

Juvenile Detention and Shelter Best Practices Award Official Entry Form

Attach the form to all entries. Entrants must complete all sections for the entry to be considered complete. A copy of this official entry is available electronically at www.pacounties.org.

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PROJECT INFORMATION

Title Weekend Accountability Program Start Date 9-2011

Each application must be submitted with two signatures. Place appropriate signatures on two of the lines below:



Chair of the Board of County Commissioners

Facility Chief Executive Officer 

Oversight Board (where applicable)

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

Attach a separate program narrative document to the form that addresses each of the following subject areas, and does so in the order presented below. *Entries must be typed in a Word-document, Times New Roman, 10-point type.*

A separate program narrative document must be attached to this form that addresses each of the following subject areas, and does so in the order presented below.

- A description of the identified need and the background including what programs were in place before the current project, if any, and how it led to this effort.
- A description of the project, including any evidenced-based approaches to divert individuals from further penetration into the juvenile or adult justice system, community involvement strategies, formation of stakeholder groups, county-wide planning strategies, etc.
- A description of expectations and measurable goals, including supporting data.
- A brief description of how the project was evaluated and any lessons learned.
- A brief description of the community, including a description of key stakeholders, organizations, and county departments that were involved in the project.
- A description of how the activities described in a project started in the past were altered or will be continued based on experience, including plans for leveraging additional resources.
- A description of any costs associated with the project and how it was funded; cost savings, if any, and any change in community acceptance, reductions in insurance costs, or inspection improvements that resulted from the program.

DATA ELEMENTS

Award submissions will receive consideration for outcomes or best practices supported by data. Please attach any supporting data to demonstrate the impact of the project in cost or population outcomes, or other data to demonstrate the considerations utilized in determining the scope or design of the project.

Please attach supporting documents, forms or other information that support the award entry. Entries must be typed in a Word-document, Times New Roman, 10-point type. Entries must be received by close of business on March 1, 2012. Winners will be announced during the CCAP Spring Conference, March 25 - 27, 2012.

More information: Brinda Carroll Penyak, bpenyak@pacounties.org

MCYC Weekend Accountability Program

The number of admissions to detention centers both nationally and statewide have been declining for the past several years. The number of admissions to Juvenile Detention in Pennsylvania went from 19,918 in 2006 to 16,654 in 2009; a difference of 3,264, a 16% decline.(see exhibit 1) This decline as well as the expense of staffing and maintaining secure beds has resulted in the closing of many county detention programs. In 2008, there were 23 juvenile detention centers in Pennsylvania, there are now 16. (see exhibit 2) In Montgomery County, our 36 bed Detention facility has had admissions decrease from 611 in 2006 to 430 in 2011. This represents a 29% decrease. Detention is a very costly program to run , because of mandatory staffing ratios to ensure safety and security and the low Act #148, reimbursement rate, at 50%. To staff and run empty beds in this economic climate is unthinkable, however not to sustain secure beds, can prove more costly in the long run. It is critical to maintain secure beds, because historically Detention numbers can rise and fall, and when they rise, they can almost explode overnight and centers become overcrowded immediately. An example of this was in 1999, when the Columbine tragedy occurred, and children all over the County, State and Nation were copy catting with Terroristic Threats and Bomb Threats. In Montgomery County, we had 24 beds at that time, and at one point we had over 66 children. Overcrowding causes conditions of confinement to deteriorate. It also results in the cycle of mandatory staff overtime, that causes burnout, thus turnover, and then more overtime. If there are not available secure beds in a County, overflow beds in other centers, and in converted structures, such as state hospitals are used. Many times these beds are not in the community and parents, lawyers and clergy are unable to visit their children and clients, who are many times several hours away, in a different county or even a different state, and without public transportation. So, it is imperative to keep secure beds open and viable. Therefore, one of the identified needs is to keep secure beds open and staffed, without paying for empty beds.

