

X DADE COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
PLANNING UNIT

File Juvenile Justice

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ACQUISITIONS

X INFORMATION FLOW, FOLLOW-UP,  
AND THE DIVERSION PROCESS IN THE  
JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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## INTRODUCTION

A research study was initiated in Dade County on the flow of information from the Office of Youth Services Intake to various diversion programs and the flow of information back from the programs to Intake. This study was initiated for various reasons. First of all, it became apparent during the monitoring of juvenile delinquency grants (funded through LEAA dollars) by our planners and grants management personnel that many of the projects were not keeping adequate information on those youths referred to them from Intake. Secondly, some of the projects also felt that adequate written information about the child was not being sent upon referral to the program by Youth Services. Thirdly, many counselors at Intake stated that once a child was referred to a program, Intake rarely received information on the progress of the child. This created a situation where Intake many times did not know whether a child had even shown up at the program. In addition, the system was not adequately serving those youth who may have needed continuing follow-up. For example, a child who had been diverted to a community based program because of a minor offense or a first offense, may not have been successful in a program. Six months later, this child may be referred to Intake again for a different offense. Intake usually does not know anything about how successful the child had been in the program, whether he needs to be in the same program again, or referred to a different program. If the child has dropped out of the community program, there is no standard way of following up on a child and insuring that he has received the needed services.

The Criminal Justice Planning Unit has been encouraging our diversion grants, through their measurable objectives and evaluation criteria, as well as through verbal requests, to carry through on more extensive follow-up. These efforts have been only partially successful and the staff felt that there needed to be a more formalized manner of follow-up from the point of diversion.

In summary, at the time that this study was initiated, the diversion system was not functioning at its optimal level in terms of following the child's progress in the community after a law violation has occurred.

A description of Diversion from Intake follows as well as an assessment of the problem and some possible solutions.

