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**FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT**

**DADE COUNTY MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN  
EDUCATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM**

**9/30/92 - 3/31/95**

**NCJRS**

**Submitted by**

**JAN 30 1996**

**ACQUISITIONS**

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This **FINAL NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT** is submitted in compliance with the requirements of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) "Missing Children Field-Initiated Program", Grant Number 92-MC-CX-0015. The Report covers the entire grant period: 9/30/92 to 3/31/95. Copies of all grant supported publications and brochures are enclosed.

The Dade County Missing and Exploited Children Prevention and Education Program has implemented a model public information and education campaign in Dade County, Florida. The program has implemented proven strategies for raising awareness, enhancing education and fostering effective action to prevent children from becoming runaways, throwaways and exploited. Program messages have been widely disseminated throughout Dade County and thousands of individuals and organizations have benefited. Activities have included the production and distribution of education and prevention materials, media campaigns and community outreach.

Targeted audiences have included: the community-at-large, youth and family services professionals, law enforcement, and youth and families at risk. Program messages have promoted awareness and encouraged effective intervention to prevent and reduce the occurrence of missing and sexually exploited children. The campaign has delivered impactful messages through printed materials, media messages, public presentations and community-based advocacy.

The effort originally proposed was an 18 month intensive public information and education campaign that would barrage the community with messages. A concentrated blitz of information



delivered through a variety of targeted mediums has proven effective in raising awareness and encouraging intervention in the short term. However, due to several factors beyond the control of the contractee, the campaign strategy was modified in implementation. With the cooperation of the OJJDP Program office, the program activity period was extended to thirty months. The strategy implemented over this extended period of time focused greater resources into community participation, outreach and advocacy efforts and less on mass media blitzes. This strategy allowed for enhancements resulting in: a high level of innovation and broad-based participation for the development and dissemination of program messages; stronger institutional and individual commitments to the achievement of program goals and; the continuation of program activities beyond the federal contract period. These strategy modifications, rational and achievements will be more fully discussed in the Approach section below.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To conduct a countywide public information and education campaign promoting community awareness of the need to prevent children from becoming runaways, throwaways and displaced.
2. To conduct a countywide public information and education campaign promoting community awareness of the factors that place children at risk of becoming runaways, throwaways, and sexually exploited.
3. To conduct a countywide public information and education campaign encouraging intervention and provision of needed services to children at risk and to families with children at risk of becoming runaways, throwaways and sexually exploited.



4. To conduct a countywide public information and education campaign encouraging community agencies and organizations to intervene and provide needed services to children at risk and to families with children at risk of becoming runaways, throwaways, and sexually exploited.
5. To conduct a countywide public information and education campaign encouraging families with children at risk of becoming runaways, throwaways and sexually exploited to seek needed services.
6. To conduct a countywide public information and education campaign encouraging children to seek needed services as alternatives to becoming runaways, throwaways, and sexually exploited.

#### **APPROACH IMPLEMENTED**

Important guidance and support for the implementation of program activities and the achievement of program goals was provided by the Project LEARN Advisory Committee and liaisons. The Dade County Law Enforcement and Runaway/Homeless Youth Service Network was initiated by Metropolitan Dade County in 1990. With initial funding provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Project LEARN has worked to enhance cooperation between law enforcement and community agencies serving runaway and homeless youth and youth and families at risk in Dade County. The project has sought to strengthen networking, information and referral systems. The network operates through a contingent of 98 liaisons appointed by the leadership of local law enforcement and youth service agencies. Liaison represent 34 local police organizations (26 municipal and eight Metro-Dade Police Department substations) and 64 organizations





providing community based services to youth and families. These liaisons are key to community participation, outreach, training and advocacy for the Missing and Exploited Children Program.

The Project LEARN Advisory Committee was created by criminal justice and human services agencies leaders serving on the Dade-Miami Criminal Justice Council and the Council's Juvenile Justice Committee. Through the Council's influence, Project LEARN has been able to obtain strong police and community based support. The members of the Project LEARN Advisory Committee represent ten law enforcement agencies and representatives of 14 community based agencies and institutions which provide services to runaway/homeless youth and youth and families at-risk. Police agencies participating include those serving Dade's most heavily populated communities as well as neighborhoods disproportionately populated by runaway/homeless youth. Participating community based organizations have demonstrated expertise and commitment to the provision of needed services to targeted youth and represent a broad cross section of service delivery systems and population groups. The membership is reflective of Dade's diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, economic and geographic groups.

The members of the Project LEARN Advisory Committee have worked with staff throughout the program period and provided expertise and oversight for the development of program outreach strategies and information materials. The Advisory Committee has met to review all products and identify important resources for outreach and advocacy. **Program Messages**

All campaign messages:



-Provided information concerning the extent and impacts of the problem in our community, dangers to children, child victimization, sexual exploitation including involvement in pornography and prostitution, physical and psychological harm to children and their families, and the long term impacts on homelessness, addiction and family dysfunction.

-Provided information concerning the numbers of at-risk youth and families in our community and the reasons youth become runaways. Issues addressed include: abuse and neglect in the home; substance abuse, crime, mental and physical disorders and poverty, children in foster care and homosexual and bi-sexual children.

