

**What services will be provided by the Sonoma Police
Department to meet the needs of the “at-risk” youth and their
families through the year 2008?**

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Introduction

The twentieth century has seen a wide swing in the pendulum of the American society's attitude towards children and in particular to those in contact with the juvenile justice system. In the early part of this century it was not uncommon have labor sweat shops staffed with children. These deplorable work standards lead to the enactment of many laws to protect children from unsafe work and living conditions. In response to those harsh surroundings all of the states have enacted laws to protect children from physical as well as sexual abuse. In the mid part of the century, laws and court decisions were also made to protect children from a potentially abusive criminal justice system. These protections include the right to have a separate court system from adult offenders.

However, in recent times, many states, including California, are changing their laws to allow for the prosecution of juveniles who commit serious crimes to have those proceedings take place in "adult" courts with "adult" penalties.

Youthful offenders also enjoy a privilege in law that encourages a system designed to divert them from entering "the system". These diversion programs are designed to address the risk factors that can cause a juvenile to commit crimes as well as hopefully directing them to a more appropriate behavior pattern so that criminal activity is not their routine performance. In most areas throughout the State, diversion plans are often directed at counseling the "at-risk" youth and their families. These services can be expensive both in terms of financial impacts as well as having time and labor impacts.

The challenge for the law enforcement community is to continue to seek creative ways to meet the needs of providing diversion services to "at-risk" youth and their

families. This challenge can be even more acute in jurisdictions with smaller communities and limited resources. The Sonoma Police Department is actively taking steps to develop a creative way to address the issues of youthful “at-risk” offenders. Our work is intended to establish partnerships within the community to address the needs of these families.

This work can not be viewed as a temporary approach to this issue. It must be developed with a vision that will last for years. This project will address a process that will respond to the desire to provide responsible and practical diversion programs that address the needs of our community through 2008.

Background

Sonoma county is located 45 miles north of San Francisco. In many ways it is an ideal location as a suburb community for the San Francisco Bay Area. It has many rural and bucolic regions. It also has an urbanized core that has primarily developed along the main highway, U.S. 101, that runs through the middle of the county. In the southeastern corner of the county is the Sonoma Valley. Many consider this area to be the heart of California’s premier wine country. The Valley also prides itself on it’s rich history as the birthplace for the State of California.

The City of Sonoma is the commerce center for the Sonoma Valley. Within the city’s 2.5 square miles are a regional hospital, three neighborhood shopping centers, the schools, hotels and businesses that provide for the 9,000 residents of Sonoma. Surrounding the City of Sonoma is the greater Sonoma Valley. This area is also called the Valley of the Moon. The 140 square miles of the unincorporated Sonoma Valley contain

the vineyards, dairy lands, rural as well as a residential area with a total population of 35,000 residents.

Law Enforcement services are provided to the residents of the Sonoma Valley by the Sonoma Police Department and the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department. The two agencies, due to their geographic location, are closely connected. While each agency has its unique identity, they also share a common vision. Both agencies attempt to provide the best service to the community given their resources and staffing.

As is the case in other areas of California, those that participate in criminal activity often do so regardless of the political boundaries the area. Suspects involved in crimes within the city limits are often involved in criminal activity in the unincorporated areas. This is true for adult as well as juvenile suspects. In particular regard to the juvenile offenders, both agencies have made a top priority to share information and coordinate resources to address the needs of this group.

In 1995, bookings and retention of subjects at the Sonoma County Juvenile Detention Hall reached an all time high. There was an average population of 130 juveniles in a facility that was designed to hold 100. As a result of this overcrowded condition, an advisory board made certain recommendations to address this problem. Included in those recommendations was the direction to form community based systems that would be structured within the geographic boundaries of the school district. These local groups would formulate strategies and develop collaborative efforts at the community level to help prevent or reduce the number of children entering the dependency and juvenile justice systems.

