

E X A M P L E    O F    P R O P O S A L    M O D E L

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS  
A STUDY AND LOCAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

A Directed Project Proposal

by

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## Introduction

Over the last decade juvenile crime has been rising at a rate faster than that of crimes committed by adults. According to the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics published by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), between 1985 and 1994 there was an overall increase of crimes committed by juveniles of 28.3%, and violent crimes showed a 75% increase (OJJDP, 1995).

Crime in general has an obvious negative impact on society. Crimes committed by our country's youth are even more disparaging, when coupled with the fact that rehabilitative efforts often fail.

The problem became significant enough to warrant government attention. In 1974 the federal government created the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), within the U.S. Department of Justice. This office is responsible for sponsoring research, providing training, and coordinating and disseminating information on juvenile justice and delinquency prevention programs.

Recent research conducted by the OJJDP concludes that the most effective efforts aimed at reducing juvenile crime, are programs that focus on prevention. Hawkins and Catalano have developed a comprehensive delinquency prevention program called the social development model, and have demonstrated it to be effective in preventing serious and violent acts of juvenile delinquency (OJJDP 1995).

The model focuses on key factors of a juvenile's existence, those being the family, school and peer influences, which have been cited as the strongest risk areas for predicting delinquency. Programs that address these three factors in conjunction, have shown a greater impact on the juvenile, thus a greater deterrent effect. This is done in various ways, including family counseling, parent/teacher/student programs, and conflict resolution efforts for peers.

The primary purpose of this project is to develop a delinquency prevention program that is based on the theory of the social development model, but also includes principals found to be effective in other programs. This project includes a research paper reviewing various community based youth intervention programs that have been implemented in different areas of the country. The paper will include an outline and study guides for the program to be implemented in Evansville. The goals of the local program are to educate youth, creating a bond with the community which will result in lower delinquency rates.

#### Review of Literature

A review of the literature reveals that of the delinquency efforts that fail, most are based on a negative or punishment type approach (OJJDP, 1993). Studies indicate that young people respond better when exposed to positive reinforcement, thus the prevention aspect to juvenile delinquency prevention affords that opportunity.

Areas that can be targeted for the creation of a positive environment for children include safe, effective schools;

strong, involved families; availability of youth development programs; and community policing (OJJDP, 1995).

All of these factors can be found in the social development model. While programs differ in style and implementation, the procedures that appear to be delivering the best results all share a common theme of a comprehensive approach to juvenile delinquency prevention.

The comprehensive approach theory is being applied in many different community programs. The juvenile justice system itself has long been a proponent of this style of service in dealing with young offenders on probation for crimes already committed. From a prevention perspective, programs such as the locally available Drug And Alcohol Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program have long been offered in the public school system.

Some advocates of this approach indicate that it is more in keeping with the juvenile court's mission, based on a philosophy of determinism rather than free will, that juveniles commit crimes as a natural result of antecedent causes, and that the state's role as the "ultimate parent" is to heal the hurt child rather than to punish the criminal offender (Reamer & Shireman, 1986). This traditional philosophy has come under fire as the nature of juvenile crime continues to grow more violent and senseless.

When applying the social development model to prevention programs, at-risk youth can be targeted as opposed to those already "in the system". Early intervention is necessary to increase the success of the prevention program. When targeting at-risk youth, attention should be paid to those who are failing

at school, have family or school problems, or those who have been involved in minor offenses such as curfew violations and shoplifting (OJJDP, 1997).

The research reviewed is clear, juvenile delinquency is a community based problem that must be addressed in a community based manner, which may, and often does include a multi-agency approach. To put it simply, "It takes a village to raise a child" (Clinton, 1996).

#### Statement of the Problem

Juvenile crime is a problem that touches every member of society, including the juveniles, their victims, their families, schools and taxpayers. Effective methods for controlling the problem must become a priority in the national investment of public safety.

The purpose of creating a multi-dimensional prevention program is to increase a child's perception of his role in and relationship to society as a whole, via the connections with peers and schools, the two biggest forces in a child's life outside of his/her family. In addition to broadening the societal connection, the program must strive to educate youth on the responsibilities inherent in community life. If the bond between young people and their community can be strengthened then the risk factors for delinquency can be reduced.

#### Significance of the Problem

Each year the statistics on the number of crimes committed by juveniles increases. This is true locally as well as at the

national level. In addition, the number of juvenile victims also increases.

In the ten year period from 1985 to 1994, the national murder rate committed by juveniles rose 150%, robbery rose 57% and aggravated assaults saw a 97% increase (OJJDP, 1995). At the state level Indiana saw a 32% increase in juvenile court cases between 1989 and 1995 and the juvenile corrections population in state operated facilities increased 36% between 1992 and 1996. If left unchecked, some experts feel that a "predator class" of youths will be created (Okeson, 1997).

Results from 1997 juvenile crimes forums convened by the State Clerk of Courts and conducted in several cities all over Indiana indicate that some of the most common concerns of law enforcers and youth service workers was the lack of appropriate aftercare services and prevention programs.

One of the major appeals of prevention programs is that they are generally more cost effective than intervention or aftercare programs that deal with youth already involved in the justice system. Currently the Indiana Youth Service Bureau is the only state wide agency designed for delinquency intervention and prevention.

#### Assumptions

The assumption is made that providing juveniles with a diverse educational program involving the local police, school system, government officials and various youth service or youth oriented organizations will assist in creating a bond between youth and their community. It is further assumed that those who

have a bond or who have a responsibility to their community will less likely choose to commit acts of crime and violence against that community.

It can also be assumed that youth who participate in such a prevention program will be better prepared to resist temptations to join in with others who chose to violate laws, thus preventing them from becoming part of the growing number of juvenile delinquents.

#### Delimitation

The major delimitation of this program is the number of participants. A small population of juveniles, roughly 25, will be allowed to take part in the pilot program, which is scheduled for the fall of 1998. This small sampling may not adequately represent the population of the community's youth.

In addition, follow-up on the participants' behavior will not be immediately available, therefore the success of the program will not be readily determined. Immediate feedback such as the juveniles enthusiasm and personal impressions will be documented via surveys done at the end of the program. A follow-up survey can be done one year later with the assistance of the schools and parents.

#### Procedures

The procedures will be conducted as follows to ensure completion of the program in a reasonable time frame. Before the local program is developed, a review of literature focusing on other prevention programs in use around the nation will be

completed. Interviews with local youth care providers will be done to ascertain what needs can be addressed in the sessions. The interviews may be done via the telephone or in person, depending on the situation. The focus will be on what has been proven effective in other prevention efforts.

This information along with a program schedule and lesson plans will be completed in research paper form and submitted prior to implementation of the local youth delinquency prevention series.

#### Time Action Plan

The development of the research paper will take approximately 8 weeks, culminating with the local prevention program will run approximately 4 weeks, with one session per week.

The research paper will review other community initiatives that have proven successful in delinquency prevention. The local D.A.R.E. program will be thoroughly examined to eliminate any repeating of information. The research paper will conclude with the outline and agenda for the implementation of a youth delinquency prevention program.

Other factors to consider in the time frame of completing this project are the availability of those who will be conducting certain sessions (law enforcement officials, local government officials, youth care providers), as well as location availability, and enlisting the aid of the local school system from which the initial group of juvenile attenders will be selected.

The final phase of the project will be to analyze the success of the program in educating youth. This will be done as previously described by surveys at the conclusion of the final session, and again with a follow-up survey approximately one year later.

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