

# OJJDP Update on Programs

Verne L. Speirs, Administrator

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## A Private-Sector Corrections Program for Juveniles: Paint Creek Youth Center

Citing the need to reduce government spending and streamline operations, the Reagan Administration has advocated a greater role for the private sector in providing social services traditionally offered by State and local governments. Considerable debate among juvenile justice practitioners about the use of the

private sector in providing juvenile correctional services has resulted.

Those who favor privatization argue that the private sector has more freedom and flexibility to start programs quickly and operate them cost efficiently. Private-

sector agencies have greater control over the hiring and firing of staff than agencies in the public sector, and they are more accountable for their actions because of scrutiny by boards of directors, stockholders, and consumers of their goods or services. Based on these factors, proponents conclude that privatization of juvenile corrections can produce more effective services that better meet the needs of young clients.

Opponents of privatization argue that the private sector cannot ensure or provide a consistent level of services. Conversely, better benefits and salaries in the public sector result in a low rate of staff turnover, which enhances continuity of services. Private-sector agencies, they argue, typically accept only those clients or cases that are most likely to succeed and, therefore, are unable to handle the most difficult cases historically handled by public agencies. Opponents conclude that increased private-sector involvement in juvenile corrections will lead to a lack of coordinated services and ultimately a decrease in financial and political support.

The debate over privatization has heated up in recent years because of citizen demands that the juvenile justice system more aggressively confront the problem of serious offenders. So juvenile justice

### From the Administrator:

Shrinking budgets and public demands for more effective programs have led many in the juvenile justice field to consider involving the private sector in juvenile probation and corrections programs.

Although this idea of privatization has often led to heated debate, some jurisdictions have already contracted out select program functions to the private sector. And, it's possible that in the coming years we may see more and more contracting out of services that were traditionally provided by government.

Rather than simply adding to the debate, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is actively examining how effective the private sector can be in providing correctional services for juvenile offenders.

Three years ago, OJJDP awarded Federal funds to New Life Youth Services, Inc., of Cincinnati, Ohio, to

set up a private-sector program for juvenile offenders. To date, OJJDP has provided almost \$1 million for the program, known as Paint Creek Youth Center.

Rand Corporation, through an OJJDP grant, is evaluating the effectiveness of Paint Creek Youth Center. Although the final results are not yet available, it is important to share information about how this program was set up and what it has accomplished so far.

This *OJJDP Update on Programs* describes how Paint Creek Youth Center was established, its treatment program, program costs, and preliminary results from the program. This information can help policymakers and juvenile justice practitioners who are interested in involving the private sector in selected juvenile justice functions.

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agencies are trying to find answers to several important questions:

- How can the juvenile justice system deal more effectively with the chronic, serious juvenile offender?
- What approaches are best for responding to this population and to reducing recidivism?
- What type of correctional/rehabilitative setting is most appropriate for chronic, serious offenders, and how should services be delivered?

To help answer these questions, OJJDP awarded a contract 3 years ago to the Rand Corporation in Santa Monica, California, to examine the effectiveness of several private-sector programs for dealing with serious juvenile offenders. This study is performing the following:

- Measuring the impact of each program in reducing recidivism rates.
- Determining the best and most appropriate services for dealing with specific categories of youth.
- Assessing regulatory factors that affect both the growth and quality of private-sector programs.
- Assessing the effectiveness of private-sector business and management practices.
- Developing a system of workable evaluation procedures.

Three experimental programs were evaluated. One of the most talked about of these private-sector programs is the Paint Creek Youth Center (PCYC) in Bainbridge, Ohio. Since its beginning several years ago, PCYC has been the focus of considerable discussion within the juvenile justice community because it offers an alternative to traditional public correctional services. In a small, open setting, PCYC combines proven program components, including a highly structured environment, intensive aftercare, low client-staff ratio, job training and work experience, and many other comprehensive services.

