.

SERVICES

Clients are referred to Project CREST by the district YS offices from their rolls of probationers³ because of severe developmental, and particularly emotional, problems which require special attention. Intensive, long-term weekly individual counseling is provided by the counseling specialists to a subset of those children determined most in need of such services after clinical diagnosis (also provided by CREST). The families of many of these children are also provided with family counseling. Less critical cases are assigned to volunteer

- 1 A maximum of six doctoral students and 64 volunteers were working during any one grant period. The FY 76-77 staff will include three half-time counseling specialists.
- 2 The number of counties served varied during the three years due to shifting funding as LEAA regions were altered. In FY 76-77, three counties will be served: Alachua, Columbia and Dixie.
- 3 Starting in January 1976, and continuing into FY 76-77, the project takes some diversionary (non-adjudicated) cases, but the majority are probationers.

graduate counseling students for individual and/or group counseling. In past projects, tutoring services were provided for many youths, but this aspect of the project was dropped in 1974 due to administrative problems, and was picked up by YS volunteers with some recruiting and training assistance from CREST. In FY 76-77, tutoring will again be provided, but only for CREST counselees. Also in 76-77, weekly counseling will be provided, in one community only, for a number of disruptive public school students, referred directly by the school, who are not necessarily adjudicated delinquents.

Consultation services are offered by Project CREST staff both to the schools of their clients and to the referring YS district offices, in an effort to impact on the delinquent through his/her environment as well as directly through counseling. Conferences with school personnel, sometimes including parents, are arranged to plan strategies for dealing with and helping a child. In-service training and consultation with the probation agency (YS) focus on concepts of testing, the helping relationship, current research findings and individual and group counseling skills.

Diagnostic testing services are provided on a limited, as-needed basis. During the 1973-74 project year, available psychological data in YS files was analyzed, and profiles were constructed and assessed. As an outcome of this study, it was found that at least 20% of the files contained IQ and psychological test scores from unspecified and undated tests. This information is alarming because "in nearly every case this useless and potentially damaging material was supplied the courts by the schools".⁴ It is a very important side

⁴ This study is described in Lee, Robert, Project CREST: A second year report. Mimeograph, 1975. Gainesville, Florida.

product of the project that the implications of this finding were discussed with every YS district office involved with CREST.

For each of the service objectives, numerical goals were set for each grant period as to how many children were to be served. These goals have almost always been exceeded by the actual numbers served. The following chart summarizes the number of clients receiving each type of service and the total number of hours of that service provided by Project CREST for a 20-month grant period (July 1, 1973 - December 31, 1974). During this period 421 children received an average of 1.8 services per child. The chart serves as an example of how staff time is utilized.

<u>No. Clients</u>	<u>Services</u>	<u>Hours per Client</u>	<u>Total Hours</u>
98	Individual Counseling (paid staff)	26 (6 months)	2,548
141	Individual Counseling (volunteers)	21.5 (5 months)	3,032
65	Group Counseling (four clients per group)	18 (4 months)	420
79	Tutoring	13 (3 months)	754
116	Family Counseling	26 (6 months)	3,016
22	Parents Group (five per group)	156 (12 months)	686
93	School Consultation	10	930
78	Test Profiles	3	234
45	Research Testing	4 x 3	540
25	Other Testing	4	100
58	Testing Only	4	240
239	Consultation with YS (paid staff)	6	1,434
65	Consultation with YS (volunteers)	1	65
Total hours			13,999

BUDGET

The attached budget shows how funds are to be distributed under the FY 76-77 allocation.

BUDGET: FY 76-77

<u>Salaries</u>		<u>Total</u>
1 Project Director (Full-time) (includes \$126/mo. retirement)	\$18,312	
1 Education Specialist and Assistant Director (3/4 time)	8,100	
3 Counseling Specialists (half-time) @ \$5,220	15,660	
1 Secretary (Half-time)	3,360	
	Total Salaries	\$45,432
<u>Other Operating Expenses</u>		
Rent	\$1,440	
Telephone	792	
Supplies	480	
	Total Operating Expenses	\$ 2,712
<u>Travel</u>		
(\$235 @ mo x 12)		\$ 2,820
<u>Other *</u>		
Workmen's Compensation, Liability Insurance, etc.		\$ 1,036
	Total:	<u>\$52,000</u>

* any excess in "Other" will go into "Travel"

COST EFFICIENCY

Over a three-year period (October 1, 1972 through August, 1975) Project CREST provided weekly professional diagnostic, counseling, consulting and tutoring services for a total of 591 children referred by Florida Youth Services: the total cash cost over the three years was \$202,531 (\$186,277 federal and state; \$16,254 local).

