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POLICE-YOUTH COOPERATIVE
COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAM

A Review Report Concerning
the Performance and Impact
of the Fargo Youth Depot

(ND)

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INTRODUCTION

This report contains an evaluation of the PCI ICE-YOUTH COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAM (hereafter referred to as the "Fargo Youth Depot"), established in the City of Fargo, North Dakota, in 1971. The general issue under discussion in this review is the relationship of this program to the problem of juvenile delinquency and more particularly whether the Depot has made a contribution to the relationship between the youth and police in the community.

Background Developments of the Fargo Youth Depot

The idea for a community centered program for youth began to crystalize during 1969-1970; and the Fargo Police Department submitted a proposal to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in an effort to operationalize this concept. This particular proposal was eventually rejected. During the early months of 1971, the Model Cities Agency and the Southeastern Community Action Agency also became involved in formulating and financing such a program. In the meantime, the Fargo Police Department submitted a second application for funding, this time to the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. In April, 1971, the Fargo Police Department was granted authorization to pursue its plans; and in September, 1971, the Burlington-Northern Railroad granted use of a non-operational depot to the City of Fargo. This building was designated as the location for the Fargo Youth Depot.

The response of local youth to the availability of such a program was quite positive, and they gave generously of their time and energy in physically preparing the building for utilization.

Several problems, however, were initially experienced which retarded the complete implementation and progress of the program. To begin with, the above identified agencies, i.e., the Fargo Police Department, the Model Cities Agency, and the Southeastern Community Action Agency, were all involved with various degrees of input in the attempted operation of the Depot. Whereas personnel from all three of these agencies understandably viewed their respective organization as having made a contribution in gaining authorization for implementation, all three desired to make additional input to the center and maintain some degree of accountability. Obviously, this contributed to a serious state of confusion regarding respective agency role involvement. Eventually the Chief of Police, who had primary responsibility for the Fargo Youth Depot, decided in June, 1972, to close the center for an indefinite period of time. The Mayor of Fargo, on the other hand, had the Depot reopened and granted responsibility to the Fargo Fire Department. Eventually this uneasy and uneven situation was resolved when the Fargo City Commission established a Fargo Commission on Youth and provided this organization with the authority to oversee the operation of the Fargo Youth Depot. This body, the Fargo Commission on Youth, submitted the rather optimistic proposal to the North Dakota Combined Law Enforcement Council which is to be reviewed in this report.

Additional problems plagued the early operation of the Depot program. Strong disagreements between the adults and youth, who were on the governing boards, emerged about policy and decision making issues. The absence of clear definitions of authority partially contributed to this particular problem. Furthermore, there existed a considerable staffing

problem due to turnover in personnel. In fact, the present staff of the Fargo Youth Depot were recruited in December, 1972, and as such were not involved in the framing or immediate implementation of the FY 1972-1973 proposal. The point here is that these staff inherited a less than desirable situation for the maximum likelihood of facilitating program accomplishment.

REVIEW OF PROPOSALS, PROGRAMS AND PERFORMANCE

Having briefly reviewed the developments of the Fargo Youth Depot, attention now turns to a specific review of the program's five general goals. The discussion and analysis of each goal and the respective attempts to achieve them parallels the sequence as presented in the proposal.

The First Goal

Identified as the first goal by the Commission on Youth was the "...attempt to increase understanding between law enforcement officials and the youth of the community" (p. 3). Hopefully this would be accomplished via activities such as Depot "rap-sessions," police officers stopping in for coffee, youth participation in the in-service training of police, joint community service projects, police participation on the Youth Commission, and a Police Cadet Corps.

Available evidence obtained by this reviewer through discussions with youth who participate in the Depot and personnel of the criminal justice system (i.e., Chief Edwin Anderson of the Fargo Police Department, Judge Arthur Lieb and three of his staff of the Cass County Juvenile Court) provides a mixed conclusion. To begin with, there is some partial indication that understanding between the youth of the community and law enforcement officials has improved somewhat during the past year. Improvement in understanding can be attributed to the following developments:

1. "Rap sessions" between the Depot staff and participating youth have provided these youth with a perspective which was either not at all considered or done so quite minimally heretofore.
2. Some police officers do stop in for a beverage and talk with the youth about a number of issues. Apparently, at least, this has provided a double-edged benefit in police-youth relations:
 - a. Some police personnel come to know and relate with youth in a more relaxed, informal, and congenial situation.
 - b. The youth develop a relationship and thus an image of police personnel which is one that facilitates a willingness to listen and try to understand the perspective and social-legal responsibilities of the police. Very much related to this is that the youth develop an image of the police officer which connotes something other than a negative stereotype.
3. In March and April a "Workshop" was conducted at the Depot. The purpose of this was to provide an additional mechanism which might lead to an improvement in relations with police in particular and personnel of the criminal justice system in general. Feedback from the youth and representatives of the criminal justice system who participated in this particular program leads one to conclude that considerable headway was achieved in improving youth-police relationships specifically

and more generally the relationship between youth and personnel of the overall criminal justice system. (For a more specific discussion of the "Workshop," see Appendix A.)