In 2010, a newly elected Judge, Wendy Demchick-Alloy, was assigned to the Juvenile Court Division. The Juvenile Court is located in the Montgomery County Youth Center (MCYC) building. Upon taking the bench, the Judge, a former long time prosecutor, a founder and director of the Montgomery County Child Advocacy Project, and a mother of two daughters, recognized an immediate need for accountability for the children who came before the Court. The Judge also saw the need to keep the non-violent offenders with their families in their communities and in their home schools.

Therefore, there were dual identified needs: the first to keep detention beds open and available, and secondly, holding children accountable, while diverting them from long term placement, thus saving the County money, while preventing recidivism and thus protecting the community, while using the existing resources in Detention.

After reviewing current programs in operation, both at other Detention centers and in private residential facilities, the MCYC Administrators, decided upon a weekend program, that would incorporate the BARJ principals and would be a dispositional alternative for the Court. Judge Wendy Demchick-Alloy was involved from the beginning with the planning aspect and it was designed to meet a need that she had identified. Judge Demchick-Alloy first insisted upon approval from the Juvenile Court Judges Commission (JCJC). She felt strongly that this alternative use of Detention had to be sanctioned by JCJC, before she could use it. The JCJC Executive Director, Jim Anderson, gave approval to the program, if the Judge, at a hearing placed a child in the weekend program, for a specific number of weekends. Additionally, he wanted assurances, that the children would be kept as separate as possible, from the Detention population. This disposition was to be used for children who were being considered for possible long term placement, thus effectively and successfully diverting them from placement. Mr. Anderson was fearful that it was possible, that some children, who would normally go home on probation, would be placed in the program as a sanction, and he did not want this to happen. Detention in Pennsylvania is not used as punishment. He was given these assurances, by both the Judge and the MCYC Executive Director. MCYC staff sought and received approval from the Department of Public Welfare, for this alternative use of Detention beds. The proposal was reviewed and is supported by the Montgomery County Youth Center Board of Managers, a 10 person citizen Board, appointed by the Board of Judges and County Commissioners.

Once the program was developed and approved by the Judge, JCJC, and DPW, but before implementation, direct care staff were interviewed and carefully selected for this 3 day, 40 hour work week.

These were not additional staff, but part of the current staff allocation, so there was no impact on the Budget.

MCYC staff met with the Chief JPO, his Deputy, and several Probation supervisors. During that meeting, MCYC staff, outlined the program, and described its operation. We asked for a Probation supervisor, who would be the direct liaison for the program and in turn, identified Detention Supervisor and former Probation Officer, Jed Johnson, as the MCYC point person. Trainings were then set up for all the probation officers, describing the protocol for the weekends. Jed Johnson conducted these trainings and developed a tri-fold brochure for the JPOs and also for the families of the children, who were court ordered into the program (see exhibit 3)

BARJ (Balanced and Restorative Justice) is not only part of the Mission Statement of the Juvenile Act, but the backbone of the weekend program. The MCYC weekend program embodies BARJ with Reflective Writing, Community Service, Drug and Alcohol Class, Victim Awareness Class, a Drug Test upon admission, Team Building, and a Family Component. The Weekend Accountability Program Specialists write a report on every child, every weekend, to the Judge and the assigned JPO, regarding the child's behavior, adjustment and cooperation in the program. This report is delivered to the Judge every Monday morning. The Reflective Writing starts upon admission on Friday afternoon, when the children are dropped off by their families. The topic, chosen by the Court is, "Why am I here?" The children work on their essay all weekend, after which it is reviewed by program staff for spelling, grammar, etc. The completed essay is attached to the child's behavioral report that is given to the Judge. If there are subsequent weekends, the child writes an insightful update on attitude, behavior and their weekend experience. The Judge has shared with us, her appreciation of the children's reflections. Community Service is mandatory and each child does 5 hours during the weekend. This has included, weeding, raking leaves, shoveling snow, washing cars, washing the gym and kitchen floor and much more. A one time only payment of \$25 is paid in the child's name to the Juvenile Probation Victim's Fund. The County Behavioral Health office partners with MCYC and pays for a Drug and Alcohol class to be conducted every Saturday, by a Community Agency, Lincoln Family and Youth Services. A Victim Awareness class is conducted by the Weekend Specialists, who were trained in the JCJC Victim's Curriculum by a JCJC trainer. Finally the weekend culminates in a Family component, a family de-briefing, when they come on Sunday afternoon to pick up their child.

