SOUTH OXNARD CHALLENGE PROJECT

Report of What Works

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Prepared for the Ventura County Probation Agency

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PREFACE

Despite the overall decline in adult crime rates in the 1990s, crime experts have cautioned that youth crime is increasing at an alarming rate. Researchers and practitioners alike have noted the importance of focusing our anti-crime efforts on this youth population and on developing new and innovative approaches to the problem. In 1996 the California Legislature indicated their intent to reduce the rate of juvenile violent crime in the state by passing Senate Bill 1760 establishing Juvenile Crime Enforcement and Accountability Challenge Grants. The "Challenge Grants" provided approximately 50 million dollars for 14 counties to develop comprehensive, multi-agency plans designed to provide a continuum of responses to juvenile delinquency. The Legislature asked that counties develop collaborative, integrated approaches to addressing youth crime and incorporate an evaluation component into the project design.

Ventura County developed an innovative collaborative approach to reducing juvenile delinquency in South Oxnard based upon the principles of Clear's "Corrections of Place" theory. This restorative justice approach incorporates offenders, victims, and community residents in the administration of juvenile justice and in the healing of the community. The RAND Corporation and Dr. Joan Petersilia conducted the evaluation of the Ventura program using a randomized field experiment to document program outcomes for youth, their families, victims, and the local community. This publication goes beyond the quantitative RAND study and focuses on the implementation issues that SOCP faced during the four years of the grant. This report is intended for distribution to those who are interested in a qualitative description of the South Oxnard Challenge Project (SOCP). For a complete explanation of SOCP and the evaluation, please refer to the SOCP Final Report (Turner, Schroeder, Fain, Lane, and Petersilia, 2001).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE SOUTH OXNARD CHALLENGE PROJECT (SOCP)

The South Oxnard Challenge Project was developed as a demonstration project to test through a randomized experiment the practical applicability of Clear's restorative justice theory and to examine the results of the newly developed collaborative approach to juvenile justice in South Oxnard. The SOCP was a collaborative project between the County, City and private non-profit agencies. The major participants in the collaborative were the Ventura County Probation Agency, Ventura County Behavioral Health Department (Drug and Alcohol Programs, Mental Health Services), City Corps (Oxnard), City of Oxnard Recreation Department, Oxnard Police Department, El Concilio De Condado De Ventura, Interface Children Family Services, and Palmer Drug Abuse Program (PDAP). Participants from these agencies jointly determined treatment approaches and delivered services using a team approach. Direct provision of services constituted one of the primary differences between SOCP and regular juvenile probation where youth are "referred out" for services with periodic follow-up.

The primary mission of the SOCP program was:

> To reduce juvenile crime in South Oxnard/Port Hueneme by bringing together the justice system, offenders and their families, human services, victims and the community, as partners in the strategies needed to make change.

The broad goals to implement this mission were:

- Enhanced formal and informal participation in the justice system by citizens and local communities
- Improved outcomes related to juvenile delinquency reduction, created in a climate of accountability to victims and the community
- Increased emphasis on families, not just individual children, as the focus of frontline practice, with the families as partners in public safety
- Development of a more responsive, more comprehensive, and less categorical system

The project targeted youth who lived in South Oxnard or Port Hueneme, were between 12 and 18 years old, had a citation or violation of probation, and scored at least 12 points on the risk assessment. South Oxnard/Port Hueneme teens between 12 and 18 were targeted because this geographical area has the highest crime rate in the county and because this age group was most at risk for both offending and victimization. Youth with citations or violations of probation were believed to be most at risk among this group for committing crimes again in the near future.

The primary difference between SOCP and routine juvenile probation was the manner in which services were delivered. On regular probation caseloads, probation officers are located outside the community (in the city of Ventura) and manage cases, determine needs, and refer youth to outside agencies for services. At SOCP, staff worked in multi-agency teams and shared offices in two primary South Oxnard buildings--the South Oxnard (Community) Center and an office space located a few miles away. Team members met formally at least weekly to discuss cases, and SOCP staff typically collaborated daily to coordinate services. They also provided treatment groups, community service, and recreation opportunities on site.

WHAT WE FOUND THAT WORKED

For Ventura County, SOCP represented a new way of conducting business. Probation officers and other collaborators created a unique environment in order to engage youth and their family participation. SOCP found that making the program more accessible, including family members in the process, and utilizing a team case management style were the most successful components of SOCP.

WHAT DID NOT WORK

The project was able to successfully implement pieces of the Corrections of Place Model, but struggled with taking the entire theory into daily practice. Incorporating "community" in decision-making was the toughest component of the Corrections of Place model, in part because the relevant community was difficult to define. In addition, victim needs were not adequately addressed due to the focus of SOCP efforts on youth and family--in part because of funding requirements and in part because the participating service providers had been trained in how to increase competency among individuals (e.g., monitoring youth, addressing mental health needs).

PROBLEMS THAT WE ENCOUNTERED

From the outset, one of the toughest struggles for the local agencies was creating a "true" collaborative approach through a consensus decision-making model. In addition, SOCP staff were required to balance the conflicts between the Corrections of Place (COP) approach to dealing with juvenile crime and the legal requirements of administering justice. Finally, SOCP proved to be a resource intensive model that made it more difficult for management and staff to focus their attention on the youth and families they were trying to serve.

FUTURE PLANS FOR THE PROJECT THAT WAS EVALUATED

Although the South Oxnard Challenge Project is no longer operational, Ventura County will use Crime Prevention Act 2000 (CPA 2000) funds to replicate programs that were previously deemed effective. Based on experiences at SOCP and current literature, Probation is collaborating with other agencies to design five new juvenile justice programs. Several of these programs (e.g., Day Reporting and Early Intervention) will incorporate components and practices used at SOCP.

RECOMMENDATION FOR OTHER COUNTIES CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PROJECT

Ventura County implemented their own version of the Corrections of Place model, but the lessons they learned can provide valuable direction to those embarking on a similar journey. For agencies that are considering similar restorative justice models or are involved in some collaborative efforts, several questions are posed that should be considered at the outset.

I. SUMMARY OF OUR APPROACH AND REASONS BEHIND OUR CHOICES

CONSIDERING "CORRECTIONS OF PLACE"

In the summer of 1996, Frank Woodson, then director of the Ventura County Correction Services Agency (Probation Agency), read a short article by Todd Clear about his theory "Corrections of Place (COP)," a restorative justice approach to addressing local crime problems (Clear 1996b). This model, presented later in Figure 1.1, incorporated offenders, victims, and community as the primary parties responsible for addressing crime and relegated the state to a supportive role in this effort. Woodson was intrigued by the restorative justice approach and had a strong personal commitment to including community in local efforts to address crime. When the Challenge Grant applications were issued in late 1996, Woodson saw an opportunity to try an innovative approach based upon Clear's model and presented the Corrections of Place idea to the local Multi-Agency Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (MAJJCC), the newly-formed group that was charged with assessing local needs, setting priorities, and submitting the Challenge Grant application. MAJJCC had 15 members including a county supervisor, the presiding judge of the juvenile court, the District Attorney, the Public Defender, the Sheriff, the Ventura Chief of Police, the Superintendent of Schools, the county Chief Administrative Officer, and directors of county and private social service agencies. This committee agreed to apply for funding to implement a variation of the COP theory in South Oxnard, a predominately Hispanic, working class community located in the southern part of the county. In early 1997, Ventura County was awarded approximately $4.5 million to implement the South Oxnard Challenge Project based on the COP model.