While the above discussion might be interpreted as indicating that understanding between the youth of the community and the police has markedly improved, such a conclusion could be hazardous. Several factors prompt this suggestion:

1. No member of the Fargo Police Department has been appointed to the Commission on Youth. Chief Edwin Anderson informed this reviewer that he posted a notice in his department requesting voluntary participation but that no one came forward to accept the offer.
2. While some police personnel are to be found at the Depot, this is frequently done on a paid basis. To be sure, there is one officer who regularly and freely visits the Depot and interacts with the youth. But such activity, while praiseworthy and seemingly successful to some degree, is insufficient. The point is that there is no official and structured program between the Depot and Fargo Police Department.
3. The achievement of this goal was to be accomplished via several mechanisms: rap sessions, police officers stopping in for coffee, youth participation in the in-service training of police, joint community service projects, police participation on the Youth Commission, and a Police Cadet Corps. All of these means have not

fully materialized. Some of these, i.e., rap sessions and police officers stopping in have occurred but in a partial and informal manner. Other identified operations, i.e., youth participation in police in-service training, joint community service projects, police participation on the Youth Commission, and a Police Cadet Corps, have not at all materialized. The absence of these mechanisms can, in this reviewer's judgement, be partially attributed to the lack of a well designed program between the Depot and the Fargo Police Department.

It is important to realize that the staff of the Depot and, in particular, Chief Edwin Anderson, have informed this reviewer that it is still quite possible for more to be done regarding a joint working relationship between the Depot and his department.

The Second Goal

Proposed as a second goal by the Commission on Youth was the establishment of "a broad, relevant program that will interest all types of young people and different age groups" (p. 4). This was to be achieved by a comprehensive Cultural and Arts Program, for example, painting, a drama workshop, ceramics. Recreation was not the simple issue. Rather, the intention was to provide an opportunity for the expression of cultural interests of those youth who are unable to identify with other community organizations in a meaningful manner. Additionally, this specific goal was to be achieved by the continued provision of facilities for Youth Job Placement Office and for the Open School, and having the Depot program serve as the follow-up for youth who express needs to the local Hot-Line operation. Response by participating youth indicates that this particular goal is being achieved, at least partially. The above identified activities and facilities do exist at the Fargo Youth Depot. From all indications, it is clear that these programs are meeting the interests of different types of young people. Reflecting developmental changes in the Depot, the participating age group is narrower than suggested in the proposal which identified aspirations of appealing to different age groups. The clientele of those presently participating in Depot activities is very much restricted to the thirteen through fifteen year age range. In a manner of judging, then, this goal is partially successful insofar as it is addressing the needs of a narrower age group. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that for those youth who do participate, such cultural

activities provide an avenue for them "...to feel good about themselves, to feel like a worthy person..." (p. 5).

A final means of achieving this goal were the plans to establish "...alcohol and drug education and therapy, ..." (p. 5). These plans were undeveloped for two main reasons:

1. The drug education program was viewed as unnecessary by the youth because they perceive themselves as possessing sufficient and accurate knowledge on the issue.
2. Upon the advise of Dr. Will Wells of the Southeast Mental Health and Retardation Center, the therapeutic aspect for the achievement of this goal was eliminated. Dr. Wells cautioned that such activity can be involved with some quite delicate psychological circumstances which could be inappropriately addressed if pursued by unqualified personnel. Due to the unavailability of specifically trained personnel, it was decided not to pursue this specific operation.

To avoid misinterpretation, it is important to point out that the above discussion is not to be construed as indicating that counseling activities are totally absent. Such is not the situation. While some counseling does exist, the definite emphasis is crisis oriented.

In general, it may justifiably be concluded that this second broad goal has achieved some success. Similar to the situation regarding the first goal of the Depot, however, the activities which have been pursued to achieve success are more informal and unstructured than formal and systematically organized. Such a circumstance does not maximize the probability of successful goal attainment.

The Third Goal

Proposed as the third goal by the Fargo Commission on Youth was the reduction of juvenile delinquency, specifically, "...to reduce the number of arrests of juveniles in the community... For the year of operation we have set a goal of 20%" (p. 5). One means of reviewing this particular goal is the use of official statistics, and this technique is employed. In so doing, data from the Fargo Police Department are presented and discussed. A second statistical source is available, namely, the Cass County Juvenile Court. Statistics from Cass County are not detailed in the main body of this report but are, instead, to be found in Appendix B. This was done for the following reasons:

1. Fargo Police Department statistics were chosen over Cass County statistics for the main review of this goal because it seems reasonable to assume that the jurisdictional target, while not exclusively so, is the City of Fargo.
2. To include both the Fargo Police Department and Cass County statistics in the main body would be useful if a comparative question between these units were the issue. Such is not the case because, in part,
 - a. The legal jurisdictions, while similar, are not the same. Thus the statistics for Cass County are not only greater, but may reflect the effect of factors beyond any possible influence of the Depot.
 - b. The classification schemes of the Fargo Police Department and Cass County are noticeably different.

Nevertheless, Cass County Juvenile Court statistics are presented in Appendix B in order that one may arrive at a complete a judgement as possible concerning this important goal.

TABLE 1
 FARGO POLICE DEPARTMENT STATISTICS:
 OFFENSE AND NUMBER FOR YOUTH UNDER AGE EIGHTEEN

	1971	1972	Difference
Robbery	0	2	+2
Aggravated Assault	0	0	None
Burglary	26	41	+15
Larceny-Theft	197	127	-70
Auto-Theft	12	32	+20
Assaults	3	2	-1
Arson	0	1	+1
Forgery and Counterfeiting	4	2	-2
Fraud	3	1	-2
Stolen Property: Buying, Receiving, Possessing	13	11	-2
Vandalism	30	22	-8
Weapons: Carrying, Possessing, etc.	5	11	+6
Sex Offenses	1	4	+3
Marijuana	7	30	+23
Other Dangerous Drugs	8	0	-8
Driving Under the Influence	1	0	-1
Liquor Laws	89	41	-48
Drunkenness	0	No specific data	
Disorderly Conduct	21	15	-6
Vagrancy	30	23	-7
Curfew and Loitering	14	27	+13
Runaways	75	56	-19
All Other Offenses: Except traffic	11	29	+18
Total	550	477	-73

Data from Table 1 could be viewed as cause for qualified optimism regarding the goal of delinquency arrest reduction. Overall, these statistics reveal a decrease in "arrests," i.e., from 1971 total of 550 "arrests" to a 1972 total of 477 "arrests," or, stated differently, an overall decrease of slightly more than thirteen per cent. Of the twenty-two categories for which comparative data exist, nine offenses reflect an increase, twelve offenses were marked by a decrease, and one category reflects no change.

