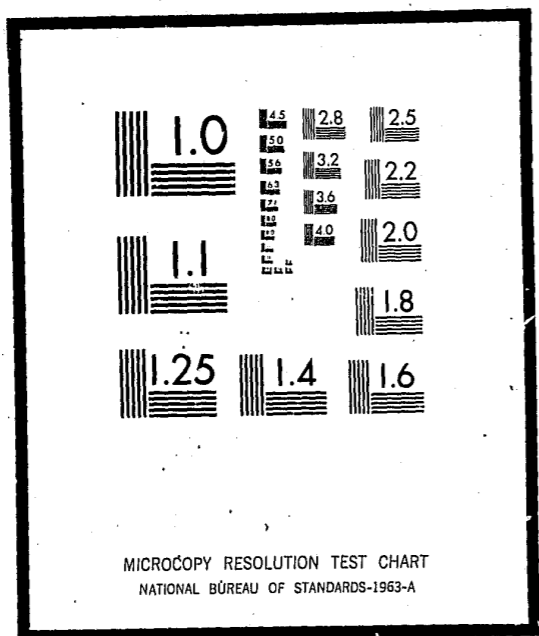


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EVALUATION

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YOUTH SERVICE CENTER

Final Evaluation

July 15, 1973

040 = Operation Positive

Raymond Sales, Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. YSC Goals and Accomplishments
3. YSC Counseling and Employment
4. Program Participants - General Characteristics
5. The School - A Primary Contributor to the Problem of Juvenile Delinquency
6. Recommendations
7. Conclusions
8. Addendum I - Six Cases
9. Addendum II - Youth Service Center Staff

INTRODUCTION

During the past five months of operation the Youth Service Center has proven to be a significant factor in meeting the individual needs of youth in our community. The YSC has demonstrated its ability to reduce the gaps between the philosophical and functional activities of the several institutions serving the youth. We strongly assert that these institutions are essential to the socialization and positive maturation of our youth.

The above-mentioned gaps or program voids among the various agencies are extremely critical to the delinquent or pre-delinquent youngster. Often their inability to respond within the perimeters of an individual's need is a prime factor in encouraging anti-social behavior in the juvenile delinquent.

The community's interest and the cooperation of the public school system, the various social agencies, churches, and individuals demonstrates that the public recognizes juvenile delinquency to be a major problem. However, more significantly, they realize additional attention and resources are needed to overcome this problem.

The YSC has shown that the conversion of the potential energy of the youngsters themselves may be the greatest new resource available or needed. The program has targeted on

guiding an individual into a feeling of self-worth and a realistic understanding of his or her actions. This has been coupled with constructive alternatives to aggressive or anti-social behavior, i.e., employment, helping a peer who has a comparable problem, or getting professional help with dispatch.

The questions, "Why a Youth Service Center and is it a duplication of existing services?" was answered by the functional success of the Center. The Center has proven its value by creating a new "trusted" outlet for the youth. It has expedited the meeting of available assistance with the Youth in need of a particular service. This often averted a potential problem which may have accrued simply due to logistics. Also, the YSC was able to identify programmatic needs in existing services for youth.

YSC GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The YSC began, technically, on January 29, 1973, the day the Grant Award notification arrived at Operation Positive. However, the first actual day of operation was February 5, 1973, the day the Director of the project was hired.

From the outset the goals of the project were: 1) the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency, 2) the diversion of youth from the juvenile justice system and, 3) institutional change, i.e., provide legitimate roles for youth.

However, looking at 96 of the 129 individuals referred, with whom significant contact was made, only three (3) were rearrested for a subsequent offense. This is suggestive of a very low rate of recidivism (3.1%) with respect to YSC participants. Although it is merely suggestive and additional data and time are necessary to form valid conclusions, all indications point to the fact that youngsters involved in the project were much less inclined to get into trouble. The YSC recidivism rate (3.1%) would certainly compare favorably with other juvenile delinquency prevention programs.