-Identified types of interventions and services that are needed; including substance abuse treatment, employment and housing assistance, health and mental health care, academic assistance, conflict resolution and family counseling.

-Encouraged involvement and support for individual, organizational, neighborhood and community wide efforts to provide needed interventions and services, through empowerment, persistence, peer intervention, and identifying resources for multiple problems.

The members of the Project LEARN Advisory Committee felt particularly strongly about the need to communicate the responsibility of educators, professionals, and other caring adults within the community. This concern was incorporated into the program awareness strategy.



## **Production of Information and Education Materials**

Below is a listing and brief description of materials produced:

### **VIDEO PROGRAM-"A KID LIKE YOUTH SHOULDN'T BE ON THE STREET"**

A fourteen minute high quality video program was produced and 1,000 copies distributed. The program features dramatic depiction of events in the lives of runaway and homeless youths. Special effort was made to encourage youth to identify with the characters, their strengths and problems, to understand when problems are "serious", that help is available, the need to get help and the impact that youth may have to help their peers or loved ones. The program provides valuable information to families and community based organizations to identify youth and families at risk and encourage effective intervention.

The National Association of County Information Officers, an affiliate of the National Association of Counties, selected the Dade County Missing and Exploited Children Program video for its **1994 BEST OF CLASS AWARD**, the highest honor given among over seventy entrees from throughout the United States.

### **POSTER**

A 36'X24' full color poster was produced and 5,000 copies made. The poster features three young players from the video program and the program theme "A Kid Like You Shouldn't Be On the Street". This eye catching poster features state-of-the-art graphics and professional portrait photography. Youth and families are informed that "Problems are tough-but the street is tougher."



And includes the encouraging messages; "Don't run away. Don't quit. You can get the help you need. You are important."

### **INFORMATION CARD**

An 8 1/2" x 4" information card was produced and 75,000 copies printed on durable glossy post card type paper. The card employs messages and graphics consistent with the poster and video program. The card identifies the dangers of inaction, the characteristics of youth and families at risk and encourages intervention, empowerment and resources available to provide help.

### **Distribution of Materials**

Posters, video programs and information cards were distributed throughout Dade County through the following groups and organizations.

1. Schools: 131 Dade County public senior and middle schools.
2. Law Enforcement: 27 police chiefs, 34 LEARN law enforcement liaisons and 100 School Resource officers assigned to public junior and senior high schools.
3. Dade-Miami Criminal Justice Council: 34 criminal and human services agency and business leaders.
4. Neighborhood Service Centers: 23 community centers providing social, health and human services to low income residents.
5. The Community Action Agency: Fifteen community based service centers providing social and employment services and outreach in low income residents.





6. Florida Department of Juvenile Justice: secure detention and day treatment facilities and community based crime prevention, intervention and supervision programs serving adjudicated youth and their families.
7. Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services: HRS Dependency Units serving children in foster care, care providers and youth and families in need of services.
8. Parent/Teacher/Student Associations: School based organizations serving all middle and senior high schools.
9. Crime Watch and Youth Crime Watch: Community based citizens crime prevention organizations and school based youth crime prevention .
10. Park and Recreation Facilities: Recreation and cultural enrichment programs at 25 park facilitates.
11. Dade County Crime Prevention Programs: 34 community based crime prevention programs serving youth and families in high crime communities.
12. Juvenile Alternative Sanctions System: Counselors and case workers providing court diversion services for 8,000 non-violent, non-habitual juvenile offenders and their families each year.
13. Law Enforcement and Runaway/Homeless Youth Liaisons: Project liaisons providing services to youth and families through 64 community based organizations.

### **Community Outreach**

Staff worked directly with human services professionals, law enforcement and community based agencies and leaders to facilitate the display and distribution of program materials. An important



link to the community were the Project LEARN liaisons. Liaisons made presentations in schools and before community based organizations and incorporated program messages into treatment, counseling, outreach and other ongoing direct services efforts.

Program information and education materials were distributed to local print and broadcast news and public service media. Project LEARN liaisons were encouraged to promote program messages through media targeted media . The program video was broadcast on five occasions on channel 34, the Dade County Cable Television Station.

Community outreach through liaisons and existing service providers was selected as an effective strategy when program activities were delayed due to Hurricane Andrew, which destroyed or severally damaged over 30,000 homes. While the storm served to draw resources and attention away from program efforts for several months, the devastation and high level of family stress resulted in focused and unprecedented community wide efforts to intervene and provide needed services to children, youth and families at risk. The focus on youth and family strengthening took place throughout the Greater Miami area and was not confined to the hardest hit communities. Over time these trying circumstances served to enhance community participation and support for program efforts beyond what could have been originally anticipated.

A second unforeseen condition which served to strengthen program impact over time was unprecedented levels of community concern over youth violence and delinquency. Several high profile crimes against tourists, shootings of children, youth and police officers and a growing



public perception that crime and criminals were out of control, also drew resources away program activities. Community leaders seized the initiative to develop short and long term strategies for crime reduction and control. Public awareness and community participation efforts played a key role in the local strategy. An important result has been increased public support for prevention and intervention to provide needed services to youth and families at risk. In this environment, the production and distribution of program materials and outreach efforts have met with widespread and enthusiastic support sure to enhance the achievement of program goals and objectives among all target populations.