Table 2 presents the statistics for those offenses which were characterized by an increase in number of arrests from 1971 to 1972.

Table 2

FARGO POLICE DEPARTMENT STATISTICS:

OFFENSE AND NUMBER FOR YOUTH UNDER EIGHTEEN WHICH ARE INCREASING

	1971	1972	Difference
Robbery	0	2	+2
Burglary	26	41	+15
Auto-Theft	12	32	+20
Arson	0	1	+1
Weapons: Carrying, Possessing, etc.	5	11	+6
Sex Offenses	1	4	+3
Marijuana	7	30	+23
Curfew and Loitering	14	27	+13
All Other Offenses: Except traffic	11	29	+18
Total	76	177	+101

As identified in Table 2, the above nine categories were marked by an increase of 101 (132.9%) "arrests" from 1971 to 1972. While some of these offense increases constitute a slight proportion of the

total increase (e.g., Robbery, Weapons, and Sex Offenses), other categories, (e.g., Burglary, Auto-Theft, Marijuana, and Curfew and Loitering, comprise a major proportion, about seventy percent) of the total increase. Thus, while an initial and superficial glance at Table 1 could lead to a favorable response to the issue of delinquency "arrest" reduction, Table 2 compels one to be guarded about such an evaluation. Increase in delinquency arrests for the above nine classifications leads to the proposition that the goal of a twenty per cent reduction in arrests for delinquency has not been achieved for several specific behavior patterns.

Table 3 presents the arrest statistics for those offenses which were characterized by a decrease in number of "arrests" from 1971 to 1972.

Table 3

FARGO POLICE DEPARTMENT STATISTICS:

OFFENSES AND NUMBER FOR YOUTH UNDER EIGHTEEN WHICH ARE DECREASING

	1971	1972	Difference
Larceny-Theft	197	127	-70
Assaults	3	2	-1
Forgery and Counterfeiting	4	2	-2
Fraud	3	1	-2
Stolen Property: Buying, Receiving, Possessing	13	11	-2
Vandalism	30	22	-8
Other Dangerous Drugs	8	0	-8
Driving Under the Influence	1	0	-1
Liquor Laws	89	41	-48
Disorderly Conduct	21	15	-6
Vagrancy	30	23	-7
Runaways	75	56	-19
Total	474	300	-174

For the twelve offense categories presented in Table 3, there is an overall decrease of 174 (36.7%) "arrests" from 1971 to 1972. As is the case with those statistics in Table 2, some of the offenses (e.g., Assaults, Forgery and Counterfeiting, and Fraud) contribute a small proportion to the total decrease. On the other hand, some offenses (e.g., Larceny-Theft and Liquor Laws) comprise a major percentage (67.8%) of the total decrease. Of particular interest are the statistics on Larceny-Theft. It is important to review such offense statistics for a longer period of time in order to underscore the issue. From 1969 through 1971, "arrest" statistics for Larceny-Theft were on the rise, i.e., there were 108 such "arrests" in 1969, 132 "arrests" in 1970, and 197 "arrests" in 1971. In 1972, however, the number of "arrests" for Larceny-Theft declined to 127, a three-year low point. While the overall decrease in the twelve offense categories in general, and Larceny-Theft in particular, do not warrant the conclusion that the Fargo Youth Depot has succeeded in achieving a twenty per cent reduction in delinquency "arrests," the above data do suggest that the program may apparently be accomplishing this goal to some degree.

Available data from the Fargo Police Department allows us to conduct a preliminary correlation between the amount of juvenile delinquency and specific age categories. Table 4 provides such an indication for review purposes.

TABLE 4
 FARGO POLICE DEPARTMENT STATISTICS
 FOR 1971-1972 ACCORDING TO AGE

	1971		1972		Difference	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ages Ten and Under	28	5.1	20	4.2	-8	-28.6
Ages 11-12	61	11.1	59	12.4	-2	- 3.3
Ages 13-14	157	28.5	124	26.0	-33	-21.1
Ages 15	118	21.5	100	20.9	-18	-15.3
Age 16	98	17.8	93	19.5	-5	- 5.1
Age 17	88	16.0	81	17.0	-7	- 8.0
Total	550	100.0	477	100.0	-73	-13.3

The data in Table 4 reveal an extremely important statistical distribution within the change between the years 1971 and 1972. To realize the importance of the data, it is useful to return to a statement on the second page of the proposal under "The 'Need' for the Depot" which identifies that:

"The city police records show that in 1969 there were 480 arrests of juveniles under age 18; in 1970 the figure was 452; but in 1971 it jumped to a new high of 550. The biggest increase came in the 13-14 year olds, where in these years the totals were 140 - 95 - 157." (p. 2)

Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that when the Fargo Youth Depot reopened under the auspices of the Fargo Commission on Youth, there was a marked change in the age representation of the participants. Earlier, that is to say prior to being closed, the youth who were involved in Depot activities were the sixteen and seventeen year old groups. After reopening, the age group represented in Depot affairs

has been and continues to remain the thirteen through fifteen year old youth. The point here is that the Youth Commission implies that the age target group will be the thirteen and fourteen year old youth. Whereas these two age categories and the fifteen year olds are the age participants, it is justifiable to closely examine the "arrest" data for these age groups.