The Paint Creek Youth Center's program and approach have important implications for the entire juvenile

justice community as it attempts to resolve the diverse problems associated with handling and treating serious juvenile offenders. By focusing on PCYC's components and strategies, this *OJJDP Update on Programs* provides both policymakers and practitioners with important information needed to plan for and effectively treat serious juvenile offenders in their own communities.

### **Paint Creek Youth Center: The beginning**

The Paint Creek Youth Center is 1 of 10 programs of New Life Youth Services, Inc. (New Life), one of the Nation's largest nonprofit, private, community-based youth service organizations. New Life, established in 1969, provides community-based residential, employment, and vocational services to delinquent and high-risk youth from the greater Cincinnati area.

Paint Creek Youth Center is a cooperative effort by Federal, State, and private agencies. New Life was one of two private organizations selected in March 1984 to receive \$982,000 in research and demonstration funds from OJJDP to implement a private-sector corrections program. To help defray the cost of purchasing and renovating the PCYC facility, several foundations, including the Eisenhower Foundation, Public Welfare Foundation, and the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, provided financial assistance. The Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) pays per diem for clients in the program.

New Life purchased a site for its Paint Creek Youth Center in July 1985. Work began immediately to complete the architectural and engineering designs for the facility's renovation and to obtain the necessary permits to construct the renovations. More than 300 applicants for staff positions at PCYC were screened at the same time.

On March 17, 1986, eight months later, the first youth was placed in the Paint

Creek Youth Center. This marked the culmination of an intensive effort that resulted in establishing a full-service correctional program for youth in a relatively brief period of time—an accomplishment that would be difficult for many government agencies to match.

### **Client referral**

PCYC serves up to 34 male youth aged 15 to 18 who have been convicted of first- or second-degree felonies. PCYC, however, has no control over who is actually placed in the center. As part of the cooperative agreement between OJJDP and New Life Youth Services, youth are randomly placed in PCYC by an independent contracting agency, the Rand Corporation. To be placed in PCYC, a youth must first be committed to the Ohio Department of Youth Services and approved for placement at PCYC by the committing judge. The Department of Youth Services then notifies the Rand Corporation, which—through a computerized random-selection scheme—assigns the youth to Paint Creek or to a control group. Youth in the control group are placed in one of two facilities operated by the Department of Youth Services—TICO or Riverview.

PCYC is an open facility, located 28 miles from the nearest medical or psychiatric support. The staff, therefore, is able to determine that a youth is inappropriate for placement because of public protection and safety issues or because the youth has severe psychiatric or medical problems. PCYC does not, however, determine which youth are ultimately placed at the center.

The Rand Corporation evaluators track the situations of youth placed in both PCYC and Department of Youth Services facilities throughout their placement and during aftercare supervision. If possible, the evaluators also monitor these youth for 3 years following aftercare to determine the program's impact on recidivism.

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## **The youth population at Paint Creek**

During a 19-month period between March 1986 and October 1987, 60 youth were placed at Paint Creek. Initially, placements were gradual to allow for necessary adjustments in the program, to give staff an opportunity to work together within the structure of the program, and to allow for completion of renovations. By the end of December 1986, PCYC was averaging 30 youth per day, and since that time, the center has remained close to its capacity population.

Paint Creek Youth Center serves 37 counties in the Southern Ohio region. Two urban counties—Montgomery, which includes Dayton, and Hamilton, which includes Cincinnati—account for more than half the youth placed in the facility. The remaining youth are from surrounding rural communities, including Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Athens, Butler, Clermont, Muskingum, and Ross Counties. Similar population ratios are found in Department of Youth Services facilities.

The majority of youth (34) placed in the center between March 1986 and October 1987 were committed for burglary offenses; however, many others were committed for violent crimes: 10 were committed for assault; 9 were committed for robbery; 4 were committed for rape; and 1 person was committed for each of the crimes of manslaughter, arson, and attempted burglary.