ADAPTING THE THEORY: THE SOUTH OXNARD CHALLENGE PROJECT

Translating Clear's Concepts

Because theories rarely enumerate specific recipes for implementation, one of the toughest challenges of the Ventura County collaborative was developing a method to translate COP theory to practice. Local policymakers and managers who would be supervising on-site staff at SOCP

began meeting weekly as the "Implementation Committee" that would serve as the hub of planning activities[1]. They invited Dr. Clear to visit during the first few months of the project to help them specify practical strategies to implementing the theory. The Implementation Committee solidified the mission for SOCP, created the transition plan for placing staff at the program site, and fine-tuned the program components.

With COP as a backdrop, the committee envisioned their collaborative project would include more victim and community involvement in the implementation of juvenile justice in South Oxnard, the area with the highest felony crime rate in the county. Given that the COP model also assigns responsibilities to each party in this transaction and that SOCP would be aimed specifically at youthful offenders (12-18 years of age)[2], Ventura County modified Clear's model to include the youth's family as an important party in the sanctioning process. This modified model is presented in Figure 1.1.[3]

Mission and Goals

The Implementation Committee at SOCP developed the primary mission of the program in November 1997. This mission was:

> To reduce juvenile crime in South Oxnard/Port Hueneme by bringing together the justice system, offenders and their families, human services, victims and the community, as partners in the strategies needed to make change.

The broad goals to implement this mission were:

- Enhanced formal and informal participation in the justice system by citizens and local communities
- Improved outcomes related to juvenile delinquency reduction, created in a climate of accountability to victims and the community
- Increased emphasis on families, not just individual children, as the focus of frontline practice, with the families as partners in public safety
- Development of a more responsive, more comprehensive, and less categorical system

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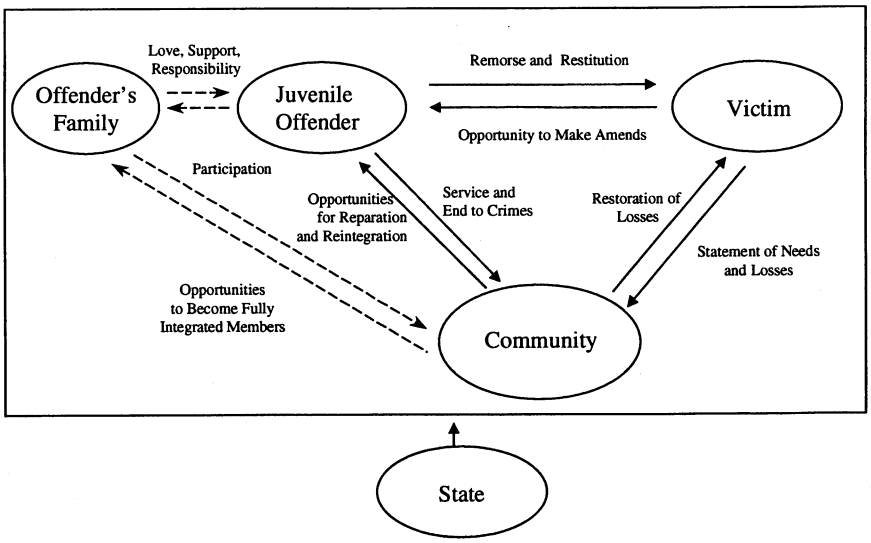
[1] The SOCP was a collaborative project between the County, City, and private non-profit agencies.

[2] This age group is most at risk for both offending and victimization.

[3] The dotted lines represent the responsibilities added by Ventura County. The unadapted model is presented in Clear and Corbett (1998) and Clear and Karp (1998).

Fig. 1.1 - Modified Corrections of Place Model[4]



SOCP PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Table 1.1 illustrates the differences between SOCP and regular juvenile probation for youth who were on medium supervision caseloads. The primary difference between the two types of probation was the manner in which services are delivered. On regular probation caseloads, probation officers are located outside the community (in the city of Ventura) and manage cases, determine needs, and refer youth to outside agencies for services. In comparison, the South Oxnard Challenge Project occupied space in two primary South Oxnard buildings--the South Oxnard (Community) Center and an office facility located a few miles away. At SOCP the staff also worked in teams to provide services to the experimental youth and their families. The teams comprised probation officers, service coordinators (case managers who maintain a non-peace officer status), navigators (mentors), mental health providers, alcohol and drug specialists, and a restorative justice specialist. For case oversight, SOCP youth were typically assigned to a probation officer if they were on court ordered probation or a service coordinator if they were on

[4] The Ventura County service providers specified the model to apply to juvenile offenders and added the offender's family as an important part of the healing process. The dotted lines in the figure represent the additional responsibilities added to the model by Ventura County.

informal handling. Although these staff members supervised compliance of the probation (or Challenge) contract, all members of the interagency team contributed to the youth and family programming. The team members met formally at least weekly to discuss cases, and typically collaborated daily to coordinate services. They also provided treatment groups, community service, and recreation opportunities on site. In general, SOCP staff saw youth and contacted families two to three times a week, although some youth were seen daily and some were seen less frequently depending on their needs[5].

[5] For a complete description of SOCP, please see the final project report (Turner, Schroeder, Fain, Lane, and Petersilia 2001).

Table 1.1

Comparing SOCP and Routine Juvenile Probation

	SOCP	*Routine Juvenile Probation (Medium Supervision Caseload)*
Location of Service Center (Probation Office)	South Oxnard	City of Ventura
Case Management	Interagency Team	Probation Officer
Expected Contacts with Youth	Initial home conference	Office visit once a month
	Two family contacts and two total hours per month by Service Coordinator/DPO	Field visit every three months
	One hour face-to-face contact per week by Navigator	
Focus of Intervention	Family	Youth
Duration of Intervention	7 months for informal probation cases	Intervention ends when probation case is closed
	9 months for formal probation cases	
	Continued treatment if youth continues contacting staff after case closed	
Social Services Availability	Mental health, alcohol and drug, anger management, parenting skills, child protective services, mediation, City Corps, Day Reporting services available on site	Referral to outside agencies
Victim Services	Probation officers call victim or refer to on-site restorative justice advocate	Probation officers send restitution letter or refer to local non-profit for mediation
Community Services	Community Outreach Workers Community Advisory Group Community Development Events Community service projects in target area	None

II. STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESIZED AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

In the summer of 1997, Ventura County contracted with RAND and Dr. Joan Petersilia of the University of California, Irvine to evaluate the South Oxnard Challenge Project. The evaluation team had been involved from the beginning, participating in the grant development and overall evaluation design. The evaluation used an experimental design with random assignment, which is one of the strongest scientific methods for determining program impact. The study had several major hypotheses. They were:

- Compared to youth on routine probation supervision, SOCP youth would show better school performance, as measured by attendance, grades, and disciplinary actions
- Compared to youth on routine probation supervision, SOCP youth would show better outcomes on risk behaviors, as measured by drug and alcohol use
- Compared to youth on routine probation supervision, SOCP youth would have better recidivism outcomes, as measured by new arrests, petitions filed, and petitions sustained
- Compared to youth on routine probation supervision, SOCP youth would have better probation outcomes, as measured by successful completions of probation, payment of restitution, and completion of community service hours

III. WHAT WE FOUND THAT WORKED

As mentioned previously, the South Oxnard Challenge Project was developed to test the practical implementation of Clear's modified Corrections of Place Model. This section describes the unique practices that SOCP successfully implemented to create a new way of conducting business. Specifically, the discussion will focuses on program accessibility, family involvement, and case supervision style.

PROGRAM ACCESSIBILITY

Location

In Ventura County, the regular juvenile probation unit is located in the City of Ventura.[6] Officers drive to the cities where their clients reside (e.g. Oxnard, or Santa Paula) for field visits. In contrast, SOCP was housed within the South Oxnard community. The program worked hard to ensure that all services they provided, including those off-site, were located within the boundaries of South Oxnard (or Port Hueneme). Historically, active South Oxnard residents had been concerned that their area of the city had the fewest services and one of the neediest populations. From the outset, these concerned residents were insistent that services be located within their community and serve youth and families within their boundaries. This "place" concept became such an important part of the project that SOCP managers initially chose inadequate facilities over better facilities in other parts of the city--because the buildings were the only available sites in South Oxnard. But because the buildings were centrally located, youth and families were more likely to "drop in" and talk to staff and access services.