The first thing to be noticed for the 1971 and 1972 data is that the modal category for each year is thirteen through fourteen year old group. The second largest category, again for each year, is the fifteen year old group. Taken together, within each year, it is seen that the thirteen through fifteen year olds comprise 275 (50.0%) of the 550 "arrests" in 1971 and 224 (46.9%) of the 477 "arrests" for 1972. If, then, a specific age category should be singled out as a "target group" for the activities of the Fargo Youth Depot, it is the thirteen through fifteen year old group.

Interpretating the previously presented and reviewed statistics must occur with caution because, in part, the main year of focus has been 1972. The proposed program and its operation under discussion was identified to be for the latter part of 1972 and the first nine months of 1973. While the actual implementation of the Depot program under the direction of the present staff did not parallel this schedule, the point remains that statistics for 1973 should be assessed. However, statistics from the Fargo Police Department are available from January, 1973, through June, 1973. Furthermore, no tabulated statistics are available, at the present time, according to age groupings.

The point is that a comparison of 1972 and 1973 statistics is not fully possible insofar as one is able to suggest only a "best guess" as to the overall 1973 situation. With these facts in mind, attention now turns to the statistics for the first six months of 1973 presented by the Fargo Police Department. Table 5 presents these statistics.

TABLE 5

FARGO POLICE DEPARTMENT STATISTICS: OFFENSE AND NUMBER
FOR YOUTH UNDER AGE EIGHTEEN FOR THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1973

Offense Category	Number
Robbery	0
Aggravated Assault	0
Burglary	20
Larceny-Theft	80
Auto-Theft	27
Assaults	0
Arson	2
Forgery and Counterfeiting	3
Fraud	7
Stolen Property: Buying, Receiving, Possessing	6
Vandalism	13
Weapons	5
Sex Offenses	0
Narcotic and Drug Laws*	13
Driving Under the Influence	1
Liquor Laws	29
Drunkenness	0
Disorderly Conduct	5
Vagrancy	2
Curfew and Loitering	No Specific Data
Runaways	No Specific Data
All Other Offenses: Except Traffic	58
Total	281

*Statistics concerning drugs, at this point of time for 1973, are not, as done in previous years, separated according to the classifications of "Marijuana" and "Other Dangerous Drugs."

While Table 5, for reasons identified earlier, must be interpreted with considerable caution; it does suggest that, should the present trend continue, juvenile delinquency in 1973 will, generally speaking, reflect an increase when compared with 1972. It will be remembered that the total amount for 1972 was 477. For the first six months of 1973, the total amount is 281. Making the risky projection that the final six months will reveal a pattern exactly parallel to the first six months, the overall amount of juvenile delinquency could be 562. Stated differently and if this pattern remains, there would be an increase from 1972 to 1973 of 85 offenses (15.1%). While it would be quite unfair to assert that this increase will hold, the statistics do raise a legitimate question regarding the goal of a twenty percent reduction in juvenile delinquency.

The general and specific juvenile offense data lead one to conclude that the goal of a twenty percent delinquency reduction has not been achieved. These data do not, however, justify a response which would suggest that the Youth Depot has been a failure in addressing the delinquency problem. To begin with a goal of a twenty percent delinquency decrease is quite optimistic, so much so that it borders upon the perimeters of unrealistic aspirations. Secondly, when we compare 1971 and 1972 statistics, it is seen that some offenses do reflect a decrease. Third, as presented in Table 3, the statistics for the thirteen through fifteen year old group have demonstrated an important decline. "Arrests" for the thirteen and fourteen year old youths have declined from 157 in 1971 to 124 in 1972. Regarding the fifteen year old youths, the data indicate that the number of "arrests" has decreased from 118 in 1971 to 100 in 1972 which is a three year

low point. Stated differently, the statistics for the thirteen through fifteen year old youths have declined from a combined total of 275 in 1971 to 224 in 1972. Fourth, it is particularly important to recall that the proposal suggested that the age "target group" would be the thirteen and fourteen year old youths. whereas the clientele of the Depot is, in the main, thirteen through fifteen year old youth, it seems reasonable to suggest that the program is attracting its suggested "target groups."

While official statistics have been used in an effort to judge this third goal, this type of assessment is not the exclusive approach to the issue. In proposing to reduce the amount of delinquency, it could seem reasonable to expect that some systematic program between the Depot and other community agencies would be planned and operationalized. While some initial attempts at agency coordination were previewed, follow-up has been lacking. This observation should not, on the other hand, be construed as singling out the Depot or any other agency as being at fault. Community agency cooperation is a rare, if at all operational, phenomenon. The point is that delinquency reduction, without community agencies planning and implementing a systematic program, is, at best, a difficult task.

The Fourth Goal

Proposed as the fourth goal of the Fargo Youth Depot was the operation of the Depot as a "hub" for youth activities in the community. This was to be achieved by conducting meetings, similar to an "open forum" model on events in the community. A review of this particular goal reveals that explication is noticeably absent. Examples of how such a goal will be operationally achieved are identified. Thus, one is informed that meetings between the youth, police, and interested citizens could be scheduled at the Depot in order to discuss problems, e.g., "hanging out in Island Park." Interaction between these three community sectors has occurred, and one could be led to conclude that this specific goal has been achieved to some apparent degree.