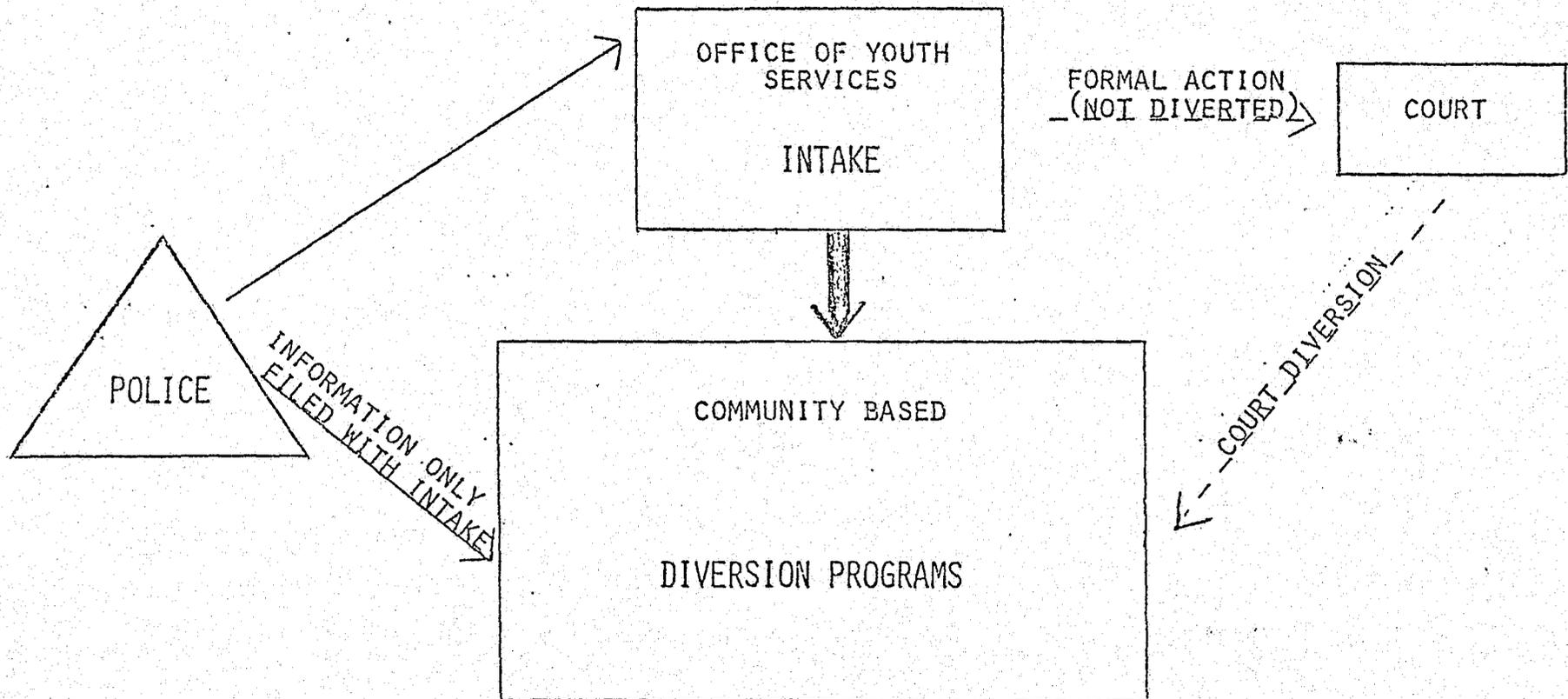
DESCRIPTION OF THE SYSTEM: INTAKE DIVERSION

INTAKE: The Intake Office of the State of Florida's Office of Youth Services serves as the official intake arm of the Juvenile Court System. Police who have apprehended a juvenile for a law violation under the Florida Statutes, must refer the juvenile to the Intake Office. Police may do this either by sending an information only (information on the incident but not request for action) or by requesting an Intake Interview. A Youth Counselor is assigned to the case and he meets with the youth and his/her family or guardian. There are no formal procedures as to the gathering of information about the child, although the school the child had been attending at the time is usually questioned as to how the child had been progressing, the victim (if there is one) and the police may be consulted about the actual incident, and other appropriate people or agencies involved with the child may be consulted (see Attachment A for the Intake Face Sheet).

Within 15 days (or 24 hours on children who have been detained), under the Speedy Trial Rule, a recommendation must be made to the State Attorney's Office concerning the disposition of the case. Although the State Attorney's Office actually decides whether or not to file a petition on a child, locally there is a very good working relationship between the State Attorney's Office and Youth Services Intake and recommendations made by Youth Services regarding diversion from or further processing

into the system, are generally respected. If the recommendation is made to divert the child, and the State Attorney's Office concurs, a dispositional report is completed regarding the reason for diversion, program diverted to, etc. This diversion is an informal action since no petition has been filed and the child has not been adjudicated. The dispositional report is confidential and is not distributed to the agency to which the child is referred unless the agency requests written information. (See Attachment B for information that is generally gathered for dispositional reports.) There is no form for distributing information to referral agencies. Some information may be given over the phone to the agency, but this is at the discretion of the Youth Counselor and is also dependent upon how much interest the agency takes in obtaining background information. However, information about the actual offense is not given to the referral agency due to confidentiality.

INTAKE DIVERSION



## COMMUNITY-BASED DIVERSION PROGRAMS

The philosophy of handling juveniles, especially first time offenders and those with minor violations is quite different from the handling of adults. Efforts are made to keep the youth from penetrating the system any more than is necessary and either taking no action or diverting him to a community-based treatment program or other youth development program where the problems of the child can be addressed and worked through. There is less emphasis on punishment and a genuine goal of rehabilitation.

There are a variety of types of diversion programs in the community and they all operate differently. (Only those projects funded through LEAA, will be discussed here.) Of the eight Juvenile Delinquency grants that are currently being funded out of LEAA Action dollars in Dade County, five act as diversionary programs to the Office of Youth Services, especially the Intake Office. These five programs are Alpha House, PESCA, JESCA Youth Streetworkers, The Miami Bridge, and Big Brothers, Big Sisters Delinquency Prevention Program. (See Attachment C for a brief description of each of these programs.)

In terms of the initial assessment and collection of information and dissemination of information to Youth Services about the progress of the child in the program, each grant has somewhat different criteria for

evaluation and follow-up. For instance, while some grants collect extensive background information about the child, his family and problems, others collect very little. Some grants, although encouraged by the Criminal Justice Planning Unit to conduct follow-up on clients, do not follow-up once the child has left the program, while others do follow-up on a periodic basis. No grant consistently reports back to Youth Services once the child has been terminated or has completed the program.

## ASSESSMENT OF THE PROBLEM

At the time that this study was initiated, there were no formalized procedures for (1) providing information to diversionary programs at the time a referral was made, (2) follow-up on a child by Youth Services to assess how he was doing in a program, (3) provision for relating information back to the Office of Youth Services as to how the youth progressed while in the program.