The program started in Sept. 2011, with 6 beds for males only. It proved to be very successful and popular with both the Judge and Probation. We were asked to consider opening up additional beds for females, which we did in December after selecting and training a female staff person. Since September, we have had 74 total weekend admissions. Some of these admissions are returning children. Taking that into account, we have served 21 different boys and 6 different girls. The initial recommendation for the program was a commitment of between one and four weekends. However, some children have received up to six weekends instead of placement. The YC has paid out \$425 to the Juvenile Probation Victims' Fund for the 360 hours of community service that has been performed. The program currently accepts 12 children per weekend and runs every weekend except for major holidays, or if the YC is at capacity. The weekends are currently full through April and there is a waiting list. The number of referrals demonstrates the Courts reliance on and trust in the program.

The first goal, to keep secure detention beds open has been met through a re-allocation of resources. The second goal, to reduce long term placement and reduce recidivism through diversion, is still being evaluated. Part of the decision to commit a child to the weekend program is whether or not long term placement is being considered. If a child was not going to be placed long term, then there is no diversion. Of the 27 children that have served weekends, only 2 have recidivated, resulting in a return to MCYC. One child was sentenced to additional weekends and the other child was placed. Recidivism for this purpose is defined as someone who is re-arrested or violates probation and is returned to MCYC. Long term tracking of the child is a goal, however, we are currently only looking at juvenile arrests or violations.

An important collateral goal, is saving the County money, not necessarily the Youth Center. Diversion from placement is usually reflected in Juvenile Probation's Budget and if there is ultimate success, it would be reflected in the County Correctional Facility's Budget, with one less adult incarceration. A real life example of this cost savings is 15 year old Chelsea H, a white female probation violator. The recommendation from Probation to the Court was a residential placement at Northwestern's "Building Bridges" program. The per diem for this program is \$245. The average stay for a child is between six and nine months. At this per diem, the County spends at least \$44,000. Chelsea was instead committed to 6 weekends at the YC. The per diem at the YC is \$350 and at two days for six weekends,

costs about \$4200. The savings for the County is about \$40,000. One cannot measure the benefit that results in Chelsea remaining with her Mother and siblings, allowing her to attend counseling and staying in her home school district

A 6 month review of this program shows that it is being utilized by the Court and additionally, the goals of the program are being achieved. As mentioned before, long term tracking has not yet been developed or implemented. Some things that we have looked at and may have to change is the Family Involvement piece. Originally this was envisioned to be a mandatory "group" on Sunday afternoons, when parents come to pick up their kids. However, not all parents are able to do this, because of work or other commitments. Also, some kids actually take public transportation to report for their weekend and walk to the bus stop on Sunday afternoon. These kids are committed to fulfilling their court stipulated weekends, with or without their parents. In light of this, the family "group" has morphed into a family exit interview, where the staff person discusses the child's adjustment to the weekend. We would like to have more family involvement. We also need to consult with the Court, regarding the number of weekends that a child received. Initially, it was between 1-3. Some children are receiving up to six weekends. With the limited number of spaces, there is beginning to be a backup, we are fearful that a child could violate before they get a chance to "do" their weekends. We also need to look at some programmatic diversity for the curriculum and content for the children who receive multiple weekends.

If this program succeeds in preventing recidivism and continues to enjoy a substantial cost savings, we would have to consider continuing the program, even if Detention admissions began to climb in the future. Plans would have to be made for an alternative physical site.