Current Response to Juvenile Offenders

As stated earlier, the Sonoma Police Department and The Sonoma Sheriff's Department have established a workable system for sharing information concerning juvenile activity. Input on juvenile activity also came from the school officials who regularly met with the law enforcement representatives. While counseling services were available as a viable diversion for many youthful offenders, there was often a waiting list as well as lengthy delays prior to accessing these services.

In the review of the names of those involved in criminal and inappropriate behavior, often times the same names of juveniles would be found among all of the participants. These offenders were often acting out at school and over utilizing those resources as well as acting out criminally, bringing them to the attention of the law enforcement agencies. In these instances, two common themes would surface:

- 1) A lack of overall coordination in the case management of the juvenile offender.
- 2) The frustration that comes from the feeling of not being able to successfully address the causes of the inappropriate behavior.

To respond to this common frustration, and in a spirit of collaboration and team cooperation, the Schools, the Police, and Sheriff's Department agreed to form and fund a Youth and Family Services Coordinator. This position would help manage the case work of juvenile offenders. This position would also help coordinate and develop new and alternative diversion services within the community.

To accomplish the goal of providing new services it was necessary to find willing providers of these services. This process actually was made rather simple in that we were fortunate to have an active yet un-tapped (by Law Enforcement) resource of mental health providers in the Sonoma Valley.

Our department met with these service providers that were willing to donate their talents (or at least work on a low sliding scale paid for by the participating families) with various projects. Out of this pool of providers has come the following diversion specialty groups:

Parenting Skills

Blended and Divorced Family

Grandparents parenting again

Fathers as single parents/Father and son relationships

Self Esteem groups for young women

Drug/Alcohol Experimental Use and Abuse

Anger Management

Theft Awareness

Stress Reduction

Mentoring Programs

Organized meetings and tours of the State Prison at San Quentin

These specialty groups will provide additional diversion options for the Sonoma Valley. These newer services will hopefully relieve the current system of the lengthy waiting period as well as provide more directive and specific treatments for the specific offenders.

Although this program has just begun for our community, the challenge that is addressed in this project will be to look to the future of this program and the types of services that can be provided in that future.

Futures Research

In identifying the types of services that the police department would provide to “at-risk” families in the future. It was necessary to identify the kinds of needs that would exist in the future. There is an initial assumption that the police department would continue to develop programs within the community to identify those service providers who are willing to provide for the needs of the community. There also was the agreed assumption that many of the issues we are addressing today will also more than likely still exist in the future. Drug and Alcohol use will not likely disappear nor will petty thefts or fighting completely vanish from our culture.

The ideas generated for this project came from a futures oriented process known as the Nominal Group Technique or NGT. In this process, informed community leaders provide their input and direction to future Issues and Events as it relates to providing service to “at-risk” families. This group process helps to clarify the direction and possible future for our service providing. The participants in this process included mental health providers, law enforcement officers, youth community organizers, and representatives from the Hispanic community.

This group specifically examined the trends and issues as they relate to the types of services that might be provided to individuals and families that are “at-risk” of entering the juvenile justice system. The group also identified the specific trends that they felt would

have the greatest impact on the services that would be provided and the manner in which they will be provided. This group also firmly believes that the process of providing these services is a good thing for the community. They generally were optimistic about the future and that the risks of failure by any one service provider would likely be balanced with the addition of another.

The NGT process identified the following “Key” Trends:

- Latino Involvement in the Community

This trend was identified as meaning that the Latino Community would become more vocal and participatory in the community. It also meant that services would need to be tailored more for this group. There is a current scarcity of resources for the Latino Community in Sonoma. The greatest concern is in finding service providers that are fluent in Spanish. Those providers that are fluent in Spanish are already worked to their capacity.

- School Responsiveness

This trend was identified as meaning the schools would take on a more active role as being more responsive to the needs of parents, students and teachers. This response would come from a stronger demand made by the public for more accountability on the part of the school.