The program was organized in stages, reaching full operating capacity in the fall of 1973. A study of a 20-month grant period beginning July 1, 1973, shows that the project operated on an average of \$5,950 per month, which was \$850 a month less than originally budgeted. The average cost per client was \$283. Each child received from one to seven different professional services, for an average of 4.5 months per child. The estimated cost per child contact hour was \$8.50; the average cost per child day was \$1.49.

Experimental Evaluations

For each of the three years Project CREST has been operating, a subset of the long-term, intensive counseling cases has been compared with a matched sample of YS probationers who are not receiving CREST services, to determine the effects of project intervention on conduct and attitudes. While the number of cases for each of these comparisons was relatively small, and the individual measures of improvement which achieved statistical significance have varied somewhat from one year to another, overall the experimental subjects have compared very favorably.

Study 1 - The first fifteen "hard-core" cases referred to CREST (October, 1972) were compared over a six-month period with fifteen delinquents receiving only YS probation and with 26 randomly selected

non-delinquents. The CREST group showed improvement over the control group on school attendance, school grades, acts of misconduct, and two instruments measuring personality change.⁵

Study 2 - Thirty-four additional "hard-core" CREST clients were compared with 31 controls over a 12-month experimental period in 1973-74. Following CREST intervention the recidivism rate (i.e., percentage of clients with referrals to YS for offenses) during that period was 24% for CREST clients compared with 44% for the controls.⁶

The CREST group showed improvement over the control group on: school attendance, school grades, fewer suspensions from school, monthly rate of offenses, and one instrument measuring personality change.

Study 3 - Twenty-four experimentals were compared with 24 matched controls between September, 1974 and June, 1975 on a monthly rate of delinquent behavior before and after CREST intervention. The average experimental period per subject was 6.6 months. Prior to the time CREST services were begun, the offense rate was higher for the experimentals than for the controls, indicating that CREST clients were probably more seriously delinquent than the controls. However, for the CREST group the rate of offenses was reduced to one-half of the controls.

⁵ Details, including significant differences, are presented in Piercy, F. & Lee, R. Effects of a dual treatment approach on the rehabilitation of habitual juvenile delinquents, Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin. 1976, 19, pp. 482-492.

⁶ Details of the study and statistically significant differences are discussed in Kemp, M. & Lee, R. Professional counseling and the juvenile offender: A field experiment. L.A.E. Journal, 1976, in press.

Also, during the experimental period only 29% of the CREST group had any subsequent charges of misconduct filed against them, compared with 50% for the controls.⁷

A new Florida Statute which protects the confidentiality of student records limits access to data on school attendance, grades and suspensions, therefore restraining comparisons on these measures due to small numbers.

Follow-Up Studies on "Experimental" CREST Clients

Study 4 - A short-term follow-up was conducted on the 34 Study-2 CREST youth and a comparable group of probationers who did not receive CREST counseling to measure the project's effects on the rate of change of delinquent behavior. This study found that CREST clients essentially ceased misbehaving after only four months, as compared with ten months, or more than twice as long, for the control group on probation only.

The combined costs of YS supervision plus CREST for four months is less than the cost of YS supervision alone for ten months; using 1974 cost figures the saving is about \$80 per child.⁸

Study 5 - A longer term study, with an 18-month follow-up, was conducted on all youths who received intensive CREST services between October 1972 and July 1973 (32 children, including the 15 Study-1 "experimentals"). Comparison was made with a random sample of 30 children who had been on probation alone for at least 18 months.

⁷ Details, including statistically significant differences, are presented in Kemp, M. and Lee, R. Project CREST: A third year experimental study. Mimeographed manuscript, 1975. Gainesville, Florida.

⁸ Details of these studies are in Haynes, L. Project CREST: follow-up studies on rates of misconduct. Mimeograph, 1975. Gainesville, Florida.

The study showed that before referral to the project, CREST delinquents were being charged with offenses at one and a half times the average rate of the "control" probationers, i.e., their misconduct was not slowed down by probation alone. However, when CREST counseling was added to probation services, the rate of law violations was cut in half, and about 70% completed the last nine months with a clear record.⁸

Study 6 - Recidivism Study - All of the experimentals and controls over a two-year period (July 1973 to August 1975) were compared on recidivism (as measured by referrals recorded in YS files) by means of Chi-Square Analysis. The number of experimentals was 58; the number of controls was 55. Following CREST intervention, only 27% (16) of the counseled children committed a subsequent delinquent act, compared with 45% (25) of the control group. The odds that this difference was due to CREST intervention and not to chance alone is better than 40 to one ($\chi^2 = 5.85$, $df = 1$, $p < .025$).⁹

Additional Evaluational Information

Commitment to Training School¹⁰

When asked to assess the probability of commitment to training school of each child referred to CREST between June 1974 and June 1975, the YS counselors rated 64% of these children as having a 50/50 chance or higher of being committed. Three-fourths of this high risk group have not been committed. Out of the low risk group (rated less than 50/50 chance) only 6% have been committed.