Admittedly, some goals and objectives of the program are difficult to measure without the benefit of longitudinal study. One must realize that the degree of difficulty in measuring intangibility does not mean it is not a powerful reality.

Although the nature of this project does not totally lend itself to numerical evaluation, the center has effectively dealt with over one hundred and twenty-nine youth. A statistical tabulation will provide a positive picture of services rendered from January 30 thru June 30.

However, the success of the YSC project is based on several factors such as the willingness of institutions to change and the positive response of youth to counseling, etc.

It is impossible to adequately transpose emotional, psychological and human triumph into numbers. This would surely be like reducing a flawless diamond into a lump of coal.

One of our primary goals was to reduce the number of cases handled by the juvenile court. This was referred to as diversion. The purpose of diversion is to prevent minor offenders from being processed in the juvenile justice system and keep them out of court before they are branded as delinquent.

The Center has been successful in receiving and handling referrals from the juvenile justice system. YSC has accepted 88 youths from juvenile court and 13 youth from the Ohio Youth Commission referrals. This is a strong indicator that YSC has reduced the number of cases handled by the probation and parole officers. Therefore, one might conclude that the goal of diversion was attained by the Center.

Another major goal of the project was to provide legitimate roles for troublesome youth. This would provide constructive and rehabilitative alternatives to meet specific needs of the individual and combat the devastation of personal and environmental frustrations.

The YSC did experience a degree of success in sensitizing the various agencies to the need for increased access to existing opportunities. Thus, an increase in the frequency of legitimate roles became a reality for the youth of the Center.

At the beginning of the program it was urged that existing community agencies be utilized and that efforts be made to make these institutions more responsive to youth.

The involvement of existing community agencies in the affairs of potentially delinquent and delinquent youth will lead to a greater appreciation and understanding of the complexity of the delinquent's problems. Once our community agencies become directly involved with these youngsters and are cognizant of the unique problems of all youth, these agencies will be more willing to make needed changes in their structure and operation so as to provide legitimate roles for our youth.

The Youth Service Center, therefore, made a conscientious effort to seek out community agencies and urge them to provide job stations for YSC youngsters. The response was excellent and the result was a successful YSC Employment Program. The willingness of various agencies to place pre-delinquent and delinquent youth in jobs within their organizations is an important indication of the community's willingness to cooperate with a program such as this. Conspicuously absent from the list presented below are the traditional social institutions, particularly those involved with youth. This represents somewhat a disappointment for YSC, as we anticipated a great deal more cooperation.

The American Cancer Society, The Stark County Humane Society, The Stark County District Library, The Voluntary Action Center, Head Start, The Canton Public Schools, (Lathrop, Martin, and Roosevelt in particular), The Sandy Valley Community Action Center, First Baptist Church of Canton, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Canton First Church of the

Brethren, The Human Rights Center, etc., all provide job stations for YSC youth and helped these youngsters develop a sense of job responsibility and discipline.

Our teacher's aide program is particularly noteworthy. In this program twelve YSC participants were utilized as teacher aides at Lathrop, Roosevelt, and Martin Schools. They were put to work tutoring first, second, and third graders in math and reading. The teacher aide jobs were particularly important because: 1) they helped promote a sense of responsibility and competence and 2) they helped to build a sense of belongingness. To the youngster for whom the school has long been alien territory this is of critical importance.

The teacher aide program would have never gotten off the ground had it not been for the willingness of the principals at the schools involved to accept the idea. The fact that the program was accepted by the schools was, in itself, a major accomplishment and is additional evidence that institutions such as the school will make changes for the betterment of youth.

YSC COUNSELING AND EMPLOYMENT

The Youth Service Center maintained an effective counseling program staffed by one full-time and three part-time professionals and one volunteer. The counseling program consisted of individual and group counseling sessions aimed at the determination and resolution of an

individual's problems, i.e., individually tailored work with youth. The sense of trust which evolved from close contact and rapid follow-up to problems uncovered during counseling sessions made the program successful. Trust and individual care thus became the core of the program.