Flexibility

Because staff from different disciplines were housed together and worked in teams, their roles often blurred as they worked together to solve client problems and address their needs. In practice, staff who were available often were those who responded to client calls. And, because staff were given the freedom to be creative in responding to client needs, implementation

guidelines and program components were fluid. Staff generated new ideas for improving the delivery of services, which were often implemented and then maintained if they seemed to work. New client groups--such as a Girl's Social Group, Job Club, Leadership Group--came and went depending on clients' expressed interest.

In Ventura County, routine juvenile probation generally offers services during working hours--Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m--although some officers in intensive units participate in searches and ride with police on evenings and weekends. From the beginning, SOCP managers recognized the importance of more flexible work hours, because they were aware of research indicating that youth are most likely to commit crime after school on school days and in the early and late evenings on other days (Sickmund, Snyder, and Poe-Yamagata 1997; Snyder, Sickmund and Poe-Yamagata 1996). SOCP employees, therefore, made themselves available during evenings and weekends to better serve their clients. For example, family conferences--meetings where staff worked with the youth and family to develop a program plan-- were often held in the evenings or on weekends to ensure parent availability. In addition, staff sometimes transported youth to tapings of television programs on weekdays, and held recreation events, such as dances, camping trips, bike rides, and trips to Magic Mountain on weekends.

Informality

SOCP made the program more inviting to clients to ensure that youth, families, and the community would be drawn to the program without being forced to come to the project. The environment was much different from that of a typical probation office--there were no metal detectors, bulletproof glass, interview rooms, or probation officers wearing "gear" as part of their daily attire. Although police officers wore their guns, they were not in uniform, and probation officers wore their bulletproof vests only when they were conducting searches. The remainder of the staff dressed in casual street clothes. Staff met with youth in their cubicles, in the courtyard or in someone's office, depending upon the need for confidentiality. Some youth were so attracted to the program that they "hung out" there daily. For example, one youth generally

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[6] The Youth Services (Diversion) Unit is housed in sites throughout the county. One of the offices is in North Oxnard.

arrived after school and stayed late into the evening because, as his mother has told staff, she "does not want him." Other youth came to the City Corps office and continued to perform community service even when their ordered community service hours were complete. Some youth actually initiated community projects, asking, for example, "Can we clean my alley today?"

The informal environment also increased the comfort level youth had with staff. Youth sometimes came to the offices without appointments and without direction from their probation officers. They looked to probation officers for resources unrelated to probation, such as job openings. One mother mentioned that SOCP had changed the dynamics in her family because the staff helped her understand her role in family problems, and also helped her daughter to learn new skills and confidence. Navigators spoke of their clients' friends asking if they, too, could join the project and get help with school and employment. SOCP staff felt their clients were gaining self-respect and beginning to trust that some people in their lives may be dependable and consistent. In addition, navigators reported that they felt respected by community members and organizations they contacted to obtain client services, because of their reputation for doing good things.

Service Delivery

Maintaining a one-stop service delivery site resulted in tremendous benefits for those involved with the project. Youth and family were able to go to one location to obtain a variety of services. Youths could get a ride to the site by their navigators, see their probation officer, and attend an alcohol and drug class in the same afternoon.

Quality of service also increased by housing the collaborating staff at the same site. Monitoring referrals to outside providers is often a time consuming process for routine probation officers. To find out whether a youth has complied with an order, the officer must find time to place a call to the agency handling the referral. Many traditional probation officers have limited time available to monitor compliance through these types of follow-up calls to service providers. At SOCP, probation officers found the collaborative environment more time effective. At SOCP, there was daily communication between service providers and probation staff, which made referring and monitoring youth more realistic. Not only did staff have quick access to other providers, but they were also aware of their clients' scheduled appointments. SOCP staff could

encourage youths to show up for their appointments and take the appropriate action when they failed to appear. In addition, the collaborative environment allowed service providers to obtain additional knowledge about each youth and family. Although confidentiality rules limited the sharing of specific information, all staff were provided with information essential to case management and treatment. As a result of the collaborative environment, staff members were more effective at treating youth and had a broader understanding of their needs. For example, mental health workers could talk and encourage youth to accept responsibility for their delinquent actions. More importantly, probation officers had a better understanding of the "whole picture" and could focus their efforts on changing behavior rather than solely monitoring compliance and punishing misbehavior.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

From the outset, SOCP realized the importance of including the offender's family--both parents and siblings--in attempts to encourage offender accountability and increase competency in the youth and family. After youths were randomly assigned into SOCP, the initial meeting with the youth occurred in a "family conference." Two or three staff from different agencies (e.g., probation officer, navigator, alcohol and drug treatment specialist) would introduce themselves, talk to the family about their strengths and needs, and sign a Challenge Agreement (and terms and conditions of probation, if necessary).[7] At a minimum, these conferences included the youth and one parent, but often also included siblings and extended family members. Unlike routine juvenile probation, family members could help craft the goals of the agreement--for example, a parent might want the child to come home earlier, stop using drugs, or stop fighting with him/her so much. When possible, staff would try to work on the issues that the family indicated were the priorities for them and would listen to the parent with respect to what might help their children. If a sibling of the offender was also on probation, the SOCP probation officer would request the sibling's case be transferred to his/her caseload, so the project could

[7] Although all experimental youth were referred by Probation, only about half were wards of the court on formal probation with court-ordered terms and conditions. The other half were informal handling or informal probation cases that may or may not have been expected to sign a probation agreement. These youth often signed a simple "Challenge Agreement" regarding the expectations of their participation in the program.

serve the entire family. If the sibling was not on probation, the parents and sibling(s) were still encouraged to use SOCP services such as the Parent Support Group and recreation events. For example, SOCP invited families to attend a camping trip sponsored by another community organization but monitored by project staff. When anger, fighting, or unresolved issues emerged, families were invited to participate in parent-child mediation. If the family had special needs, such as parental drug use or child abuse and neglect, staff would also work with the family to help remedy these problems. The goal of such efforts was to teach the family to be self-sufficient and decrease dependence on the justice system and other social service personnel to solve problems for them. By focusing on the family as a whole, SOCP would be able to affect the youth's environment and better his or her chances of doing well after the intervention was completed.

CASE SUPERVISION

Generally, terms and conditions of probation were signed by the SOCP youth and set the standard for their behavior during the supervision period. Probation officers monitor these terms and conditions during their monthly office visits and periodic field visits and searches. When rules were not followed, officers could file formal violations of probation, which might have resulted in more rules or incarceration.

At SOCP, youth on informal probation received a 7-month intervention (supervision) period, and youth on formal probation received a 9-month intervention period.[8] At the project, offender supervision encompassed more staff activities than monitoring terms and conditions of probation. Compared with routine probation supervision, SOCP officers saw youth more often and talked more about general life activities--e.g., goals in life, job, family situations, and services needed. SOCP officers noted that both youth and families seemed to respect and trust them more than when the officers worked in a traditional probation unit. This may be due, in part, to SOCP officers participating in activities *with* the youth. For example, rather than simply telling a youth to go to alcohol and drug treatment groups, SOCP officers often drove the youth

[8] Stopping the services at the end of the intervention was very difficult in practice, because staff found it hard to "let go" of cases if they believed the youth and their families still needed

to the group and personally talked to the counselor about the youth's needs. The officers would take youths to a job placement office to help them get jobs, or take them to school. One probation officer "worked out" with a group of youth who were going to the Grizzly Academy, a volunteer boot camp, and another went running with one of his probationers in the mornings before work. Officers also went on field trips with youth--bike rides, museum tours, and university tours. During these events officers were able to spend more time affirming acceptable behaviors--giving clients ideas about how to better spend their time, how to do well in school, how to avoid negative situations with police and courts, and how to better their lives. Officers commented that some family members did not recognize them as probation officers because their roles were so different from routine probation officer roles. For youth on informal handling[9], non-probation "service coordinators" provided the case management role, decreasing the workload of the probation officers.