⁹ No further details available; this study was reported in a summary of evaluation findings attached to the "final" LEAA progress report for August 1975.

¹⁰ Details are on file at Project CREST; reported in LEAA quarterly report for July 1, 1975.

Client's Evaluation of CREST¹¹

Counseling evaluation forms submitted anonymously by clients indicated the following: a) 97% said their CREST counselor helped them deal more effectively with their personal problems; b) 94% said their CREST counselor helped them stay out of trouble; c) 74% said their CREST counselor helped them improve their school work; d) 97% said that overall CREST counseling was worthwhile.

Evidence of Public Support

Letters of support and appreciation of Project CREST have been received from people and agencies familiar with the project's achievements. Letters from Youth Counselors, District Supervisors, and Director Joseph Rowan express the support of the Division of Youth Services. The effectiveness of the work done in schools is attested to by letters from school principals and from professors and department chairmen in the College of Education at the University of Florida.

Senator Richard Stone has expressed strong support, as have Senator Kenneth MacKay and Representatives Bill Andrews and Pete Skinner. Letters or resolutions of support have come from public agencies and units of local government, such as: Lake City - Columbia County Chamber of Commerce; City Commission of Lake City; City of Gainesville City Commission; North Central Florida Regional Planning Council; Alachua County Juvenile Committee; Alachua County Mental Health Association; Tri-County Mental Health; Gainesville Police Department.

¹¹ For the youngster's own comments, see Lee, R. Project CREST: A second year report, Appendix D. Mimeograph, 1975. Gainesville Florida.

The cost of Project CREST over its three and one-half years of operation breaks down to a very modest amount on a per child basis. This is especially clear when one considers the alternative cost to the juvenile justice system if even a few more of the youngsters served by Project CREST were not diverted from YS commitment.¹²

¹² An analysis of the 1974-75 assessment by YS counselors that at least 32 offenders were probably diverted from training schools (at a per-case average cost of \$3800 at that time) by CREST intervention resulted in an estimated saving of \$50,000 above the cost of the Project for that year.

This analysis was included in a summary page on Project CREST results at the conclusion of the August 1975 phase. By similar calculations at present prices and tenures for Training Schools, (i.e., \$27 per day and a 7-month average stay), only ten diversions from training schools as a result of CREST intervention would more than justify the \$52,000 expenditure for 76-77.

Conclusions

Critical review of 1) the extensive documentation of services rendered, and 2) the numerous and varied evaluational studies conducted by Project CREST, has resulted in a very positive picture of the work accomplished by this group. Their effectiveness on most major outcome measures is well established. While one might quibble with the small size of the experimental group in any one study, the replications, and the many different measures which showed improvement, tend to overcome the criticism.

The ability to work with and supplement YS services, and to deliver a fairly wide variety of counseling and related services to a population defined by YS as needing this more extensive attention has been clearly demonstrated. The fact that special services are generally lacking for such developmentally impaired and emotionally disturbed delinquents as were served by the project is attested to by the number one priority set by Secretary Page for 1976-77 on improving resources and services for emotionally disturbed children.

Summary

This report by PDYS on Project CREST is based upon a review of written materials prepared by CREST personnel, discussions with CREST staff, and comments by local YS staff regarding the work the project has done over the years.

The project is enthusiastically supported by the YS staff whose efforts they supplement. The workload data and evaluational reports provided give ample substantiation of the services supplied and their measured effectiveness.

Project CREST provides intensive, professional, individual, counseling services to especially disturbed YS probationers, and gives additional support through family counseling, tutoring, and consultation with the schools and YS personnel. Studies of the impact of these services have found significant improvements in both attitudes and conduct of the children. Follow-up studies on rate of change in delinquent behavior and recidivism both show effectiveness in terms which are readily translated into cost savings for YS. Project CREST's small paid staff is supplemented by volunteers who are also carefully supervised professionals-in-training who serve the less severely disturbed children.

CREST efforts clearly provide important additional resources for serving YS clients and addressing the objectives of the YS agency. They do this with documented effectiveness and full local support. No recommendations were deemed necessary; the overall evaluation of the project is very positive.