An additional interpretation, however, of the proposition to "...have the Depot serve as a 'hub' for youth activities in the community..." (p. 5) is possible, i.e., the Depot would function as a center of information for all youth activities, both problematic and non-problematic events. If this fourth suggestion is to be interpreted as meaning that there will be a center where the youth of the community can turn for information concerning not only what is happening but when and where these activities are, then we must conclude that this goal has not been attained.

While channels of communication between youth, police, and interested citizens are important for facilitating respective and respectful understanding, and can partially contribute to the Depot personnel possessing information regarding youth activities, these types of communication channels are insufficient to establish a comprehensive information center. While it is possible for local

youth to obtain some information regarding youth related events, the probability of procuring such knowledge is, at best, highly variable, i.e., dependent on organization and personnel contingencies which are unorganized and, therefore, are uneven. Meritorious as the goal of an information hub is, it is not surprising that its accomplishment is not yet a reality. To expect that the Depot would achieve such in light of its developmental changes, newness, and staffing patterns would be unrealistic. An organization is unlikely to become a collection and dissemination hub of information, in so short a period of time, unless this is the primary, if not exclusive, goal and possesses the necessary supportive personnel. The point being that whereas channels of communication between different community sectors are important and needed, in and of themselves, they are insufficient. What is additionally and importantly needed, is that the Depot be composed of a division of labor which specifically assigns its personnel the responsibility of collecting and distributing the relevant information. In order to facilitate the responsibilities of these particular personnel, there must be the provision of technical apparatus needed for information collection, classification, and dissemination.

To briefly reiterate, then, the idea of an information hub at the Depot is meritorious but unachieved and this circumstance is due to the lack of sufficient organization, supporting personnel, and equipment.

The Fifth Goal

Somewhat related to the above discussed goal is the fifth goal, i.e., "a primary goal of our commission is simply to provide a place for kids to go--a place to listen to records, see a film, have a coke, play a game of pool, hear a concert, paint a picture, or just rap" (pp. 5-6). Without any doubt this fifth, and one of the primary goals, has been achieved. The Depot does provide the above activities for the youth in the community; and it is quite clear that some (e.g., ages 13-15) Fargo youth are aware of such activities and do use these facilities for such purposes. Chief Edwin Anderson indicated to this reviewer that the Depot has functioned so that it keeps the youth off the streets. To be sure, not all segments of the youth population are represented at Depot conducted activities. This phenomenon, however, was expected. While the Fargo school system does provide a quite diversified extra-curricular program which is supplemented by additional facilities and activities sponsored by the local YMCA and YWCA, there are some youth in the community who do not identify with such agency sponsored programs. The youth who cannot so identify with these programs constituted the "target group" of the Depot proposal (p. 3). The Depot staff and this reviewer have all received continual feedback that the Depot program does indeed meet the activity needs of this target group. Thus, while the youth who participate in the Depot program cannot be classified as a cross-sectional representation of all local youth, these youth do represent quite heavily the target group which was and remains the audience of the Youth Commission program.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Evaluating the Fargo Youth Depot has provided some observations not fully identified in the review of the five specific goals.

1. In interviewing personnel of the Cass County ~~Juvenile Court~~, some worthwhile information was obtained.

A. Probation officers have informed this reviewer that some of their youth have discussed the Depot and its operation. A frequent comment voiced by these youth is that the Depot began to deteriorate in the early fall of 1972. The importance of this is that the Depot allegedly began to experience some (widely) known shortcomings before the present staff were recruited. Available evidence, which is somewhat sketchy, suggests that when the present staff of the Depot began functioning as such, they were constrained into conducting a "holding operation" so as to simply keep the "program" operating without falling into disintegration and eventually collapse. As pointed out in the introductory comments, the Depot staff inherited a less than desirable situation for program efficacy. The observations of juveniles and probation officers underscore the existence and seriousness of this particular problem.

B. A recurrent complaint of the Depot identified by juveniles on probation and reported to this reviewer is that the Depot does not provide structured programs. The absence of such structure could be attributed to several circumstances

which, in this reviewer's judgement, need not be elaborated upon at this point. Rather, the point is what the youth desire and simultaneously do not desire. As suggested above, the youth want structure. On the other hand, it is also communicated by these same youthful critics, the structure must be quite carefully provided. That is to say youth prefer to identify, and to whatever degree possible, explicate their interests and needs and then have the Depot staff provide the structure for the attainment of their goals. To be sure this can be delicate and can easily open the door to one way communication if not dictation. Witness the failure of the drug education program which, while proposed, did not materialize. Failure here could be blamed on the youth for alleging that they possess sufficient and accurate knowledge regarding drug use and abuse. While the possession of such knowledge by thirteen through fifteen year old youth is highly unlikely, the youth, nevertheless, successfully resisted and therefore thwarted this particular planned operation.

The issue is larger than the mere provision of structure. Personnel in charge of administering and planning the Depot program must confront the task of providing structure, when possible, for those aspirations voiced by their clientele. On the other hand, the staff must also find a mechanism which will prevent the youth from undermining those planned programs which they view as important. In short, the Depot

staff must establish agreed upon criteria as to when they are to listen to the youth and when the youth are to listen to them. Achieving and implementing such a stance, while necessary for a successful program, will be difficult for several reasons the least of which is not the fact that their clientele participate on a voluntary basis. It seems reasonable, however, to assert that one assumption for conceiving, planning, and funding programs such as the Depot, is that the principle has the potential for recruiting and retaining youth on a volunteer model. If such is an accurate assumption, then it is an idea which is not fully achieved.