The current population reflects a similar distribution of offenses. Of the first 60 youth placed in the center, 24 were black and 36 were white. At the time they were committed, 21 were 17 years of age; 21 were 16; 13 were 15; 4 were 14; and 1 was 13.

## **The staff at Paint Creek**

Two issues guided the selection of staff at PCYC: first, the importance of providing close contact between staff

and residents and ensuring program security through a high ratio of staff to residents and second, a desire to make a positive economic impact in communities adjacent to the center. To address these issues, PCYC hired 28 full-time and 1 part-time staff. Twenty-one staff members are from Ross County, home to PCYC. Four are from Highland County, two from Pike County, and one each from Hamilton and Montgomery Counties. An additional two full-time teachers are provided to the center by the Paint Valley School District, making the ratio of staff to residents almost 1 to 1.

Directing the Paint Creek Youth Center is Dr. Vicki Agee, a clinical psychologist with more than 20 years of professional experience working with juveniles. Dr. Agee was formerly the Director of the Closed Adolescent Treatment Center in Denver, Colorado.

## **The treatment program at Paint Creek**

The PCYC treatment program uses a combination of treatment philosophies. The central treatment approach, however, is based on the concept of the positive peer community, a successful technique used to help youth get along with others. Because youth at PCYC have histories of problematic interpersonal relationships, the positive peer community provides an ideal environment for them.

The premise of the positive peer community is that youth need help, particularly from their peers, to learn acceptable behaviors and develop positive, supportive, caring relationships. The positive peer community allows youth to foster self-esteem and concern and understanding for others and makes them feel important and worthwhile.

The treatment philosophies of nationally recognized psychologists William Glasser and Stanton Samenow are also important in the PCYC treatment program. From the moment a youth enters the

PCYC, tremendous emphasis is placed upon personal responsibility. Youth learn to accept responsibility for their wrongdoings and make commitments to change. They are consistently confronted by their peers and staff for lying, projecting blame, intimidation, and showing a lack of empathy for victims. While such confrontation aids in the learning process, peers also provide the necessary support to help youth make positive changes and become open, honest, and responsible members of society.

## **The point-and-level system**

The program at PCYC is guided by a point-and-level system designed to give youth prompt, clear, and consistent feedback on their progress. It consists of earning behavioral points, given by staff daily, and five program levels that have different goals and treatment emphases. The point-and-level system permits youth and staff not only to identify and assess the changes made by each program participant but also to determine if these changes last.

The point system provides immediate feedback to youth about their interactions with others. This is particularly valuable for youth with a history of distorting messages. Points are given for appropriate behavior and responsible thinking, and as youth earn increasing numbers of points, they also earn increased privileges and level promotions. The higher the level, the greater the responsibilities and privileges, indicating sustained personal growth.

The average length of stay at PCYC is 1 year. The actual length of stay varies, however, depending upon a youth's individual progress through the five program phases, ranging from orientation to release.

All youth entering the program are placed in the orientation level for 3 days. Orientation is designed to get the attention of new residents, have them accept responsibility for past actions,

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and familiarize them with the program and expectations of PCYC.

After completing orientation, youth move to Phase I, which emphasizes educational and behavioral changes. During this phase, youth begin to examine and work on their problems and make positive changes.

Phase II focuses on increasing the youths' awareness of others and gives them an opportunity to help others in need. They are expected to help their peers identify problems and make positive changes, while continuing to focus on their own problems. They also participate in community service projects, such as painting, gardening, cleaning park facilities, or helping the elderly, as a way to increase their awareness of victim rights and needs.

Once youth clearly demonstrate an ability to face their own problems and undertake various responsibilities within PCYC and the community, they move to Phase III. The purpose of this phase is to assess the youths' ability to handle responsibility in a job setting and to further develop their understanding for others. During Phase III, youth begin to work on their release plans, which include ways for dealing with family problems and continuing employment or educational training after release.