SOCP also had other staff who spent time monitoring youth and providing suggestions and help with their lives. Each youth was assigned a navigator, who was primarily responsible for connecting the youth with services and teaching them how to navigate the services on his/her own. Activities included taking the youth to or joining the youth in doctor's appointments, school conferences, etc. In practice, navigators did many other things with youth--providing friendship, mentoring, guidance, crisis intervention, transportation to and help in court, recreation activities, tutoring, food, clothing, etc. For some youth, these navigators served the role of an older brother or sister who gave advice and yet was also easy to talk to. For example, one youth had a problem with other girls in the neighborhood and instead of responding to their provocation to fight, she called her navigator, who helped her find another way of coping with the situation. For other youth, the navigator served as a substitute parent who spent most of the time monitoring, giving advice, and sometimes disciplining them--e.g., asking them why they were not in school, whether they were using drugs, telling them how to do things differently, and giving them consequences if they did not respond.

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them. The formal probation grant actually continued beyond the 9 month intervention period, but other services stopped.

[9] "Informal handling" refers to youth who are on informal probation but who were not ordered on informal probation by the court pursuant to section 654.2 of the California Welfare & Institutions Code.

Because the staff worked in teams, additional staff also worked with each youth--including drug and alcohol treatment specialists, mental health social workers, a restorative justice advocate, City Corps staff, and recreation staff. These workers provided services based upon their disciplinary expertise, but also provided supervisory roles and promoted positive behavior thereby serving the role of an extended family of service providers. They also connected youth and families to services--helping them obtain housing assistance, help with payment of utilities, jobs, medical care, furniture, and clothing. And as part of their daily routine, staff talked to youth and families about how to make better choices--which for some was very different from their traditional roles.

IV. WHAT DID NOT WORK

The South Oxnard Challenge Project faced challenges implementing their vision of a community justice model based upon Clear's conception of "Corrections of Place." One of the biggest challenges was translating the abstract principles of the theory into workable, daily practice. Because theories are not based on practitioner experience and because communities are different, theories rarely include detailed recipes for implementation. Consequently, much of the early project effort went toward understand what Corrections of Place meant for program operations. As noted previously, SOCP staff spent a great deal of time creating an environment and engaging youths and their family members in the project. Victim and community components, on the other hand, were more difficult to implement.

INCLUDING COMMUNITY IN DECISION-MAKING

Facilitating community participation, as envisioned by Clear (1996), was one of the biggest challenges at SOCP. Restorative justice calls for direct consideration of community feelings in responding to offenses. According to Clear's theory, the ideal community to include in healing transactions is the immediate, micro community--those people directly affected by the particular offense, those who live on the street where graffiti was painted or within a few blocks of a murder scene. Initially, the Ventura staff interpreted Clear's definition of community to mean "macro" community and conducted outreach to the broader community as a whole. Even so, SOCP had great difficulty generating interest from a broad base of South Oxnard residents. One practical issue was how to incorporate community resident advice into juvenile justice decisions. Another major issue was finding community members who wanted to participate on a consistent basis. When the California Board of Corrections notified Ventura County administrators that they would be receiving the grant, County leaders held a community meeting asking for participation and advice about project implementation details. Out of this meeting emerged a small group of concerned residents (about 10) who later became the Community Advisory Group (CAG). This small group of involved citizens met weekly at first and then monthly to ensure that their concerns were considered and to help Probation develop a new way of implementing juvenile justice in their community.

Members of the CAG initially were interested in assisting in case decisions for specific youth. However, Probation had an obligation to protect the confidentiality of juveniles on probation and felt it would be shaky ground to provide case information (including names and offenses) to the CAG.[10] Probation agreed to allow CAG members willing to go through probation background checks and to attend training on the confidentiality requirements in order to participate in these decisions. However, CAG members felt that the process was too time-consuming and decided to act as a body that would provide general program and fiscal oversight. As useful as they were in giving advice to the overall project, CAG members could not substitute in reparation efforts for individuals immediately affected by specific crimes.[11] SOCP and the CAG explored the feasibility of implementing community accountability boards that other Challenge grants were funding, but ultimately, SOCP was unable to find an effective way to incorporate community involvement into the daily sanctioning process.

VICTIM INVOLVEMENT

Large caseloads and time constraints of the team approach prevented service providers from focusing much time on victims. Most formal probation cases that had an identifiable victim already had restitution determined by the Court prior to being randomly assigned to SOCP. In some instances, the restitution orders were more than a year old, which made it impractical to go back and make contact with the victim to offer mediation. Many informally handled youth were cited for status and/or "victimless" crimes--e.g., possession of alcohol or cigarettes, truancy, curfew. In cases where there were victims, SOCP found that they rarely wanted direct involvement with the case. For the most part, victims only wanted restitution for their losses, which is common practice on routine juvenile probation caseloads and facilitated most easily through letter contact. These victims were reluctant to attend the three sessions required for mediation, because it was not an efficient use of their time. For example, commercial establishments that experienced petty thefts generally only "wanted their money," or had company policies that did not give loss prevention officers or employees the choice of

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[10] Juveniles represent a special case due to confidentiality protections. This problem might not be such an issue in programs working with adults.

[11] SOCP was able to encourage some client parents to attend some of the CAG meetings.

participating in the mediation process. Schools that were targets of graffiti simply wanted compensation to pay for repairing the damage. In addition, some youth were unable to understand the importance of addressing the victim and refused to participate in mediations. Although some probation officers reported contacting victims on occasion, most staff indicated that they rarely had the time to address victim needs.

V. PROBLEMS THAT WE ENCOUNTERED

COLLABORATION

Clear's model and the Challenge Grant itself called for coordination among agencies. SOCP found that collaborating on a new project was an extremely difficult task. Agencies participating in SOCP were enthusiastic about the possibilities of working together, but found it very difficult in practice to come to an agreement about program implementation strategies. This problem was intensified because there was no existing structure to use as a roadmap in implementing the collaboration based upon community justice principles. The philosophy and the operational details were completely new to all participants, which led to confusion and frustration by everyone who was trying to make a large project work. Agencies had to come to an agreement about what "Corrections of Place" meant and how it should be implemented. In reality, management and line staff were struggling with these issues until the very end of the project. Although training was provided to help staff gain clarity about their role in the community justice effort, staff often became immersed in responding to the needs to the youth and family and loose sight of the community justice principles (e.g., focus on victim and community).

In addition, agency cultures and policies caused operational problems. Although Probation was managing the project, other agencies often dictated operational aspects of the program. Limits on caseload size was a major issue. Some of the other agencies restricted the number of SOCP youth for which their staff would accept primary responsibility, effectively requiring probation officers to have the larger caseloads. Although agencies agreed to an inter-agency release of information, in practice only the probation files were open to the participating service providers. Other information such as drug and alcohol or mental health information was shared on a case-by-case basis.

A second issue that hampered collaboration was the funding structure of the Challenge Grant. Funding was awarded to the Probation Agency and distributed to participating agencies through service contracts. No matter how much effort went into creating a consensus approach to decision-making, Probation had primary responsibility to the funders that resulted both in a

more directive approach when implementation difficulties arose and less buy-in by some of the contract agencies.