- Violent Behavior

This trend was identified as meaning the perception and/or the reality of juveniles committing more acts of serious violence. This would include assaults with weapons, or other assaultive behavior resulting in serious injury or death.

- Shift from Government to Private Service Providers

This trend was identified as meaning a decline in government provided services that would create a void that would need to be filled by the private sector.

- Economic Variance

This trend was identified as meaning the margin between the economic groups in the community. The impact of this trend on services is seen in the need for more government services for those who are unable to afford private suppliers.

The following table (Table 1) is an analysis of the most significant trends that were identified in this process. This analysis is a statistical rating of the trends at four key points in time: 5 years ago, today, 5 years from now and 10 years from now. The rating for the “Today” column was set at 100 for comparison purposes. The final column is a rating of the concern that this trend will have on the issue of service providing. A low number meant that the trend would have little to no impact. A higher number means the trend would likely have an impact on the services that would be provided.

Table 1

**Trend
Summary
Table**

Trend	-5 years	Today	+ 5 years	+ 10 years	Concern (1-10)
Latino Involvement	50	100	140	200	7
School Response	80	100	105	110	2
Violent Behavior	70	100	130	160	5
Shift to Private Suppliers	80	100	140	160	4
Economic Impact	70	100	125	140	6

After the identification of the trends related to service providing, our group identified specific events and their likelihood of occurrence.

The NGT identified the following “Key” Events:

- Daytime Curfew Ordinance

This event was seen as the creation of a city/county ordinance that would address school attendance problems. The intent of the local ordinance would allow for a local intervention. Although this process is gaining momentum in some parts of California, there are organized movements that oppose its adoption. The event was identified as being significant in that it would provide a new tool for identification of those “at-risk” of school failure. It is hoped that early interventions can be provided to assist this group.

- Organized youth gang activity

This event was seen as a threshold event. This would not include the activity of the gang wannabee, but rather the criminal activity of an organized and structured youth gang. Although this type of activity has been identified in larger cities, the smaller Sonoma Valley has perhaps avoided this type of visible criminal inclination.

- Teenage suicide pact

This event was viewed as a corollary to the youth gang activity. But this behavior would have the anger and confusion directed inward in a pact of self destruction.

- Major “Hate Crime”

Although hate crimes have already occurred in our area, fortunately they do not seem to have an organized basis behind them. This event was defined as having a strong involvement by an organized group of racists.

- Major “System Failure” of a key service provider

This event was intended to define the failure by either negligence or financial collapse of one of the key providers in the area of service providing. Examples of the types of failure included the misdiagnosed response to an “at-risk” family resulting in further injury, loss of life or great property damage. It also included a change in philosophy in the leadership of the key players resulting in a shift away from community involvement and participation.

The following table (Table 2) is an analysis of the key events. The column labeled “Probable Year 1st exceeds 0” is a prediction of when this future event will first occur. The other columns labeled “+ 5 years” and “+10 years” are the probability ratings that the event will have occurred by that time. The “Impact” column was a rating given the event on whether it will have an impact on the issue of providing service. A high number indicates a greater likelihood of the event having an impact.

Table 2

**Event
Summary
Table**

Event	Probable Year 1st exceeds 0	+ 5 years	+ 10 years	Impact (1-10)	+ or -
Daytime Curfew	1	80%	90%	7	+
Organized Gang	3	70%	95%	4	+
Teenage Suicide	4	20%	30%	5	+
Hate Crime	3	50%	80%	6	+
System Failure	4	20%	30%	8	-

Daytime Curfew was viewed as a future legislative event that is likely to first occur sometime this first year. It is believed to have an 80% probability of occurrence within 5 years and a 90% probability of occurrence within 10 years. When this legislation is

implemented, the relative impact will be high and it is believed to have a positive influence on the ability to provide new and appropriate services.