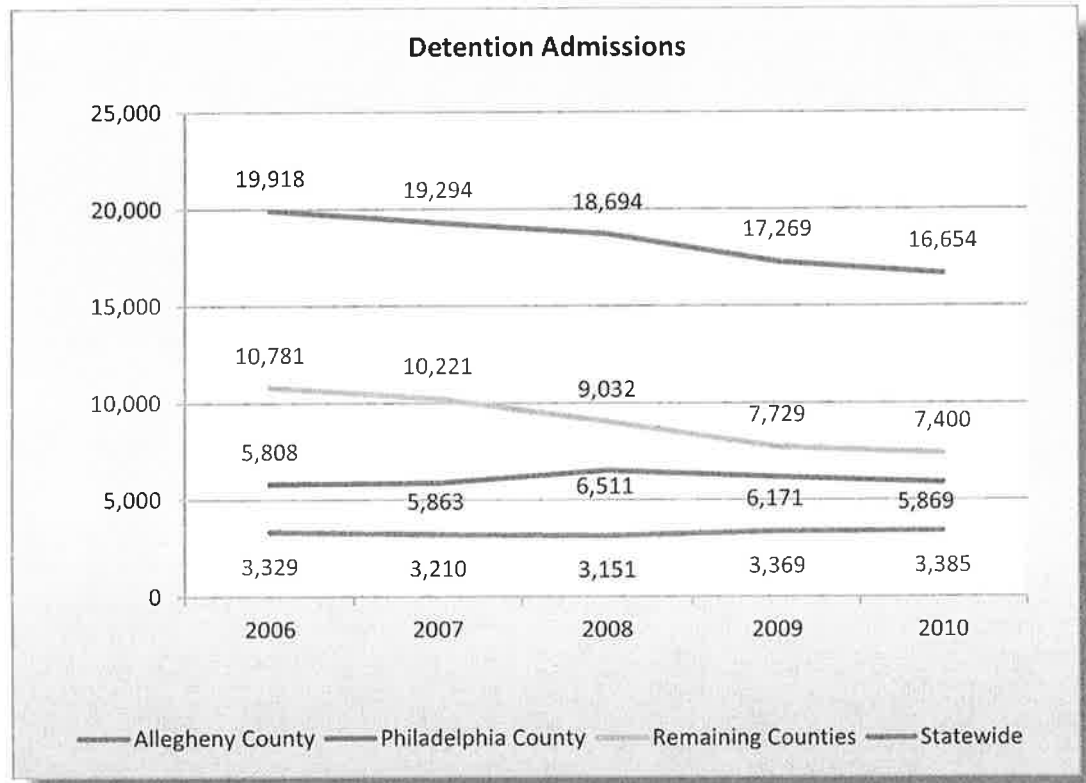
The Weekend Program data is submitted monthly to the Montgomery County Youth Center Board of Managers as an agenda item at their monthly meeting. They continue to support this "dynamic" use of Secure Detention Beds. At Budget Time, we hope to be able to report to the Commissioners the substantial cost savings for the County.

In closing, I proudly submit, the Montgomery County Youth Center Weekend Accountability Program to the County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania for its Juvenile Detention and Shelter Best Practices for the 21st Century Award.



Secure Detention Admissions, 2006-2010

Statewide, detention admissions have declined each year since 2006. This represents a 16.4% overall decrease since 2006. Admissions in all counties other than Allegheny and Philadelphia also decreased each year, representing an even more significant overall decrease – 31.4% since 2006. *Philadelphia and Allegheny County account for 35.2% and 20.3%, respectively, of all secure detention admissions.*