CLASH BETWEEN LEGALITY AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE

Some conflicts arose between community justice principles and the legal requirements for those who administer juvenile justice within the traditional system. Community justice creates liability issues for agencies that traditionally work hard to protect both their clients and communities. Community justice principles call for unusual client activities that could easily create more harm. For example, in their fictitious description of Jackson Heights, Clear and Karp (1998) discuss having offenders visit seniors to keep them company and escort them to appointments. Upon reading this, the immediate reaction of the SOCP manager was to think about the liability should the offender victimize the senior citizen in one of these encounters.

The informal environment at SOCP could have also led to other liability and safety issues. Many SOCP staff did not have the safety awareness for themselves and others that most probation officers are expected to have. This became an issue at the site on more than one occasion. For example, one gang-involved youth feared for his safety after a neighborhood altercation between two ethnic groups near his home led to more tensions.[12] During the few days after the incident, staff did not think to keep him away from the road in front of the center to protect his safety, and in fact let him do some work in plain view. Had something happened to him (e.g., a drive-by shooting), the project would have suffered irreparable harm to its community reputation and may have been shut down. Issues such as this are likely to arise when formal precautions are relaxed to create a more user-friendly environment and when non-probation staff work with youth in probation-driven programs. Non-probation staff were given basic safety training but in most instances, their level of safety awareness did not rise to that of most offcers[13]

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[12] This youth and his family soon moved out of the area because they were afraid to remain there.

[13] This issue is a double-edged sword because more safety training might lead non-probation service providers to act more like routine probation officers and decrease the possibility of breaking out of the traditional mold for doing business.

Because line staff were used to concrete expectations about their roles, they found the lack of structure and the informality inherent in community justice very difficult to navigate. They were especially uncomfortable when the project goals contradicted expectations of their home agencies. Probation officers probably experienced this contradiction the most. They are required by law to perform certain duties for the court--e.g., monitor the youth's probation terms and conditions, file violations, write court reports--yet they were asked to focus primarily on the families and to let the navigator focus on the youth. However, given navigator reluctance to share information given to them in confidence, probation officers felt they were not getting the information they needed from the navigators. Consequently, probation officers felt they not only had to do their normal court-ordered duties, but also find time to help families. With large caseloads where officers get credit only for the number of youth (and not family members) assigned to them, probation officers each day struggled to make their jobs work.

SOCP MODEL WAS RESOURCE INTENSIVE

The SOCP collaborative project was more resource intensive than routine juvenile probation. The SOCP evaluation design called for 500 youth to be randomly assigned to SOCP or routine juvenile probation over an 18-month period beginning January 1, 1998. Over time, the two staff teams working with experimental cases would be responsible for providing services to a total of 250 youth. But, because more than three or four staff might have the same youth on their caseload, caseload sizes remained large. Service coordinators (non-probation) had a caseload limit of 30, navigators a limit of 20. The mental health social workers carried about five cases at a time, and alcohol and drug treatment specialists acted as service coordinators for up to 10 youths at a time. Probation officers did not have caseload limits,[14] although the preferred caseload would have been 30. In practice, they usually carried 40-60 clients at a time. Teams as a whole were responsible for up to 100 cases at a time, depending upon case flow and the number of people on the team. The focus on families also meant that teams were not simply serving the youth, but parents and siblings also, creating even more constraints on staff time. When the project experienced staff turnover and carried unfilled positions, caseload problems were

[14] Because of logistical issues, they monitored formal probation cases and all "spillover" cases that others would not take.

exacerbated. In addition, staff spent much of their time in case staffing meetings, as well as in general informational staff meetings, leaving little time to focus on serving or incorporating victims and community members.

Managing a collaborative project was also more difficult than overseeing a regular probation unit or social service agency. In SOCP, a Probation Agency manager and a supervising deputy probation officer were primarily responsible for overseeing operational details. SOCP had created an on-site Operations Team to help make daily decisions. In addition to programming responsibilities, the Operations Team was responsible for daily management and supervision of all SOCP staff, including those from other agencies--a total of approximately 40 people. Yet, because SOCP was a collaborative project with many participating agencies and because SOCP was committed to implementing a program based upon consensus decision-making, many issues were also taken to an Interagency Management Team, consisting of managers from the participating agencies that employed SOCP staff. The interdisciplinary nature of the program and the difficulty in coming to consensus meant that both the Operations Team and the Interagency Management Team had to spend more time working out program and management details in SOCP than was customarily the case.

VI. FUTURE PLANS FOR THE PROJECT THAT WAS EVALUATED

THE FUTURE OF THE PROJECT

As the end of the grant period approached, SOCP stopped taking new referrals and began closing out eligible cases. In the final months of the project, staff were slowly re-assigned to other units and projects or obtained new employment elsewhere. As necessary, active probation cases were transferred back to traditional probation units for continued supervision. Efforts were made to assist youth and families with the transition back to routine probation. For example, one SOCP probation officer was reassigned part-time to the traditional unit responsible for continued oversight of the transferred cases. The SOCP probation officer was able to provide these youth some consistency and familiarity while they adjusted to routine probation. The project remained completely operational, although smaller in size, until June 29, 2001. The core SOCP service providers and probation staff then began the process of adapting the SOCP facilities to serve all Oxnard and Port Hueneme youth being returned to community from residential or custody settings.

OTHER PROJECTS THAT WILL BE EXPLORED

As the grant funding for SOCP approached the final months, Ventura Probation began looking for ways to apply the lessons learned at SOCP to new endeavors. The County prepared a Comprehensive Multi-Agency Juvenile Justice Plan in order to identify needs and suggest realistic approaches for meeting identified needs. The report indicated that there were several areas in which the County was lacking services. In the meantime, State funding, through the Crime Prevention Act 2000 (CPA 2000), was awarded to the County to replicate programs that were previously deemed effective. Based on experiences at SOCP and current literature, Probation collaborated with other agencies to design five new juvenile justice programs. Several of these will incorporate components and practices used at SOCP. For example, Probation will fund three new Day Reporting Centers, operating in separate areas of the county. These centers will increase the priority of education, while building on the collaborative interventions previously in place at SOCP. The SOCP facilities will become the Day Reporting Center for

Oxnard and Port Hueneme. The SOCP model and most of the core SOCP services will continue in the day reporting program. Youth will continue to have a one-stop location to receive several SOCP-type interventions as well as attend school during the morning hours. Ventura County is also increasing early intervention services based on preliminary SOCP data and recent literature. The SOCP experience revealed that less serious SOCP youth (those who were younger, on informal probation, and/or had never been institutionalized) performed better at SOCP. For the County, this evidence suggested that it is critical to provide SOCP-type interventions to younger adolescents. Although the South Oxnard Challenge Project in no longer in operation, most of its services will continue in a day reporting center, and Ventura County Probation will continue to apply the SOCP philosophy to future endeavors.

VII. SUMMARY OF WHAT WORKS

We summarize below the key accomplishments of SOCP. These include:

- **Local Services.** In Ventura County, the regular juvenile probation unit is located in the City of Ventura.[15] Officers drive to the cities where their clients reside (e.g. Oxnard, or Santa Paula) for field visits. In contrast, SOCP was housed within the South Oxnard community. The program worked hard to ensure that all services they provided, including those off-site, were located within the boundaries of South Oxnard (or Port Hueneme). Historically, active South Oxnard residents had been concerned that their area of the city had the fewest services and one of the neediest populations. From the outset, these concerned residents were insistent that services be located within their community and serve youth and families within their boundaries.
- **Flexibility.** From the beginning, SOCP managers recognized the importance of more flexible work hours, because they were aware of research indicating that youth are most likely to commit crime after school on school days and in the early and late evenings on other days (Sickmund, Snyder, and Poe-Yamagata 1997; Snyder, Sickmund and Poe-Yamagata 1996). SOCP employees, therefore, made themselves available during evenings and weekends to better serve their clients. For example, family conferences--meetings where staff worked with the youth and family to develop a program plan-- were often held in the evenings or on weekends to ensure parent availability.
- **Informality.** SOCP made the program more inviting to clients to ensure that youth, families, and the community would be drawn to the program without being forced to come to the project. The informal environment also increased the comfort level youth had with staff. Youth sometime came to the offices without appointments and without direction from their probation officers. They looked to probation officers for resources unrelated to probation, such as job openings.
- **Co-Location.** Maintaining a one-stop service delivery site resulted in tremendous benefits for those involved with the project. Youth and family were able to go to one location to obtain a variety of services. Quality of service also increased by housing the collaborating staff at the same site. At SOCP, probation officers found

[15] The Youth Services (Diversion) Unit is housed in sites throughout the county. One of the offices is in North Oxnard.

the collaborative environment more time effective. In addition, the collaborative environment allowed service providers to obtain additional knowledge about each youth and family. Although confidentiality rules limited the sharing of specific information, all staff were provided with information essential to case management and treatment. As a result of the collaborative environment, staff members were more effective at treating youth and had a broader understanding of their needs.