- C. One of the probation officers at Cass County Court raised an interesting point regarding what can be considered as youth commitment to the Depot. It was recalled, during the interview, that the change in clientele has resulted in the situation where the present participants have not made as much, if any, a contribution to the physical preparation of the Depot. It was the previous (to the Depot closing) clientele which volunteered their energy and time to preparing the Depot for youth activities. Stated differently, the present clientele of the Depot probably possess relatively little, if any, investment in the continued operation and success of the program. It would seem reasonable to suggest that program success is

partially related to participant investment and that some investment will have to be generated for the present participants.

- D. An additional feature of the Depot which is the subject of criticism by probation juveniles is that there is very little, if any, activity to be found during the summer months. The decline in attendance, which is quite noticeable when the warmer season arrives, should not be viewed as reflecting an absence of interest by all youth in the community. If such a judgement were to be reached, the lack of interest would, for some youth, be more apparent than real. The challenge for the Depot staff, then, is to attract youth during the summer season; a period when it may be the most difficult time to attract youth.
- E. Finally, it is important to consider a point of information related to this reviewer by one of the probation officers. It was revealed that some of the juveniles on probation are confused as to the position of the Depot staff regarding, for example, the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Specifically, it has been possible for a youngster, who has been drinking, to go to the Depot and, apparently at least, be "accepted" by the staff. The youngster in such a situation raises the question as to whether the staff condone such behavior. It is this reviewer's judgement that many youth are far from a final position on issues such as alcohol consumption and are quite possibly looking for

some degree of guidance and firmness which apparently has been unavailable, at least in the view of some community youth.

To avoid a potential misinterpretation of the above comments it is necessary to identify that this reviewer has discussed the phenomenon with Mr. Mike Stokes, Director of the Depot. He is aware of this problem and has indicated that he definitely plans to correct the situation. In this reviewer's judgement, decreasing the amount of attention given to crisis situations and increasing the amount of organized attention to continuing but non-crisis oriented situations would be, not only helpful, but necessary in order to overcome the confusion in the minds of some community youth.

2. The second important consideration in evaluating a program such as the Depot concerns its exact purpose. Conceptually speaking, there are two different routes that such an agency can pursue. First, it can operate merely as a "Drop-In" center. At the moment it is this reviewer's judgement that such is the present status of the Depot. On Friday and Saturday evenings the Depot will attract many community youth who come for purposes of recreation. Other evenings, however, are characterized by attendance which is considerably lower.

The second avenue of pursuit is that a facility such as the Depot operates as (a tool for organizing and generating interests beyond those of simple recreation.) Some suggested plans in the proposal lead one to believe that this would be done, i.e., to some degree. Such efforts, however, did not materialize.

The point is that the proposed program implied that this second alternative would be the guiding principle, but this is, at best, underachieved as the "Drop-In" idea is closer to the operations of the previous months.

3. The present Commission on Youth does not offer evidence of providing successful decision making and program guidance. Intra-organizational problems, namely, uneven attendance and disagreements have served to retard progress.

It may be possible to address this problem by dividing this body into a bi-level board with one level composed of civic minded citizens and youth representatives, and the second level constituted by personnel who are professionally trained in matters addressed by the Depot staff.

4. This report was based on an evaluation which experienced a major constraint, namely, the absence of data directly relevant to passing judgement on the five goals of the Depot and their impact. To be sure, official statistics (with their well known limitations) have been collected and reviewed. Interviews with various people in the community were conducted and have proven to be useful. While these data sources have been instrumental in framing this report, they are, in this reviewer's judgement, quite insufficient.

The "absence" of additional data, however, can be viewed as a (different) form of data. Accepting this position, then, leads to the question as to what this phenomenon indicates. A highly reasonable answer to this question is that the absence of one form of data reveals

the additional absence of systematic consideration of program planning and assessment. Assigning culpability at this juncture is a moot point. Rather, the crucial point is to avoid such for the forthcoming proposed operation. Plans are presently underway to guarantee that this situation does not occur in the future.

Conclusion

While much has been considered and presented in the review of the Depot operation, several major factors warrant repeated identification insofar as these problems are very much related to the agency's present status.

- (1). Socio-political antecedents which created a community climate and "program procedure" have operated to considerably restrict the potential impact of the Depot. The present staff inherited this undesirable situation.
- (2). Planning which reflects a realistic appraisal of youth needs and staff capabilities. Intertwining these two dimensions, while of utmost importance, has been uneven.
- (3). Programming has failed to move beyond the principle of a simple "Drop-In" center. With this in mind, programs should be constructed around the continued offering of various activities designed to meet the needs of youth as identified by both the clientele and the staff. When staff identify a need of youth, they must be ready to address the issue of resistance.

4. Intra-agency organization of staff and those youth who participate, to whatever degree, in the delivery of youth services. If, as is to be proposed, college students are to be called upon to facilitate the agency's operation, the contingencies of supervision and coordination must be established and followed through for the entire year. Selection and preparation of college students must be guarded quite carefully. Improving the organization and operation of the Commission on Youth must be accomplished. The previous prescription of a bi-level board should be considered.

5. Inter-agency cooperation is very much needed but nevertheless lacking. Efforts to overcome this circumstance must proceed as rapidly as possible if the Depot is to have (more of) an impact upon the community. Available evidence suggests that, to some degree, such cooperation can be achieved.

