

August 1996

## **JUVENILE EARLY INTERVENTION: Testing Juvenile Accountability in the Courts**

**BACKGROUND:** The 1996 Washington State Legislature appropriated \$2.35 million of the general fund-state for a juvenile court early intervention project administered at the county level. The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration was directed to award contracts, on a competitive basis, to counties for early intervention programs consistent with proven methodologies currently in place in the state. The following counties received funding: Benton/Franklin, Chelan/Douglas, Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Spokane, and Whatcom.

**INSTITUTE WORK:** The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration requested that the Washington State Institute for Public Policy evaluate the project, and five percent of the total amount was set aside for this purpose (\$117,500).

**PROJECT SCOPE:** The state's juvenile court administrators requested this funding to demonstrate the value of *intensive interventions with high-risk juvenile offenders before they become entrenched in the court system*. A program of early intervention from Pierce County was often used as an example in legislative discussions.

The purpose of the early intervention program is to keep participants from re-offending. The program targets offenders sentenced to probation for the first time who are assessed as having a high risk for re-offending. A common risk assessment instrument is being used at all sites in the state. This instrument was developed by the Institute, relying on instruments validated in other jurisdictions. The program emphasizes accountability for actions, with a maximum caseload of 25 youths supervised by a probation officer and case monitor team.

Youth in the program are initially placed on a high level of supervision, with close monitoring of school activity and home behavior, including a curfew. As the youths successfully meet the conditions of supervision, they move to the next levels. If the youths fail at a level, they are held accountable with sanctions, including placement in a more intense level of supervision. Youth are retained in the program for as long as they are under county supervision.

The evaluation focuses on re-offending behavior (convictions) of the participants. Their behavior will be compared to a similar group of juveniles who received standard probation services.

Because this project has been designed from its inception with an evaluation plan, the state has a unique opportunity to learn about the relative effectiveness of early interventions with high risk juvenile offenders.

**RELATIONSHIP WITH VIOLENCE REDUCTION PROJECT:** This project offers valuable information for the Violence Reduction Project that is currently assigned to the Institute. We are able to study whether some forms of "early intervention" with juveniles lead to better results than the typical system response. The results from early intervention programs across the state will be compared with each other, offering possible insight into the reasons why certain programs have more success than others.

The evaluation involves the collection of data on risk and protective factors, identified by the State Legislature to influence juvenile violence, described in the Violence Prevention Act. We will analyze how these data relate to juvenile violence and be able to validate the risk/protective factor assessment instruments. Finally, the project results can be used in our cost-effectiveness model, allowing us to estimate the level of success necessary for the state's investment in delinquency prevention to be cost-effective with this population.

**TIMEFRAME:** The funding began on July 1, 1996, and runs through June 30, 1997. The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration plans to request additional funding for the next biennium.

**PERSONNEL:** Robert Barnoski is the project manager and Scott Matson is the research assistant. Roxanne Lieb is the overall supervisor of the project.

### **ACTIVITIES AND SCHEDULE:**

#### **May 1996**

- Complete risk assessment instrument
- Pre-test instrument
- Develop training materials for instrument
- Obtain Human Research Review Board approval
- Participate in court application screening process

#### **June 1996**

- Establish contacts with project sites
- Conduct evaluation protocol training meeting
- Develop newsletter to communicate with projects

#### **July 1996**

- Projects start, program group selected
- Control group selection
- Guide decision-making on program/control group screening using risk assessment
- Distribute issue brief regarding project to Institute's violence prevention mailing list
- Visit sites to ensure compliance with evaluation protocol

#### **Summer/Fall 1996**

- Start collecting risk/protective factor data for program, control and validation groups
- Provide feedback to sites on issues as they arise

#### **November/December 1996**

- Review project progress with juvenile court administrators
- Prepare report for legislature on project status

#### **December 1996 through June 1997**

- Continue data collection and monitor projects
- Obtain JUVIS data for program, control and validation groups to assess re-offending
- Conduct initial analysis of re-offending behavior during the program

#### **July 1, 1997**

- Interim report

For further information please contact Robert Barnoski at the Institute: (360) 866-6000, ext. 6380.