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 ACQUISITION

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"A RURAL COMMUNITY EFFORT
FOR ATTACKING DELINQUENCY"

FINAL REPORT

NCJRS

AUG 5 1980

ACQUISITIONS

Program Statement

The Rural Community Effort for Attacking Delinquency program was designed with the intention of providing an effective means by which a parole agent could meet the diverse needs of a case-load of 70 or more parolees. The method for attaining this goal was to use nonprofessional personnel who were present in the community and to have them develop a "peer-influencer" role with the parolees. It was felt that an important source of concerned nonprofessional people who could devote themselves to the needs of parolees could be found in our colleges and universities. The "peer influencer" concept utilized the premise that parolees, being "nonachievers" in society, could be positively influenced through a peer relationship with college students who are social "achievers." The students, in their "peer influencer" role, would have as their main premise the development of a nonauthoritative peer relationship with the parolees.

Program Description

Selection of Parolees

Ten (10) male parolees ranging in ages from 15 to 20 were initially selected. The prerequisite for selection was geographical availability. Thus, parolees who were not readily available for contact by the college students were not selected. The maximum number of 12 parolees was to be met through the addition of parolees who would be released directly from institutions to the community of Chico.

Selection of Students

Four (4) senior male students with majors in corrections were selected. Selection was based on the students' general maturity and understanding of themselves, their apparent ability to relate to delinquents, and their interest in corrections as a career.

Matching of Students to Parolees

This program was designed so that there were two separate groups, each composed of two students and six (6) wards.

The selection method used in matching students and parolees was the parole agent's knowledge of individual parolee needs and which students appeared most capable of meeting them.

Consultants

Two professors with master's degrees in Social Welfare from the Corrections Department at Chico State College were selected to be used in helping to run the group meetings.

Orientation

Orientation of Parolees

Parolees were informed individually of their inclusion into a special program that would have them attending weekly group counselling sessions and spending some time with a college student. The parolees were informed that the college students were corrections majors and would be in the program to learn what parolees were like, what kinds of problems they had, and what their behavior was like. The parolees' role toward the students was explained as being similar, in that they would learn what students were like, what kinds of problems they had, and what their behavior was like. A peer-type relationship was stressed, and emphasis was placed on the fact that students were not to be "junior parole agents" and they would have no authority over the parolees.

Orientation of Students

The selected students, as a group, spent several hours with the project director for briefing on agency policy and their role in the project. Strong emphasis was placed on their role as being that of a "peer-influencer" and not as an agency representative who had any authority over the parolees. They were encouraged to become involved with parolees in everyday type activities and not to function within the framework of the department. The only restriction placed on types of behavior and activities to be engaged in was that they were not to involve themselves in any illegal activities with the parolees.

Program Start

The program actually got under way with our commencement of the first group meetings which took place on October 12, and October 16, of 1969. At these two meetings, the program goals for both students

and parolees were reviewed and ground rules for group discussion were set. The group counselling sessions took place regularly from that time on with two groups meeting separately for one hour on a weekly basis at 5:30 p.m. each Tuesday and Wednesday night.

The part of the program which involved the greatest amount of time was the ongoing contacts between students and parolees that took place outside of the group sessions. The success of this part of the program was crucial to the overall program for it was here that the "peer influencer" role would have to be established. Although loosely structured, the students and parolees were encouraged to participate in rap sessions, pool playing and picnics. As relationships developed, activities expanded to include college functions, tutoring and double dating.

Observed Behavior

As the program progressed, it became readily apparent that the distrust parolees have for authority was transferred to the students. This was evidenced by the parolees failing to keep appointments with students in social activities in the community and by their silence in the group meetings. An example of the reluctance on the part of the parolees to contact the students would be what all the students experienced and that is, they extended invitations to the parolees to have them drop by for dinner or a rap session and, although the parolees agreed individually, they would fail to show up as they had promised. This "distrust" finally came to a head in the group meetings when one of the parolees indicated that the students were nothing more than "finks" for the parole agent. (This was seen as a crucial point in the program, for if the students could not be accepted by the parolees, the desired "peer-influencer" role would not take place.) Initially, all parolees seemed to accept this statement as being true; however, when students openly asked all members why they felt this way, it became evident that they did not, but were merely maintaining a "delinquent solidarity" in accepting what a fellow parolee stated. As this matter was resolved, parolees and students moved closer towards establishing the desired "peer influencer" role.

There were several significant incidents that took place which served as a catalyst for changing relationships. They are reported here to give some indication of the types of things that occurred. They, of course, did not all occur simultaneously and only affected certain members of the program. A very distrustful, hyperactive individual, who denied any personal difficulties, came to develop a close relationship with the student and the parole agent. Both the student and parole agent were affected because of the type of relationship that was taking place. The parolee formed a close

relationship with the student to the extent that he began to feel that he overexposed himself and then became angry and wanted to fight the student. This "fighting" attitude was an emotional thing that went on for quite sometime, during which close contact was kept with both student and parolee by the parole agent, and it was during this time that the parolee was encouraged to, and did seek, psychiatric help at a State hospital. We feel it was through these relationships that the parolee was moved to seek professional help for his acute problems. He has since been discharged from the mental hospital and is planning to enroll in college.