Work is an integral part of Phase III. Although youth continue to attend the PCYC onsite school and are involved in group therapy every day, they spend half a day in the work program. On the grounds of PCYC is a program called the Freedom Factory, which is an employment and training center that hires youth from PCYC and pays them weekly salaries. Here youth learn actual job skills and are able, once they are released from the center, to compete for entry-level jobs in building maintenance, carpentry, auto mechanics, and material assembly.

While employed in the Freedom Factory, a portion of each youth's

weekly salary goes toward restitution or court-ordered costs. The program emphasizes restitution, an important component of the treatment approach, from the moment a youth enters the program until he leaves.

During Phase III, youth spend increasingly more time in the community and at their homes. Visits home or to future placements are permitted only during the last 60 days of the commitment to PCYC.

When youth are promoted to the release level, staff continue to closely monitor and assess their progress and behavior in the community. At this level youth are intensively supervised by community service workers and spend 3 to 4 weeks in an onsite release program; then they are transferred to their community placement. The release level program lasts 6 months, with a gradual withdrawal of staff involvement during the last 2 months. Because of the intense pressures of the release level and because the goal is to ensure a smooth, successful reintegration back into the community, the community service worker may increase or decrease the amount of supervision provided according to the needs of each youth.

### **Additional programs at PCYC**

The physical fitness and recreational therapy program is one of the important activities of PCYC. Daily activities are designed to improve the overall health and well-being of youth, to help them develop self-esteem, build self-confidence, learn to cooperate with others, and develop a sense of trust. The recreational program also teaches youth how to have fun in ways that do not harm themselves or others.

Each day begins with a rigorous program of jogging and calisthenics, with each youth's progress checked regularly. Basketball and tennis courts, baseball and softball diamonds, a

swimming pool, a creek for fishing, volleyball equipment, and soccer and football fields all are located on the grounds of PCYC. Opportunities abound for both group and individual sports activities, with a strong emphasis on learning good sportsmanship.

Education is another important feature of the PCYC. The Paint Valley School District not only provides two full-time teachers to the center, but also performs educational assessments of each youth and develops educational plans to meet individual needs. Although the school program is operated by the local school district, classroom performance and educational progress is an important consideration when youth advance from one level to another.

Because youth in classes at the center are considered enrollees in the local school district, they receive State credit for their attendance. Credits earned for schoolwork at the PCYC school are transferable to the youths' home schools.

Another important part of the PCYC program is the family therapy component. Approximately 6 to 8 weeks after a youth is admitted, a family intake meeting is held. Conducted by the family service worker and the community service worker, the purpose of this meeting is for the youth to inform his parents of his complete criminal history so that they can be fully aware of the extent of the problem. At this point, the family becomes closely involved in treatment planning. The treatment plan is shared with the family, and suggestions and ideas are requested. This allows family members to feel they have some ownership of the treatment plan and strengthens them to become less enabling of their child's negative behavior.

Family support groups are critical to the success of PCYC's family therapy component. Because of the importance of the family support group, transportation is provided for families who need

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it. The support group is held two Sundays per month for parents, older siblings, the youths themselves, and sometimes their wives and girlfriends. The goal of these group sessions is to help parents become supportive to their sons, the staff, and other youth in the PCYC program. Parents are not blamed for problems or difficulties in child rearing. Rather, they help support each other and set limits.

A drug/alcohol treatment program is conducted once a week at the center. Each youth is given a chemical abuse assessment shortly after admission. Education about the effects of drug use, the dynamics of chemical abuse, and how drug use affects an abuser's family is offered at weekly sessions. Youth who are abusers attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in the community as soon as they are able to handle responsibilities outside the center. Youth with family members who are abusing chemicals are encouraged to attend Al-Anon. When released from PCYC, recovering youth are enrolled in AA or NA by their Community Service Worker. Attendance at these meetings is mandatory.