- **Family Involvement.** From the outset, SOCP realized the importance of including the offender's family--both parents and siblings--in attempts to encourage offender accountability and increase competency in the youth and family.
- **Broad Focus.** At the project, offender supervision encompassed more staff activities than monitoring terms and conditions of probation. Officers were able to spend more time affirming acceptable behaviors--giving clients ideas about how to better spend their time, how to do well in school, how to avoid negative situations with police and courts, and how to better their lives. Because the staff worked in teams, additional staff also worked with each youth--including drug and alcohol treatment specialists, mental health social workers, a restorative justice advocate, City Corps staff, and recreation staff. These workers provided services based upon their disciplinary expertise, but also provided supervisory roles and promoted positive behavior thereby serving the role of an extended family of service providers. They also connected youth and families to services--helping them obtain housing assistance, help with payment of utilities, jobs, medical care, furniture, and clothing. And as part of their daily routine, staff talked to youth and families about how to make better choices--which for some was very different from their traditional roles.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER COUNTIES CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PROJECT

As we have discussed, SOCP implemented their own version of the Corrections of Place model, but many questions never received answers. For agencies that are considering implementing similar juvenile justice models involving collaboration among agencies and the incorporation of community input, some important questions to consider at the outset include:

Accepting Community Justice. How can a program get the broader community and the participating agencies to accept the new approach to delivering services (e.g., accept the existence of many staff with smaller than usual caseloads)? How can probation officers and other service providers be trained to think "outside the box" and contradict their disciplinary training? What should job descriptions include for probation officers and other staff? How can a program ensure that community members understand and support the program philosophy of restoration rather than retribution? How does a program instill in residents the belief that *they* have a responsibility to keep the community crime-free?

Implementing Community Justice. How can restorative justice be implemented in a bureaucratic system? What is the structure for implementing a restorative approach? What are the steps needed to get all three parties (offender, victim, and community) to participate and come to a resolution? Once an agreement is made among parties, what is the process to ensure accountability by everyone--not just the offender? What if the community and/or victim insists on a punitive response to the offender for their own healing? What if the victim really does not want to participate? What if there is no tangible victim?

Defining Community. What does "community" mean? How can programs get communities that are historically resistant to official intrusion into their lives (e.g., minority groups) to participate and trust the process?

Client Concerns. What types of offenders should be excluded? What if court-ordered terms and conditions contradict the restorative process? How can staff protect the confidentiality of youthful offenders and implement constitutional safeguards designed to protect the offender's rights? What should happen if the youth reoffends?

The SOCP experience provided valuable lessons regarding the implementation of collaborative approaches to community justice, as well as how Probation might improve their relationship with clients and their families. Even without a fully operational COP model, anecdotal evidence suggests that this approach to serving youth has its advantages. Youth and families feel better about their experiences with the justice system, and staff feel better about the communities they serve. SOCP management believed that project efforts had prompted many community improvement efforts that began in South Oxnard after SOCP started. As SOCP management argues, even though the final data show no differences on outcomes between experimental and control youth, the results show that at the least, community-based strategies that include creating an environment that welcomes clients and places a focus on case work are no *less* effective than the get-tough suppression efforts that have been popular in recent years.

APPENDIX

LETTERS TO THE SOUTH OXNARD CHALLENGE PROJECT

NOTE: All names used in this appendix are fictitious. SOCP personnel are identified only by function. No names of actual persons involved in SOCP, either as staff or as clients, are included.

June 11, 2001

"Juan"

I am writing this success story on Juan. Juan was fifteen when I started working with him. He was placed on probation and the case was assigned to _____.

The terms ordered by the court for Juan to follow and complete were restitution of approximately 250 dollars; complete 40 hours community service; attend drug and alcohol meetings. The last need for Juan was tutoring; his grades at the time were D's and F's due to his attendance.

One of the first things I did with Juan was get him involved with tutoring. He attended tutoring with _____ three times a week. As a result I believe that's what helped Juan improve his grades to B's and C's and eventually graduated from Hueneme High School. At the same time, Juan completed his hours at City Corps and finished his drug and alcohol education with _____. I helped him get two jobs; the first job I referred him to was a summer job program. The second job was at McDonalds. He was able to pay his restitution in a matter of months. Juan also participated in the first parent/youth group, which was real fun to facilitate with the kind of families we had. He also participated in almost every recreational activity we had.

I spoke to him about three weeks ago and he thanked me for everything I did for him. He still continues to work and since being off probation has not received any new citations. He also asked if he could participate in recreational activities. Juan was real fun to work with and I still wish him the best.

Respectfully,

"SOCP Navigator"

June 12, 2001

"Jose"

He was on probation for possession of a loaded handgun. He violated his probation several times. The violations were all technical violations which were either gang association, using marijuana, and absconding. It seems the minor's tendency was to run from probation. He was serving a boot camp commitment prior to being referred to the Challenge Project.

While with the Challenge Project, the minor continued to accrue technical violations and at one point absconded for a couple of days. However, I was able to contact the minor via his pager and left a voice mail indicating that we could work out an informal sanction. The minor contacted his probation officer and agreed that we would try to work something out. The minor began to develop a relationship with his navigator _____, then with _____, and later again with _____. The navigators worked with the minor and assisted him with his schooling and ultimately were able to assist him in obtaining a job. He and his sister and his mother attended the Parenting Classes and participated in mediation. The minor attended the Boy's Group and participated in Alcohol and Drug Groups. When Challenge moved to the new site on Pacific, the minor along with City Corps staff helped move us in.

Anyway, I believe that during this time the minor managed to mature and began thinking about his future. He re-established a relationship with his father that had not existed for several years, and that at one point he blamed for the way his life was going. Currently, he and his father are working together in a business that they started together.

The minor, I believe is a productive member of the community and no longer a drain to the community. His progress helps restore the community.

Sincerely,

"SOCP Probation Officer"

12-20-00

Dear _____,

Hi my name is "Efrain." You may have heard of me. Well, I'm writing this letter to thank you for creating the Challenge Program. This program helps me a lot. They show me all kinds of stuff. To me the Challenge Program is like family. _____, _____, _____, my P.O. _____ and everyone has helped me! I mean the last time I went to court; _____, _____, and _____ were with me. They talk to me about speaking in front of the judge. I mean, I wouldn't have spoke to the judge if they weren't by my side. And I thank you for allowing them to come and visit me because I really need them right now. The Challenge Program hasn't failed on anything. Who has failed is us the kids. I mean they always gave me advice but I never listen! When I come out you're going to hear a lot of good stuff about me. I have realized a lot of thing just by talking to them. They help me find a job. They help me stay in school. You don't know how much they have helped me!!! I like when we do stuff with the Challenge like car wash, camping, go to basketball games, stuff like that. That makes me do things rather than being on the streets doing something bad. I thank God and I thank you for having this people by my side. Well I guess that's it. Oh, thanks again for creating this wonderful program. Thank you!