Another situation that revealed the type of model the parolees desired in the students has to do with the comparison of two students. Two parolees came to respect and admire a particular student who graduated in January 1970, and had to be replaced by a substitute. The substitute seemingly was concerned with helping parolees; however, it became evident quickly, particularly to the parolees, that he said one thing in the group with the parole agent present, and quite another when he was alone with the parolees. This student, in fact, did take one of the parolees to a party where drinking took place and where the parolee was provided access to marijuana through the student. Shortly after this, the two parolees assigned to the student came to the parole agent and indicated a dissatisfaction in how the student was behaving and specifically made reference to the prior assigned student whom they saw as an ideal model compared to this individual whose behavior they felt was worse than theirs. This particular matter was resolved by terminating the student in question.

One other situation that reflects the type of relationship established between student and parolee involved an arrest in the community of two parolees for petty theft of some pumpkins during Halloween. The two parolees were bailed out by the student and through the efforts of the student and the parole agent, a court disposition was arranged whereby the parolees worked for the victim of the theft for two days, rather than receive the usual jail sentence as punishment. These incidents are examples of the students' "crisis intervention" with parolees.

OBSERVATIONS AND EVALUATION

Keeping in mind that the aims of the program were to devise a method by which the parole agent could effectively meet the diverse needs of a regular parolee caseload, we conclude that the program was a success. We were, of course, concerned with attitudinal change and this was one of the first things that took place with the confrontation by the parolees regarding whether the program was

simply a method of finding out things about them to do them harm. During the course of the program, it was evident that parolees were turning to students to discuss personal difficulties related to their succeeding in the community. We can conclude that parolees do want to succeed. Just two examples to indicate the type of things that took place would be the parolee with limited academic ability who was kept in school through the tutoring efforts of the student working with him; and the parolee who, having impregnated his girl friend and was considering running away, was able to discuss the matter with the student and then the two were able to approach the parole agent with the problem. There was a remarkable "opening up" on the part of the parolees toward the parole agent and they began discussing the problems they were having with their families and with their own behavior in the community. During this time, it was evident that they were breaking away from a solid delinquent identification and recognizing that some of their behavioral problems were the result of their own modes of behavior rather than the result of unfair adults, authority figures, and the community in general. Another indication of their commitment to the program was the almost perfect attendance to the group meetings. Of the two groups there was just one individual who voiced an objection to attendance and started absenting himself regularly. This was the individual who was later arrested on an offense and returned to be incarcerated in one of the California Youth Authority institutions.

In retrospect, it should be noted that the program could have perhaps gotten off the ground more effectively with some better pretraining of the students in terms of the roles that they were to play. There was some confusion on their part as to whether they should discuss with the parole agent things that they had learned from the parolees, and they also had a difficult time establishing their role with the parolees. More structure also is necessary in planning the social activities in which the students and parolees are to be involved.

The Jesness Behavior Checklist was used for a pre and post test evaluation instrument. Unfortunately, with the mobility of parolees only four parolees received both pre and post tests and it was felt that this was too few a number to make valid statistical analysis. However, in reviewing the scores of the subjects that did take the tests, it is apparent that improvement took place in most all of the aspects of behavior that were rated.

The major goal of the program, the development of a "peer influencer" role between nonprofessionals (students) and parolees was attained. Through the establishment of this relationship, the parole agent became capable of relating to parolees in a meaningful, open form of communication. We do not mean to imply that all parolees

were "cured" of their delinquent behavior, as indeed such was not the case but through this program, the parole agent became acutely aware of individual parolee problems and was able to effectively deal with some of them.

A final note should be made in regard to the students who were involved in this program, although this was not a program intended primarily for developing future correctional people, it was obvious that this was indeed what would take place. Of the five students involved one, as was mentioned, was dropped because of "unprofessional" behavior, and certainly if this individual continues in the field of corrections, he will have gained a valuable experience about types of behavior not to engage in with parolees. Of the other four, one is currently employed as a probation officer, one is seeking employment in the field of corrections, the other is completing his last year of work in corrections and then will be going into the field of probation and the last has been accepted, and will be attending a graduate school working towards his master's degree in social welfare.

Prepared by: Robert Zanetti
Parole Agent-
Project Director

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APPENDIX "A" -- POPULATION MOVEMENT SUMMARY

I.	Total ward participants during the project year	16
	Total returned to State institution	2
	Total absconded or missing	1
	Total moved to other city	4
	Total at year end on parole	14
II.	Wards employed at start of project	0
	Wards employed at end of project	3
III.	Wards attending school at start of project	1
	Wards attending school at end of project	1
IV.	Total wards arrested	6
	Resolved at community level	4
	Returned to State institution .	2

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