To briefly reiterate, the Depot has experienced a period of unorganized operation which is due to several circumstances. These factors have been identified and discussed in this report and it is justifiable to suggest that an effort is being made to overcome them. Staff personnel at the Depot are aware of these issues and have engaged in an initial process to correct the uneven situation.

The five proposal goals have been addressed with differential pursuit and results. Preliminary evidence suggests that the forthcoming proposed program will be more systematically pursued and, therefore, it can be expected that the results should reflect an improvement over the previous period.

APPENDIX A

WORKSHOP ON PROCEDURES IN THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE SYSTEM

Discussions with numerous youth involved in the Fargo Youth Depot reveal many facets regarding their perceptions of society in general and the criminal justice system in particular. Concerning their conceptions of the legal system and the personnel of such, some disturbing subjective "realities" were noticed. For example, it is frequently said by the youth that if they smoke marijuana and are officially dealt with by law enforcement, they will not have to worry about this occurrence in future years because it is merely a matter of time before such action is no longer legally proscribed. The issue at this point, in the minds of youth, is that smoking marijuana is not simply an acceptable act to them but, more importantly, society will eventually adopt this view and respond with legal alterations. Whether such a change will develop is not the issue which is questionable. Rather, the suggestion that if such a change does materialize, it will mean that past actions, by them and law enforcement personnel will not have any implications. Furthermore, many youth have no conceptions as to expectations of the legal personnel and what their (youth) responsibilities are when involved with various stages of the legal system. Another example underscores the problematic issue. Periodically the Youth Depot staff will receive a request by a youth on probation to call the probation officer and inquire about having a court contingency temporarily altered. Such requests reveal that the particular youth has not accepted the fact that it is not the staff's responsibility to initiate such requests but that it is the youth's responsibility to contact the probation officer.

Existing misconceptions and the absence of conceptions about the criminal justice system prompted the Youth Depot staff, in February of 1973, to organize a series of discussions (via a Workshop Model) between different personnel in the legal system and local youth at the Depot. It was decided to have these sessions on a weekly basis beginning on March 19, 1973.

It was initially decided to schedule three such meetings involving personnel from the Fargo Police Department, the Cass County Juvenile Court, and a lawyer. The three sessions were planned and announcements circulated to the Fargo schools.

The following is an observational evaluation on the achievements of these meetings which were designed for the purpose of familiarizing youth with the procedures of the criminal justice system. It was not the purpose of such meetings, however, to discuss whether such procedures were "right" or "wrong". Briefly stated, the theme of the workshop was concerned with "What Is" and not with "What Should and Should Not Be" in the criminal justice system.

Attendance

The meetings were characterized by two major attendance characteristics. First, the majority of attending youth, ranging from seventy-five percent to eighty-five percent for the three sessions, were female. The domination of females was not limited to presence but also characterized the discussion content. Those males who did attend, infrequently raised questions and offered comments.

Second, there was a marked decline in attendance for the three sessions. The first session was participated in by thirty youth, the second by twenty-one youth, and the final meeting had an attendance of eleven youth.

The proportional sex and tapering attendance possibly reflected several phenomena which will be identified later.

Perceptions of Youth

Each meeting was organized such that the particular representative of the criminal justice system would speak from five to ten minutes and then open up the session for questions and comments which revealed several factors:

- A. Many youth, i.e., those who have not been processed at all or only partially through the criminal justice system are unaware of what to expect when law enforcement intervenes. Furthermore, some youth, at least apparently, are unaware of exactly why law enforcement does intervene and proceeds the way it does.
- B. Related to the issue of why law enforcement intervenes and proceeds in a certain manner is the alleged issue of unfair treatment, or, more to the point, "particularistic standards." Throughout each and every meeting, youth would raise questions about cases with which they had direct or indirect familiarity. The theme of these questions was twofold, i.e., why did the criminal justice system intervene and wasn't such intervention and/or

disposition "wrong." The second theme reflected direct or indirect familiarity with another case where intervention and/or disposition for two or more cases did not totally parallel one another

At this juncture of a particular meeting, the youth participants were revealing a desire to alter the discussion content from one of "What to Expect" to one of condemning the (alleged) "Unfair Practices" of legal personnel. The theme of such questions and comments reflected the youthful perspective of equating particularistic decision making with unfair treatment. Discussion leaders constantly made systematic and apparently successful efforts to inform the youth that universal standards are not necessarily, if at all, in their best interests due to individual circumstances in all cases. The reception by youth of this continual response appears to have been at least somewhat successful insofar as some youth began to admit that such treatment allowed for consideration of their respective personal circumstances, something which could not occur under a system of uniform legal application.

Workshop Evaluation

In judging the success of this workshop the attendance dimension is important. A number of issues were considered by the Depot staff and this reviewer in evaluating the particular segment of the center's activities.

A. Proportional Sex Participation

The greater participation by females is reasonable cause for both some degree of disappointment and satisfaction. It is reasonable to assume that the misconceptions and lacking conceptions of females is similarly, if not identically, shared by males. Low male turnout was then a disappointment and could be due to the following factors:

1. Males are reluctant to publicly identify that they are unsure of social situations. It may well be that male youth define such Depot activities not simply as an admission of unsureness but as an event where they are seeking help. These two dimensions, more specifically, can be viewed as a threat to their masculinity particularly when some of the participants are female.
2. Low male participation may reflect that such youth are involved in activities which carry "more importance" than discussions on the criminal justice system.

In any event, the discussions and questions were of importance and some success, as evidenced by comments advanced by both the participating youth and representatives of the criminal justice system, did occur.