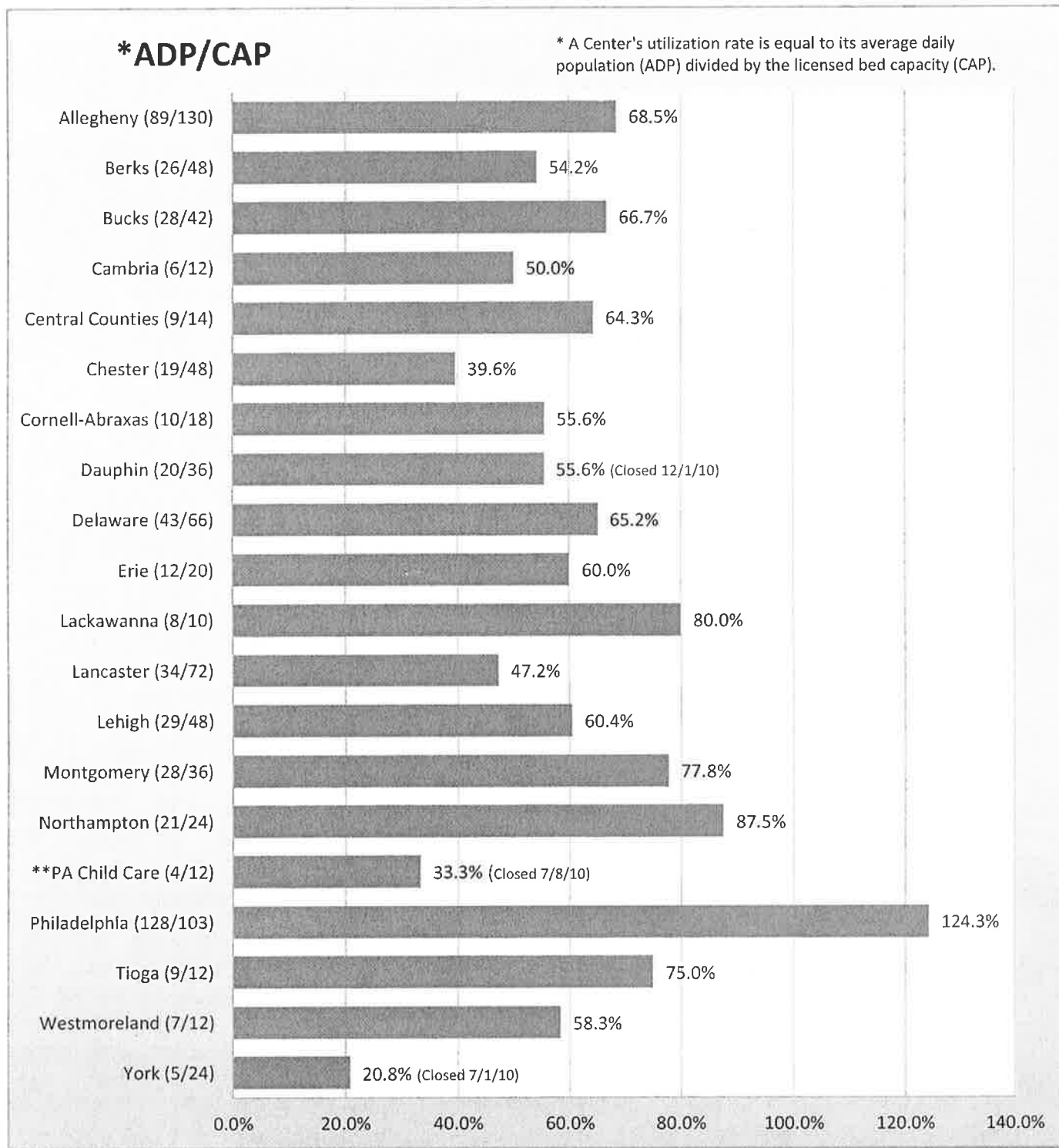


Detention admission trends in Allegheny County and Philadelphia were not as stable over this time period as in other jurisdictions. While Allegheny County showed a 5.3% decrease from 2006 to 2008, Philadelphia had a 12.1% increase in admissions. Conversely, Philadelphia showed a 9.9% decrease from 2008 to 2010, while Allegheny County had a 7.4% increase. As shown in the chart above, in 2008 Allegheny County had a low in detention admissions, while Philadelphia reported its highest number, for the time period. Overall, however, each jurisdiction yielded negligible increases in detention admissions from 2006 to 2010 – 1.7% in Allegheny County and 1.1% in Philadelphia.