However, the counseling program would not have been successful had it not been for the employment program. The employment factor was the source of motivation, an essential tool in creating and fostering an intrinsic motivation force in the counselees. The fact that the project was a purely voluntary, non-coercive undertaking magnified the need for a strong motivation factor.

Thus, the counseling and employment programs were successful and in combination they helped develop in youth a sense of responsibility, competence, and belongingness, which in turn helped to instill in youth a commitment to conformity and legitimate behavior.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS - GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The youngsters referred to YSC were delinquent first offenders and pre-delinquents or youth in danger of becoming delinquent. These youngsters came from a wide variety of social economic, ethnic, economic, and cultural backgrounds which precludes us from drawing a prototype of the YSC participant.

We have, therefore, chosen to group individuals and individual problems, rather than attempt to construct a model of the YSC participant. The general problems noted

among the participants are important in that they give us an indication of the kinds of programs needed to combat delinquency.

In most cases, the individual problems stem from damaging experiences encountered by the youngsters as a member of the family, the school, and the peer group. For example, the number of truancy problems and the relatively low career aspirations of the youngsters reflect the need for academic and vocational assistance.

Fifty-four percent of the youngsters admitted to acute problems at home as indicated by fatherlessness, marital conflict, disability and other indicators of less than stable living arrangements. Approximately eight percent have had histories of physical and/or mental problems that have contributed to delinquency. Another eight percent admitted to drug usage and twenty-three percent were referred for having been unruly or runaway. The largest category by far is composed of youth with school related problems as indicated by excessive truancy, student/teacher conflict, drop-outs, and expulsion. Of the one hundred twenty-nine youngsters referred to the YSC, ninety-three admit to serious difficulties in school.

THE SCHOOL - A PRIMARY CONTRIBUTOR TO THE PROBLEM OF

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

The Youth Service Center recognized that the school is a primary contributor to the problem of juvenile delin-

quency in Canton. In making this assertion we are not attacking the school per se, for we also recognize that such a contribution was not intentional. The school system, however, must be admonished for its complete failure to develop meaningful educational designs capable of winning and retaining the interests of all youth. It is the responsibility of the school to educate all youth including troublesome youth.

The school must also have the responsibility for having abdicated its role as a socialization and control agent of the community. The strategic position of the school in the nexus between family and community dictates that the school accept and properly effectuate this role. The school, as the institutional home of our youth, is a place where values, norms, statuses, and identities are formulated and most culture and recreational activities are channeled ~~th~~ through the school, the consequence being that the school, not the other range of institutions, is the place where the adolescent is groomed for society.

The school, however, as it is currently constituted is not a significant enough experience for many of our youth. Consequently, our youth are turning away from the school in vast numbers and many are turning to delinquency and other forms of deviant behavior.

Consequently, there is an urgent need for change. Certain policies especially student dismissal policy, need to be modified and updated as a pre-requisite for regaining the faith of our youth in our educational system.

The current dismissal policy, articulated in Section 3313.66 of the Ohio Revised Code states that a student can be dismissed by the Superintendent of Schools of a City or the Principal of a public school. Written notice of the dismissal must be given to the student's parent or guardian within twenty-four hours. All suspensions must be validated at a subsequent Board meeting and this authority cannot be delegated. No suspension can exceed the current term thereof. Students may be expelled or suspended in cases of extreme misconduct where other approaches of correction and understanding have failed and for insubordination and for truancy.

In many respects, this dismissal authority is flagrantly abused by school officials. Students are dismissed at the discretion and whim of principals and teachers, even though teachers do not have the authority to dismiss students. Students are dismissed for offenses which cannot conceivably be classified as cases of serious misconduct. The fact is that students are dismissed because they cannot get along with their teachers which is not always the students' fault. Principals and teachers in many cases do not seek other approaches or solutions to the problem but rely on dismissal as their first and foremost weapon.