The life skills program at PCYC teaches youth social, independent living, and basic survival skills so they are better equipped to deal with day-to-day problems in the work environment, within the family structure, and during social and leisure activities. Throughout their placement in the center, youth attend special life skill classes based upon their individual treatment plans. Classes range from personal hygiene to budgeting and banking. Some of the most important classes are in aggression control, anger management, sex education, and parenting training. Classes also focus on values clarification, victim awareness, human sexuality, dating, drug and alcohol counseling, and problem-solving and negotiation.

The employment and vocational training program at PCYC is one of the features

that makes PCYC unique. Unlike many correctional programs that must rely upon other agencies to provide job training and employment experience, PCYC has its own employment center—the Freedom Factory—on the grounds of the facility.

Through a job training program that offers a variety of opportunities, youth work in one of several vocational specialties, including building maintenance, cook's assistant, basic carpentry, auto mechanics, and farming. Youth are paid for their work, and upon release from PCYC, they are assisted by the community service worker in finding private-sector employment. Although a youth may not be interested in a career in one of these professions, his experience in the Freedom Factory gives him valuable skills to transfer to the work environment.

### **Program costs**

The Paint Creek Youth Center operates at an annual cost of \$925,000. New Life has invested more than a half-million dollars in the purchase and renovation of the Paint Creek facility, a joint effort between the private and public sectors. Initial operating costs were financed through the cooperative agreement with OJJDP. Now, per diem revenues are received from the Ohio Department of Youth Services. The contract between PCYC and the Department provides for the full cost of care at the expiration of the OJJDP grant. The contract was fully renewed for 2 years beginning July 1, 1988.

Approximately 60 percent of the Paint Creek budget is spent on staff salaries; 11 percent is spent on supplies, and 12 percent goes for operating costs, including utilities, repairs, and maintenance. The remaining 17 percent of the budget is allocated for individual assistance (such as medical and dental services and clothing for the youth), meetings, and overhead costs that cover a portion of the operation of the New

Life Youth Services, Inc., administrative offices in Cincinnati.

### **What can PCYC teach us?**

The final results of the Rand Corporation evaluation will not be available until the end of 1988. While PCYC has not operated long enough to have produced a large number of graduates, a staff report covering the period of March 1986 through October 1987 conveyed impressive results.

- Of the 31 youth released from placement, 21 were released after successfully completing the program, 2 were discharged for medical problems, and 8 were transferred to another DYS institution.
- 88 percent of the graduates were either going to school full time or working full time when the study was conducted.
- Paint Creek had only one AWOL resident, who was returned to the program by his family less than 2 hours after his disappearance.
- There were no assaults of staff or residents.
- Two youths in the program received their GED while in the program.
- Three youths who returned home after PCYC played on varsity football teams in their own high schools.
- One youth was accepted by a college in Florida on a basketball scholarship.
- All but one youth earned enough money in the Paint Creek Youth Center to pay his full restitution and court costs prior to release from the program. The one youth who did not completely pay off his restitution costs had a tremendous restitution bill to pay. He did, however, reduce it by half.

The approach used by PCYC holds important implications for the entire juvenile justice community. While PCYC is not the first private-sector program dealing with serious habitual juvenile offenders, it is one of the first comprehensive private-sector programs dealing with this population. PCYC

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represents a viable alternative to traditional forms of correctional services. It combines treatment, education, employment, life skills, and specialized counseling and support services into one coordinated approach and provides staff and residents with a secure setting through intensive staff and peer supervision and influence. Paint Creek Youth Center offers a unique way to facilitate changes in behavior and attitudes in a segment of the juvenile population that has become both problematic and frustrating to communities across the Nation.

For more information about this program, contact Frank Smith, OJJDP, 633 Indiana Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20531, or Robert C. Mecum, New Life Youth Services, Inc., Paint Creek Youth Center, 6128 Madison Road, Cincinnati, OH 45227.

For information about other OJJDP projects, contact OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20850, or call toll free 800-638-8736.

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



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**U.S. Department of Justice**  
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