

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview: Butte County Probation is providing direct service facilitation of the Strengthening Families Program curriculum integrated within our Wraparound program.

Challenge: Probation youth who have been identified as a low-risk to re-offend, but who have high needs (drug and alcohol abuse history of the minor and/or parents, housing instability, history of abuse or neglect, family dysfunction) were noticeably underserved, and in our opinion, still in need of community services to support their families. Butte County Probation has been participating in the California Well-Being Project, of which Wraparound is the established intervention for all participating Probation Departments. Butte County Probation has integrated the Strengthening Families Program curriculum within intervention. The Strengthening Families Program is an internationally recognized program that focuses on family skills training and has been found to significantly reduce problem behaviors, delinquency, and alcohol and drug abuse in children. This is an evidenced based program which had historically been facilitated in church, school settings, and most recently by our local Behavioral Health agency. Our challenge was to garner buy-in from participating families, keeping in mind that historically speaking, the relationship with probation officers has been viewed as adversarial by many probationers and their family members.

Innovative Solution: We have integrated the Strengthening Families Program curriculum into the Wraparound services provided.

This scientifically tested curriculum helps:

- Parents/Caregivers learn nurturing skills that support their children.
- Teach how to effectively discipline and guide their children.
- Give children a healthy future, orientation, and an increased appreciation of their parents/caregivers
- Teach youth skills for dealing with stress and peer pressure.

This 14-week program consists of 3 hour weekly blocks, beginning with a sit-down family dinner. Staff model and assist families during mealtime with communication skills that are introduced as session topics throughout program. After dinner, break-out sessions begin and are divided into a teen group, parent group, and sibling group. Childcare is provided in the event toddler-aged children are participating. The weekly session curriculum is delivered to each group for approximately one hour. At the end of the evening, the entire group reconvenes for family time, at which time families practice the skills they learned in their individual group sessions (with the assistance of program staff). Participants are given “home practice” and have access to the facilitation staff throughout the course of the program to clarify or remediate any portion of the curriculum they may struggle with.

Originality: It is our understanding we are the first Probation Department in the State of California to utilize probation staff exclusively to facilitate the Strengthening Families Program curriculum.

Cost Effectiveness: By working with the whole family evidence shows that the long-term benefit to the community results in less future family interaction with the criminal justice system.

Results: Preliminary feedback has been positive from the families who have participated in the program. The long-term progress and success of the individual family has yet to be determined, however, every effort is being made to insure fidelity to this program. In our most recent cycle, we had 100% of our participants complete and graduate the Strengthening Families Program.

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¹ Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/sfp10-14/content/curriculum>