This is a flagrant violation of the student's right to an education. It is also counter-productive to all youth development and delinquency prevention efforts. That fact that many youngsters are expelled, truant, and drop-

outs presents tremendous complications for any delinquency prevention program. At least while crime-prone youngsters are in school their time is legitimately occupied, but once they are allowed to drift into the streets time hangs heavily on their minds and they become more susceptible to the delinquent act. The school must learn to work out problems and disputes between students and teachers without turning students over to the streets.

The YSC has been an advocate of the traditional agencies and institutions which serve our youth. Yet it is committed to institutional change. Change must be brought about if we are to provide the quality and kinds of services needed to significantly reduce juvenile delinquency. Also, we must change if we are to maximize the utilization of available dollars.

We have discovered an extremely high correlation between difficulty in school and juvenile delinquency. This has prompted us to emphasize that creative alternatives must be found to the existing educational process.

The Youth Service Center is a vehicle with the potential to coordinate and reinforce an effective assault on delinquency. The Center has already: 1) improved the relevancy of schooling for some youngsters, 2) provided employment and leisure time activities as legitimate alternatives to aggressive behavior, 3) increased the instances of success to youth who believe themselves to be failures, 4) helped individuals to attain an improved self-concept and, 5) provided knowledge and understanding of the roles

various institutions play in our lives.

The Center attempted to move young people from a situation of dependency to one of independence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the five month Youth Service Center project we are prepared to make the following recommendations:

1) That a Youth Service Bureau as defined by the President's Crime Commission be established to divert juvenile offenders from the juvenile justice system and be a vehicle for upgrading and coordinating the delivery of services to youth, thereby creating a more acceptable balance of power between youth and a large and remote bureaucratic system. The YSB will direct its energies toward creating changes in those institutions which control access to legitimate identity - the school and work and those which control access to illegitimate identity - the police and court.

2) That in lieu of processing youngsters charged with such minor offenses as truancy, unruliness, runaway, beyond control, etc., in the juvenile court, youngsters so charged be referred directly to a Youth Services Bureau.

The concern for diversion has been the result of the growing awareness that negative labeling and the stigma of the court may well be counter-productive to delinquency prevention and control. Furthermore, it is a fact that many children are brought before the court not for wrongs they have done society, but because they cannot get along with their parents or teachers. Parents, schools, and social

agencies tend to dump their acting out youngsters on the courts. Immature and authoritarian parents use the court as a threat over their children to keep them in line, while archaic and boring schools readily abdicate their responsibilities by turning truants over to the court with the hope that some awesome court judge will scare the child to regular attendance.

To end this syndrome these youngsters should be referred directly to a Youth Services Bureau where they would be offered counseling, employment, tutoring or any other service that might be effective in dealing with their home and school problems.

3) That the school modify its dismissal policy and initiate a policy of reconciliation and trust-building.

To accomplish this goal the Youth Service Center urges the school to implement what might be called Project Intercept in which 'troublesome' youth would be allowed to remain in school under the auspices of the Youth Service Bureau.

A reconciliation team consisting of the parent, the student, the teacher, and a YSB official would be set-up to resolve all disputes and to make arrangements for the dismissed student to remain in school. The behavior of students reinstated in this manner will be subject to monitoring by YSB personnel. Such a project would also involve tutoring, employment, educational counseling, etc.

Such an arbitration process will be useful in restoring the principles of due process and justice to the system. It would also be an important factor in reducing alienation and restoring the faith and trust of youth in our schools.

It would be easier, cheaper, and saner to handle youth in the manner prescribed above, rather than continue turning our children out like assembly-line products, without an education, full of frustration and disgust, and with utter contempt for the social institutions of our community.

The need for the activities of a YSB has been known for several years. For example, the 107th General Assembly of the State of Ohio during its 1967-68 Session adopted House Resolution 78, asking schools to implement additional substantive courses in health and family living. The Legislators realized that the use of violence, difficulties with sexual adjustment, alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse were foremost problems of today's youth. However, very few school systems responded in a significant manner. Combine this with the myriad of potential frustrations thrust into the lives of our young people, and you have many causes of delinquency.