What has resulted because of the lack of formalized procedures is a diversion system that is not operating at its optimal level. For instance, important information that has been collected by Youth Services Intake at the time of the screening interview may not be fully related to the community-based program to which the child has been referred. Therefore, the program personnel may have to spend additional time in gathering much of the same information (regarding such things as progress in school, family situation, etc.) that Youth Services has already collected. In addition, if the child's needs have not been met while in a diversionary program, Youth Services may not know because of the lack of follow-through by the diversionary program and absence of notification to Youth Services. Therefore, if remedial action is necessary, it is not provided most of the time. Several changes could be implemented which might help the diversion process become more effective.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following items are recommended and will be expounded upon:

1. More formalized and institutional format for follow-up and evaluation for any LEAA grants that act as diversionary programs to Intake.
  2. Referral and follow-up forms to be developed.
  3. Assessment of the feasibility of a tracking system for the whole diversion system.
1. More formalized and institutional format for follow-up and evaluation. More formalized information and follow-up should be required of LEAA funded projects that are diversionary through their grant applications. All grants should follow-up, at a minimum, at least six (6) months after the child has been terminated from the program. This is especially important because if the child needs additional services, these could be recognized at the time of follow-up and a preventive service could be offered. For short-term programs, this should also be done after three (3) months. For long term programs, it should be done after six (6) months and after one year.

The importance of this follow-up is not only because of the possible additional services that a child may need, but also in terms of assessing the long-term impact that a program has had.

This follow-up should include, at a minimum, information about the progress of the child in the school and the community, any additional referrals to Youth Services for delinquent behavior, and how the child and family assess his/her progress and needs.

3. Referral and follow-up forms.

In the process of evaluating the possibility of utilizing a form in order to provide for better information flow, the staff of this project studied several areas. First of all, numerous Intake Screening Interviews were observed in order to assess the information routinely collected in the process of evaluating a child. In addition, meetings were held with the Unit Supervisors and the Intake Supervisor at Youth Services. It was ascertained at this time that whatever form was developed needed to be as simple as possible so as not to take any excessive time. Several important areas of information were discussed. Later, the LEAA project directors were contacted in order to assess what they felt was useful. A trial form was developed (see Attachment D) and is presently being utilized by Youth Services Intake. This form will be sent to a project by Intake upon referral of a child to a program. The referral part of the form includes the counselor's assessment of the problems and needs of the child. Upon termination of the child from the community-based program, the Program Termination Data will be completed by the program and returned to the referring counselor

at Youth Services Intake. Hopefully, this form will provide better information about the problems assessed by Youth Services and addressed by the accepting program. In addition, these forms can possibly be utilized at a later date for research in the area of diversion.

4. Tracking System:

It is recommended that the feasibility of a tracking system be studied in the future. This tracking system might accomplish improvement in two major areas: (1) The planners, professionals and community might be better able to assess the need for the types of services needed for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. In other words, this would be a good evaluative tool showing where we are meeting the needs of these youth and where we're not. (2) Just as this small study has attempted to address those problems related to lack of adequate information and follow-up, a tracking system would be able to alleviate some of those problems on a much larger scale and more efficiently.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ a/k/a \_\_\_\_\_  
 DOB \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_ RACE \_\_\_\_\_ SEX \_\_\_\_\_ HT. \_\_\_\_\_ WT. \_\_\_\_\_ EYE COLOR \_\_\_\_\_  
 HAIR COLOR \_\_\_\_\_ COMPLEX. \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNIFICANT SCARS/ MARKS \_\_\_\_\_  
 PRESENT ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ LIVING WITH \_\_\_\_\_  
 PHONE/ HOME \_\_\_\_\_ BUSINESS \_\_\_\_\_ YEARS OF RESIDENCY IN COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_  
 PREVIOUS ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 PLACE OF BIRTH \_\_\_\_\_  
 EDUCATION: PRESENT SCHOOL AND GRADE \_\_\_\_\_  
 KNOWN TO OTHER AGENCIES \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY

	FATHER	MOTHER	STEP-PARENT/ GUARDIAN
Full Name			
Address			
Telephone	home: bus:	home: bus:	home: bus:
DOB			
Marital Status			
Occupation and Income Range			
Work Hours			
Employer's Name and Address			

	NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP	JOB	KNOWN TO COURT
C					
H					
I					
L					
D					
R					
E					
N					

COURT HISTORY  
(List oldest referral first.)