B. Declining Attendance

The decline in attendance is cause for consideration. Several factors possibly contributed to this circumstance:

1. Seasonal Contingencies

Beginning the workshop in the third week of March and continuing it through April could account for the attendance decline. Outdoor activities are events which are quite difficult to compete with when dealing with youth. For example, one week a workshop session was postponed to the following week because of markedly low attendance, i.e., five youth were in attendance. This could have been due, in part, to the appearance of a local singing group at an outdoor concert in Fargo. The rescheduled session, while marked by better attendance, was less than the first session.

2. Attention Span

The duration of attention which can be expected of this age clientele is not particularly long. For example, within each meeting the youth can only be relied upon to give sufficient attention for no more than forty-five to sixty minutes. More importantly, however, is the attention which can be expected between each meeting. Conducting a program for a month or more may be overtaxing the attention tolerance quotient of youth.

3. Recommendation

Whereas such a workshop theme does possess much merit and potential and in light of the above observations and judgements, it is recommended that such an event

be planned for next year with the following alterations:

1. Conduct the program during the winter session, e.g., January or February, and
2. Schedule the sessions for four evenings during a single week.

Hopefully such a timing will address the issue of declining attendance and could possibly facilitate attracting more male participants.

APPENDIX B

TABLE 6

CASS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS:
OFFENSE AND NUMBER ACCORDING TO SEX FOR 1971 AND 1972

Offense	1971			1972		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Assault	7	1	8	3	1	4
Burglary	15	2	17	40	0	40
Unauth Auto Theft	6	2	8	15	0	15
Auto Theft	7	0	7	10	1	11
Larceny-Shoplifting	59	76	135	54	44	98
Larceny	62	2	68	53	6	59
Sex Offenses (Except Forcible rape)	2	0	2	1	0	1
Narcotic Drug Violation	6	0	6	1	0	1
Non-Narcotic Drug Violation	7	0	7	4	4	8
Disorderly Conduct	10	0	10	6	0	6
Missile	6	0	6	9	0	9
Fireworks	3	0	3	6	2	8
Unlawful Entry	1	0	1	11	0	11
Violation of Hunting Laws	1	0	1	1	0	1
Receiving Stolen Prop.	11	0	11	4	1	5
Running Away	17	33	50	13	13	26
Truancy	3	2	5	11	5	16
Violation of Curfew	9	4	13	8	1	9
Ungov. Behavior	21	20	41	12	18	30
Liquor	100	31	131	66	35	101
Violation of Probation	3	3	6	7	2	9
Mischief	32	2	34	26	4	30
False Police Report	3	0	3	1	1	2
Obtain Prop. Under Fls Pret.	1	1	2	0	1	1
Making Fraud. Tele. Commun.	0	1	1	1	0	1
Willful Injury to Prop. of Another	2	0	2		No Data	
Maintaining a Public Nuisance	2	0	2		No Data	
Issuing a Check--No Funds	0	1	1		No Data	
Begging Alms	1	3	4		No Data	
Liquor False ID	0	1	1		No Data	
Attempt to Buy Liquor: Minor	1	0	1		No Data	
Possess Liquor: Minor	1	0	1		No Data	

APPENDIX B CONTINUED

TABLE 6
CASS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS:
OFFENSE AND NUMBER ACCORDING TO SEX FOR 1971 AND 1972

Offense	1971			1972		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Desecration of Flag	1	0	1	No	Data	
Weapons		No Data		1	0	1
Attempted Burg		No Data		5	0	5
False Bomb Threat		No Data		1	0	1
Forgery		No Data		0	1	1
Robbery		No Data		1	0	1
Tel. Calls		No Data		0	1	1
Arson		No Data		1	0	1
Dog Viol		No Data		0	1	1
Review	0	1	1	2	1	3
Total	400	190	590	374	143	517

TABLE 7

SOME CASS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT STATISTICS: OFFENSE AND NUMBER ACCORDING TO SEX
FOR FOUR MONTHS OF 1972 AND 1973

Offense	1972								1973							
	Jan.		Feb.		March		April		Jan.		Feb.		March		April	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Burglary	2	0	3	0	6	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	2	0
Auto Theft: Unauthorized Use	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Auto Theft: All Other	0	0	0	0	NDA	NDA	NDA	NDA	0	0	2	0	NDA	NDA	NDA	NDA
Larceny: Shoplifting	4	4	4	7	NI	NI	NI	NI	3	11	2	2	NI	NI	NI	NI
Larceny: All Other	3	1	1	0	6	2	9	4	2	0	0	0	6	13	5	5
Liquor Violations	6	1	14	5	7	1	8	20	3	1	3	3	4	3	3	3
Miscellaneous Referrals	11	2	13	7	6	6	9	9	22	3	18	10	15	10	20	15
Total	28	8	36	19	26	9	30	33	33	15	28	15	26	27	30	23

N.D.A. = No Data Available

N.I. = Not Identified, i.e., all larceny at this
point was categorized into one classification.

Table 6 and Table 7 do not permit one to arrive at firm conclusions. Table 6 would lead one to suggest that, for Cass County, juvenile delinquency, generally speaking, declined somewhat during 1972. The statistics in Table 7 suggest that 1973 may reflect an increase, a pattern somewhat similar to the data provided by the Fargo Police Department. While statistics beyond April of 1972 were not yet tabulated by Cass County personnel, Judge Arthur Lieb informed this reviewer that he perceives the amount of referrals for June and July to be at an all time high point.

If these statistics can be used to index the goal of a twenty percent reduction in juvenile delinquency, available evidence for 1973 suggests that this goal will not be achieved.

END

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