	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10
STATEWIDE	-3.1	-3.1	-7.6	-3.6
ALLEGHENY	-3.6	-1.8	+6.9	+0.5
PHILADELPHIA	+0.9	+11.1	-5.2	-4.9
REMAINING COUNTIES	-5.2	-11.6	-14.4	-4.3



Utilization Rates for Pennsylvania Juvenile Detention Centers, 2010



** For years 2005-2007, this facility was referred to as Luzerne.

EXHIBIT II

Program highlights

- **Accountability**
Secure environment
- **Community Service**
- **Competency Development**
Life skills classes
Tutoring/Schoolwork
- **Drug and Alcohol Class**
Reflective writing
- **Recreational activities**
Team building exercises
- **Drug testing**
- **Written report completed and submitted Monday morning**
- **Family involvement**

Jed Johnson
Weekend Accountability
Program Administrator

Bret Thiel
Weekend Accountability
Program Specialist

Wendy Demchick-Alloy
Juvenile Court Judge

Maureen Raquet
Executive Director

Joseph Viti
Assistant Director



Montgomery County Youth Center
Weekend Accountability Program



540 Port Indian Road
Norristown, Pa 19401
610-631-1893
Fax#: 610-631-2511

Friday 5pm to Sunday 3pm

The mission of the Montgomery County Youth Center Weekend Accountability Program is to seek alternate resolutions to long-term placement for juveniles and provide an immediate and/or swift response to violations of probation.

Program Description

This is a Court Ordered weekend accountability program conducted within the Montgomery County Detention Center. MCYC is a 36 bed secure detention facility that provides an environment to maintain a juveniles' safety as well as the community's safety.



Weekend Accountability Program

Each weekend resident will report to the Montgomery County Youth Center between 4:00pm and no later than 5:00 pm on Friday. Upon admission a drug test will be administered and an orientation will be provided. Clothes and hygiene products are supplied by the Youth Center. **The only item needed to attend the weekend is schoolwork.** Ample time and tutoring is provided to complete the work.

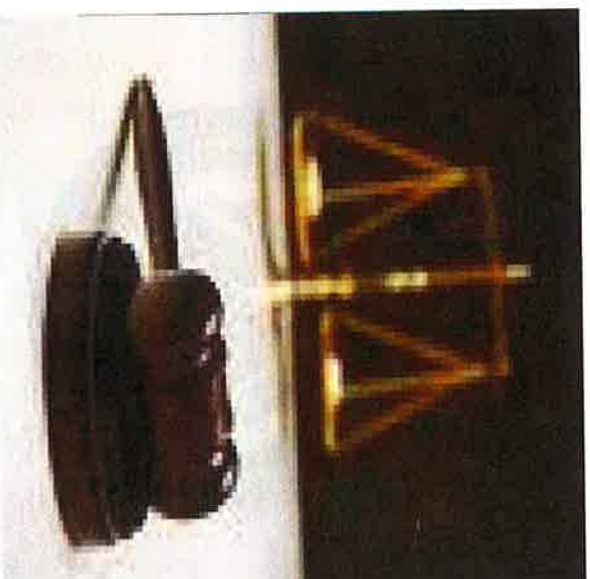
Many services are offered with an emphasis on competency development, accountability and community service. Parents are to report to the Youth Center by 2:30 pm on Sunday for a mandatory weekend debriefing and information session. At 3:00 pm the program will be complete and each weekend resident will be released to a parent or guardian.

Court reports

A Youth Center staff member is assigned to oversee and conduct the programs for the weekend residents. A report detailing the progress of each weekend resident will be written and submitted to the Judge Monday morning. Probation officers and other relevant parties will also receive copies.

Weekend Expectations

Appropriate behavior is expected at all times. The orientation process will clearly identify the rules of the program and the Youth Center. Behavior that does not adhere to the rules will be handled according to Youth Center policies. Remember, inappropriate behavior will be reported to the Judge and Probation office. If your child is ordered to attend more than one weekend alternate programming is provided.



Community
Service