Sincerely,

"Efrain"

June 15.2001

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed being a part of the project. I was made to feel like I was a part of the team. I was asked for my opinion and input. I wasn't made to feel like I wasn't just "clerical". It took a bit of getting used to working with people from different agencies. Everyone had their own opinion as to how things should be done.

It was nice to get to know the kids on a different level. Since I was able to participate in the team meetings, I learned more about the kids and their families. They became more than just another client. And because of the different atmosphere, they go to know us on a first name basis. You could tell they felt more comfortable talking to us. They would sit up front and talk about how things were going. This was something I never experienced before in the other probation units.

"SOCP Office Assistant III"

Dear _____,

Re: "Miguel"

I would like to share with you a little on how Miguel is doing. As a family, I have spoken with my other children in a group and on an individual basis on how they felt and how they see Miguel in regards to his behavior, attitude, and overall being. Well it was plain to see that they spoke with great thought and all heart in regards to their brother, in words of their own, I am pleased to share with you that they all see a "Big difference" and a "Dramatic change." But what is most beautiful about it, is that they all say it with a smile. As a mother, I have encouraged Miguel to stay focused as a young man entering young adulthood and to accept the responsibility of managing his life in a positive way. I still continue our mother to son talks as I see Miguel looking happier, more focused and willing to try. This means that he has acknowledge and accepted positive change in his life. You know me well enough as a person and as a mother, that when I say that I love and deeply care about my son, that this comes from within my heart. At this time, I would like to thank you for being part of the Challenge Project because Miguel feels comfortable talking with you and I would say he sees you more as a friend. As we all know, keeping self-control when fighting the temptation of today's society can be difficult and somewhat discouraging at times for teenagers. But by having the proper influence surrounding him, he can continue to fight and go forward. Thank you for being there for us.

Sincerely,

"SOCP Parent"

June 12, 2000

"Araceli"

Araceli has been referred twice to the Parent Child Mediation Process (PCMD). The minor has a history of drug, and alcohol abuse, truancy, curfew, and habitual runaway. The minor is now able to identify her substance abuse indicators, as boredom, alcohol, and availability. The minor is also able to verbalize her shame, and fears, in relation with her drug use which she has been unable to do in the past. She is now actively involved in many programs at El Concilio, as well as keeping weekly appointments with me. Her mother "Maria" has also made great strides in changing her behavior. In the past, Maria gave mixed messages, and wanted others to set, and enforce her daughters boundaries. Maria has taken drug and alcohol classes, enrolled in parenting classes, and joined a women's group. As part of the women's group she shares her story and gives advice to other mothers.

"Restorative Justice Advocate"

June 8, 2001

A Synopsis Of My Work At Challenge

I would love to say that I alone was able to make miraculous or even small changes with the families that I worked with, but I was lucky to work with a group of people who, when I wanted to give up on a child or family, would remind me that change occurs slowly and that chronic, multi-generational problems do not go away in a few months. Their understanding and zeal for their work helped me to stay motivated.

During my work with Challenge, I had contact with about fifty families. Half of those I saw on more than one or two occasions, and about half of those received at least six months of individual and family counseling. What amazed me the most about these families was the multiplicity and chronicity of problems. These families seem to have layers and layers of problems. My most successful interventions were my crisis interventions. Why? Because when people are in crisis they are more open to receiving help and following through with suggestions.

Most successful long-term interventions occurred with the minors and parents who were open to looking at themselves, looking at their view of the world and allowing themselves to question whether what they were doing, how they were behaving were really the best tings for them. Examples of these include "Maria", who is learning that if she respects and values herself, others will also respect and value her; "Angel," same thing. Angel's mother, who learned that if she gave her daughter the respect and appreciation that she so much needed and desired, her daughter would do the same for her. Senora Garcia (not real last name) who is learning that she doesn't have to go into crisis mode every time her children are in real or imagined danger. The parents of "Jennifer" who learned that as long as they were unwilling to resolve their marital issues, they would never be an effective parenting unit, and who then made a conscious decision that they were simply not ready to change. "Vince" who is learning to rely on his ability to prioritize and plan rather than relying on his anxiety to help him stay focused on his future goals.

My most difficult cases were what I call my "hard boys" not because they were especially cruel or especially inclined toward antisocial behavior, but because of their inability to allow themselves to feel anything other than anger. These boys were so terrified of pain, abandonment, feeling unloved, feeling unappreciated, that they absolutely refused to talk or even acknowledge these feelings. Yet these feelings seem to drive them time and time again into conflict with loved ones, or people whom they felt should love or should have loved them, protected them, but didn't. These boys walked about feeling worthless, full of self-pity. This self-pity often drove them to engage in dangerous, often self-destructive behavior, whether to prove to themselves or others that they were capable of accomplishing something, or as a way of purposely hurting themselves. They often coped by getting high or drunk, because, as one of them so eloquently put it, "It puts you in a

different state of mind, and then you don't care about anything." It was in this "different state of mind" that they often committed acts of violence or crime.

Did I get anywhere with these boys? I don't know. I hope so. I grew to really respect and pity them. I wanted to just put my arms around them and let them know that everything was going to be alright, but I couldn't. And they are too young still to do that for themselves. Hopefully someday they will remember our talks about how feelings drive thoughts and thoughts lead to actions. Hopefully some day they will have the courage to confront the demons that they are not ready to confront now. Hopefully they will some day be able to love, respect, appreciate, protect themselves the way they needed to be loved, respected, appreciated and protected as children.

We talked about a lot of things. We talked about how when we don't get what we need as children we grow up feeling worthless. We talked about how we sometimes develop ways of looking at the world that are based on our experience. For example, we may fear and/or distrust everyone if we did not feel secure as children. We may feel that people are only good for exploitation if we were exploited. We may think that women are only good for sex and serving if that is all we were taught. And that sometimes we develop ways of looking at the world, because it justifies the crimes we are committing against other people, and it keeps us from having to take responsibility. We talked about the sad state of the world, about rap music, girls (most of these boys have very negative views about women), parents. These boys had a lot to say about their mothers and very little about their fathers, most of whom were absent. These boys could argue at nauseam with me about why they were not responsible for a crime, for them being expelled from school, but became silent when asked about their fathers, or when asked to talk about their feelings of hurt, shame, abandonment.

There were four boys that touched me the most: "Tom", very angry and trying to prove himself by making a name for himself in the streets; "Felipe", very angry and hurt, feeling totally unloved and just wanting to escape life altogether. "Genaro," you, still scared, but totally misguided by his parents, brother, and friends. "Juan", filled with anger and self pity, terrified of abandonment and absolutely unwilling to be told what to do by the mother who abandoned him, or anybody else who represents an authority figure. If they don't care for him, why should they tell him what to do?

Tom is back in jail. In the time I have known him, a little over a year, he has never spent more than a few months out of jail. Felipe is serving his first WERC commitment. He is furious, and feeling victimized by probation, unwilling to take any responsibility for his actions. Genaro is testing limits the way any adolescent would and had he had appropriate limits and structure could have been a mellow, easygoing young man. Thank God for "the PO" and her ability to set structure, limits and show concern without being a pushover. She is a great example of a parent and probation officer in my opinion. Juan is out to warrant, hopefully working (he is very hard working).

Family counseling with these families was very trying to say the least. Tom's family is so filled with inter-generational resentment and anger that they could never focus for more

than a few minutes on Toms' problems. Sweet, well intentioned women and man, but unwilling to cooperate with each other, take responsibility and totally absorbed in their own conflicted relationships to pay attention to Toms' problems.