DATE OF REFERRAL	REASON REFERRED	DISPOSITION/DATE

## INTAKE DISPOSITIONAL REPORT

Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_ Charge \_\_\_\_\_

In Detention

Custody of Parents

Intake Disposition \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Reasons: (Refer to *Factors Affecting Intake Disposition*.)

dispositional reports include:

- I. Problem
- II. Strengths & Resources
- III. Action Taken
- IV. Evaluation / Recommendation

## ATTACHMENT C

Alpha House: Alpha House is a residential treatment program for juveniles who manifest adjustment problems which, if not treated, could lead to serious delinquent behavior. The treatment goals for these children are to enhance personal and familial stability, thereby reducing deviant behavior and diverting the child and the family from further involvement in the juvenile justice system. These children are usually referred to the project by Juvenile Court, State Office of Youth Services, State Social and Economic Services, and Dade County Department of Youth Services.

P.E.S.C.A.: Peer Education and Spanish Counseling Aides has been designed to serve as a counseling and educational link between the Spanish-speaking youngster, the educational system he may openly reject, and the family which he feels is immersed in traditions of the "old country". The following are major objectives: to develop individualized one-to-one bridge counseling services utilizing outstanding participants in bridge counseling courses offered at local colleges; to reduce the incidence of arrest, delinquency activity and/or disruptive behavior among project participants by at least 80%; to increase the achievement level of each participant in his/her respective educational setting by one grade; to improve the participants' relationship with his/her family by family participation in the program; to improve the participants' use of leisure time; and to improve the integration of each participant into the new socio-cultural milieu to which they have immigrated. Referrals emanate from the schools, the community, and Office of Youth Services.

ATTACHMENT C (CONTINUED)

Youth Streetworkers: The Streetworkers project's efforts are directed at youth who have committed minor offenses or who are prone to be involved in pre-delinquent behavior. The prime objective of this outreach service is to help delinquent and disadvantaged youth use their free time constructively and to assist them in utilizing community resources in the educational, employment, recreational and other social service areas. Among the services provided are: tutorial services for low achievers, individual and group counseling, field trips to cultural events, home visitation to assess home environment, recreation and sports activities programs, and summer employment for fifteen (15) youth.

Miami Bridge: The Miami Bridge is a 24-hour, 7 day-a-week, crisis intervention center for runaways, vagrants, pre-delinquents, delinquents, and their families. This program provides short-term housing, physical care, and counseling for youth 10-17 years of age. Though the Bridge deals mainly with runaways and vagrants, it attempts to aid young people with whatever problems they may be experiencing. The Bridge serves over 300 youth during a twelve month period. The main goals are: to alleviate the immediate problems of runaway youth during the runaway episode; to reunite runaway youth with their families, if this is determined to be in the youth's best interests, and to encourage the resolution of intra-family problems; to help runaway youth decide upon a future course of action; and to encourage the de-criminalization of status offenders and their diversion from the juvenile justice system.

ATTACHMENT C (CONTINUED)

Delinquency Prevention Program: Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Greater Miami runs this project in an effort to make a contribution to the reduction of juvenile crime in the South Miami area. Eighty (80) children ranging in age from 6-14, who reside in single-parent homes are eligible for the program which includes: pairing with a Big Brother or Big Sister volunteer for education and supervision, and family life education and counseling.

REFERRAL FORM

From: HEALTH AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES--INTAKE

To: \_\_\_\_\_ (Agency)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NO.: \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL ATTENDING: \_\_\_\_\_

LIVES WITH: \_\_\_\_\_ RELATIONSHIP \_\_\_\_\_

REASON FOR REFERRAL: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

SPECIFIC NEEDS OF CHILD: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PREVIOUS PROGRAMS: \_\_\_\_\_

DRUG HISTORY: \_\_\_\_\_

PSYCHIATRIC/MEDICAL HISTORY \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

YOUTH COUNSELOR MAKING REFERRAL: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

PROGRAM TERMINATION DATA

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_ (AGENCY)

TO: HEALTH AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES INTAKE

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

SERVICES PROVIDED YOUTH: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PROGRESS OF YOUTH WHILE IN PROGRAM: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

WAS YOUTH REFERRED TO ANY OTHER PROGRAM? \_\_\_\_\_

FOR WHAT SERVICES? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

WHERE? \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PERSON PROVIDING SERVICES WHILE IN PROGRAM: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE RETURN TO REFERRING HRS YOUTH COUNSELOR: \_\_\_\_\_

This form should be returned to above named counselor at Health and Rehab. Services upon termination of this youth from your program.

**END**