The YSB staff will be operated from a base of looking beyond the overt actions of an individual. Often aggressive behavior or anti-social behavior is an attempt to fill a void created by the lack of environmental response to a need. These problems could result from the lack of parent

concern, the inflexibility of a school official, the slow response of an understaffed social agency, etc.

CONCLUSION

A few of us will remember the turbulent beginning of the YSC project. At that time the controversy was due in part to misunderstanding and confusion as to the conceptual foundations of the program. The issue was, "Why a Youth Service Center and is it a duplication of an existing service?"

Five months of operation and study indicates the answer to be -- "No, it is not a duplication."

The three goals of the YSC project and the proposed YSB clearly delineate a territory of operation that is badly in need of service. The fact that 14 and 15 year olds are walking the streets with little or nothing to do except get into trouble is proof that the need exists.

The Youth Service Center has been but the first step in a journey that is perceived to be the best path to delinquency prevention and control.

The basis for a successful, continuing program has been laid.

Respectfully submitted,

Raymond Sales, Director

ADDENDUM I

The first three cases presented below reflect the need for constructive change in our school system, while the last three cases show the response of troublesome youth when institutions welcome them and make changes for them.

CASE I

A 14-year old girl is released from the Juvenile Attention Center after having been adjudicated a truant and run-away. She is released on the condition that she participate in the Youth Service Center project. Everyone concerned, including the school, is aware of this condition and that if the girl fails to participate she will be committed to OYC. The YSC finds the girl a job, however, a certain school official refuses to grant the girl a work permit. Consequently, the girl cannot work.

RESULT: Fearing that she will be committed to OYC, the girl runs away. She has not been found.

CASE II

A 15-year old lad returns from OYC in mid-February. He is not re-admitted to public school as expected. The YSC investigates and is told by school officials that a psychological report, to be forwarded by OYC, is needed before the youngster can be admitted. Further investigation reveals that the said report had already been received by the school. YSC arranged a meeting with the administration to discuss the matter, but the youth is placed in school a day before the meeting (March 27) to avoid a confrontation.

CASE III

A 16-year old youngster wishes to work as a teacher aide. He has regular classes until 11:30 am and followed by study halls until 3:15, which he repeatedly cuts. A YSC counselor requests that the youngster be allowed to work as a teacher aide from 11:30 to 2:45, which in turn would solve his truancy problem. The school counselor adamantly refuses to allow this and instead suggests that the parents have the lad re-arrested for truancy.

CASE IV

Shelley was referred to the YSC by her OYC parole officer. She had been committed for six months for running away. Upon returning from OYC she was castigated by her family and community. Her morale and confidence had fallen to zero. However, with YSC counseling and employment, Shelley has made a complete turn-about. She is presently employed at the Voluntary Action Center as a secretary. As a result, she has regained the respect of her family and the community.

CASE V

Richard was referred to YSC by his probation officer. Everyone had written Richard off as a hopeless case. However, his YSC counselor was persistent and unable to give in to Richard's idiosyncracies. We employed him in the downtown work crew and slowly but surely Richard has come around. He has not missed a day's work in a month.

CASE VI

Betty was referred by the school as a truant. At one point her mother was ready to call the police and list her as incorrigible. The YSC, however, stepped in and the intra-family conflict was ended. Betty apologized to all her teachers for being such a problem and promised that she would attend regularly next year. She is presently employed at the First Baptist Church of Canton and her performance has been excellent. She, too, has made a complete turn-about.

ADDENDUM II

THE YOUTH SERVICE CENTER STAFF

Paul D. Martin - Overall Project Director
Raymond Sales - Director
Peterz Coleman - Counselor
Stephanie Patrick - Counselor
Diane Fleishman, - Counselor
Lynda Starks - Counselor
Alfred Hill, Jr. - Street Counselor
Barbara A. Pierce - Secretary-Bookkeeper
Obie Bender - Project Consultant

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