Felipe's father refuses to acknowledge how his wife being in a coma for five years could have impacted his son's emotional development and how his inability to even talk about the issue leaves Felipe feeling invalidated, and not understood or supported.

Genaro's parents never learned the value of structure, limits, setting clear expectations or of making sure their kid makes it to school every day. They provide him with a house, food and clothes, and expect him to do the rest, and his is learning really well how to hustle, how to do the minimum to get what he wants. His father simply never attended family sessions. Mother would place such little value on our meetings that she often was not there for the appointment. Just like she would simply not take Genaro to school, because she had other things to do. She is now taking him to school daily.

Juan's mother lacked empathy for her children. She was unable to see anything from anyone's perspective other than her own. Personality disorder? Probably. Raul never met his father.

Please don't think I'm laying blame. I am describing what I saw. Did I know how to deal with these problems? No. Did I seek consultation from probation, drug and alcohol, my clinical supervisor, psychiatrists, books, journals? Yes. Did it help? A little bit.

The bottom line is this. I can't sit here and talk about one success story, because it belies the work that this job has entailed. There is no one great success story. There is only tiny little glimmers of hope. Is it worth it? Yeah. Do I wish there were better solutions? Yes. Will I keep looking? Yes.

"SOCP Mental Health"

June 12, 2001

South Oxnard Challenge Project
Success Stories

"Anna"

Anna was placed on probation for a drug related offense. Anna faced many issues at home including a brother who was heavily gang involved and who also was on probation for drugs. Her father had a criminal history which included alcohol offenses and theft offenses. Through SOCP she received a social worker, a drug and alcohol counselor, a navigator, and a probation officer. The family participated in family counseling and Anna attended drug and alcohol counseling every week, in fact, she continued to attend after she fulfilled the requirements. She was able to remain drug free for over one year. With the assistance of a navigator, she was able to secure employment at the Camarillo outlets and enroll in Oxnard College. She graduated from Gateway Community School at age 16 and was successfully terminated from probation approximately two weeks after.

"Hector"

Hector was placed on probation for fighting. He was extremely gang involved or at least tried to be. He had a defiant attitude and feared nothing. He was immediately referred to anger management and a boy's leadership group. During anger management, he instigated fights and in boy's group, yelled out gang slurs. He acted this way in front of the probation officer and the SOCP police officer. He was returned to court approximately 3 months after being declared a ward. After a brief time in custody, participation in weekly groups, anger management, tutoring, drug and alcohol counseling, a navigator, and close supervision, Hector made a complete turn around. He was respectful to all staff, encouraged others to do well, remained drug free, and was a leader in field trip activities. After one year of probation, a termination request will be submitted to the court.

"Rose"

Rose was placed on probation for an alcohol related offense. She had previously been a 300 dependant based on abuse and neglect. Her mother was extremely uncooperative and only had negative things to say about Rose. Initially, she refused to participate in any type of counseling. Rose was offered a navigator, a social worker, a drug and alcohol counselor, numerous groups, and a probation officer. In time, she learned to trust the team and became extremely open with the probation officer (it was often said that at

times she was too open with the probation officer). She voluntarily came to see the probation officer every day. After a period of approximately 6 months, the team was able to convince the mother to participate in counseling. In time, she was able to recognize her daughters achievements and communication between the both improved. Rose was seen weekly by a social worker and, with her mother's consent, was seen by a psychiatrist and placed on anti-depressants. She participated in a tobacco group that was offered through El Concilio and gave presentations to elementary students on the dangers of tobacco. She attended a Girl's Group every Monday at Challenge and participated in a number of field trips. She attended tutoring with a navigator and has been able to receive A's and B's in all her classes at Gateway Community School.

Rose also had the opportunity to participate in a sibling mediation with her brother. The two came three weeks and were able to learn how to get along at home and how to work together in dealing with their mother. The team has seen an incredible change in Rose's attitude and has witnessed her self-esteem grow. Although Rose was returned to court, she is now participating in the Drug Court Program. She is able to get herself to three meetings a week and still keeps in contact with the probation officer, social worker, navigator, and mediator.

"SOCP Deputy Probation Officer"

"Jake"

Submitted by:

"SOCP Drug and Alcohol Counselor"

As I was searching my files to pick a client I was going to write about. I realized every person I've worked with has been a success, in one way or another. Each individual has had an impact on my life whether they remember me or not. I Just hope I've planted a seed and sooner or later it grows.

I found it difficult to pick just one, but in the end I chose Jake. Addison referred Jake to me from the Palmer Drug Abuse Program, approximately about March of 1999. He started out as a community referral and attended the Port Hueneme groups. Jake had been in trouble for possession of marijuana with intent to distribute on school property and started group on April 8,1999 and continued to come until the end of South Oxnard Challenge Project. Jake became an experimental case in June of that year. _____ was his Service Coordinator, _____ his Navigator and I continued to see Jake as his Drug and Alcohol Counselor. _____ worked with his family, she had difficulty at first convincing Jake that family meetings would help, but he finally agreed. Jake had definite family issues and drug problems and he attended almost every week on Wednesdays, he seemed to trust me, lie would even show up early just to talk. If I had a closed down group, I could count on Jake to be open and start the group off. Jake would always be honest about his use and that he wanted to quit. I can't tell you how many times I said, "Start over today, just for today".

Jake received a Job as a busboy at a hotel where his dad worked. From that point on I really began seeing changes in Jake. He became more responsible arid seemed to mature in many ways. I also believe the relationship with his Father improved at that time. Each week we met. Jake accrued longer periods of abstinence. Weeks turned into months, and he started doing better in school. Jake applied for the Marines, and like his brother was accepted. He's now on a delayed entry, officially he'll be going into the Marines in September. Jake graduated Port Hueneme High School and now attends Oxnard Community College, taking classes in Psychology and Anthropology. He is also very dedicated to the Gym and trains daily.

Jake has made some mistakes and had some set backs, but more important, Jake has learned not to give up and keep trying. I do not believe that I am a Miracle worker in this particular case. I do believe we both met at that right time and the right place. For that I'm truly grateful.

Life in the project

It all started about 2 or 3 years ago, before I was really in it. I was referred to it by interface. So then I started going to the PDAP meetings on Wednesdays. Which those meetings gave me lots of support because I was able to relate to people that had the same problem I did. Also it was a safe environment.

Being part of the challenge project kept me out of trouble and gave me a chance experience new things while having fun at the same time. It also gave me the chance to make new friends. Some of the things that I was able to do while being in there was go camping, go to Magic Mountain for the first time, and even go rock climbing which I liked very much.

If it wasn't for the challenge project I think my life would be a lot worse. There would have been a good chance that I would have gone to bigger and harder drugs or even very serious crimes. But since the program gave me a place to go and events to attend, it kept me out of trouble. Also the staff in the program is great (especially _____ and _____) and always had a positive attitude and gave me great support. Even to this day I still try to stay active with the program. And even try to help others from the experiences I went through.

Jake

June 27, 2001

When I first transferred to Challenge, I was looking forward to working in a new program with new ideas. This was an exciting change to the traditional, structured probation that I had become accustomed to. Little did I know that the change required an adjustment on my behalf. With each new person, was a different personality and viewpoint. Each person had their own values and contributions to the program. In time I adjusted to the change.

Problems with kids were handled in a different manner and this seemed effective. I could see changes in kids when they came in. In time they would come back, but not always for bad reasons. Some times they would return to participate in an activity, or just to talk to someone about a problem. The stats may not always show all the little details. But these details do count.

It is sad to see the program end because the kids depend on this guidance that they do not get at school or at home. Who will they be able to call or page? Who will take them on trips that maybe their parents can't afford, or don't have the time? Who will take them to special services that they may require? All the little things that were done helped not only the child but the parents also. You hope and wonder that maybe they learned from their experience.

"SOCP Office Assistant III"

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