Future research involves asking many “What if...?” questions. The analysis of the impact on the trends based on the occurrence of an event is known as the Cross Impact Analysis. The following table (Table 3) is a descriptive analysis of the listed events and the corresponding trends.

Table 3

Cross Impact Analysis (1-5)(+/-)

Event	Trends				
	Latino Involvement	School Involvement	Violent Behavior	Shift in Services	Economic Impacts
Daytime Curfew	1+	4+	3+	1+	1-
Organized Gang	4+	3+	5+	1+	4+
Teenage Suicide	1-	4+	1-	1-	2-
Hate Crime	2-	3+	4+	1-	2+
System Failure	1-	2-	2-	4+	1-

This table shows that the group believes that should a Daytime curfew occur, then it will likely have a positive impact on the Latino Involvement in the community. However the influencing degree is not considered to be great. The group also believes that should a Daytime curfew occur, it will likely have a great impact on the School Involvement.

The matter of an organized gang activity had the most consistent impact on the listed trends of all the events that were rated. The group felt that this issue would likely result in an increased response to all of the listed trends. The greatest impact was felt in

an obvious concern for an increase in violent behavior. Also rated as likely to result were both an increased response in the involvement of the Latino community as well as the belief that a widening margin would exist between economic groups in the community. It is also significant to note that of all of the listed events, organized gang activity was rated as having the greatest likelihood of occurrence.

These charts and the data contained in them present a rather dry look at the results of the future research as seen through the eyes of the participants in the group. Another way to view the future is to present it in story format. This format is referred to as “Future Scenarios”. The following scenarios are intended to present a best case, worst case and midway case of the future of the services as provided to “at-risk” families. The highlighted areas come from the NGT process.

Future Scenarios

Best Case

On January 15, 2008, shortly after 4:30 p.m. **Victor Sanchez** entered his home. His voice recognition alarm system automatically de-activated the internal alarm and security system. It was an unusually long 6 hour work day for Victor. His children would be arriving soon from the **Sonoma Valley Boys and Girls Club** and he needed to get dinner ready. He scanned the menu display on the viewing terminal at his kitchen counter and selected a balanced meal from the automated home-chef appliance.

While the auto-chef prepared the meals, Victor scanned the afternoon news report off the internet. This report was interrupted by an electronic message from the Sonoma

Valley Police Department. **Victor had seen these types of messages before and as a therapist with a specialty in adolescent behavior, he had worked often with the department.**

The message had the usually heading: Attention Dr. Sanchez, the Sonoma Valley Police Department is requesting your services. After the usual three page disclaimer concerning confidentiality of this information, Dr. Sanchez scanned down to the issue at hand: **The Sonoma Valley High School** had uncovered an apparently active group of students that they feared would be involved in a **suicide pact**. This information was uncovered when one of teachers had the school computer scan the book reports from her Modern English Class. The computer, using the latest in psycho-analytical software was properly set to scan for psychological assessments, as was **standard now at all schools in California**. Three students in this class had a high rating in the potential self-destructive modality. This caused an immediate concern at the school and they did not hesitate to contact the **Youth and Family Services coordinator at the Sonoma Valley Police Department**.

There is an urgency to these kinds of incidents and acting swiftly and appropriately was essential. Dr. Sanchez responded immediately to the message and an interlink video conference was established with the school, Dr. Sanchez and the Sonoma Valley Police. This was an unusual event for this area, but it appears to have been properly assessed by the school. Dr. Sanchez requested copies of student's reports, as well as access to other files available on these students. The data was electronically transferred.

Dr. Sanchez felt the most appropriate response would be to schedule a meeting with these students at the counseling offices. He contacted his **crisis team** and asked

them to meet him at 5:15 at his office. He requested assistance from the Police in finding the students. He stressed that he had hoped they would voluntarily come to this meeting but if necessary the usual psychiatric holding procedures could apply.

An alert message was sent out to the monitors in the Police cars. Within minutes the students had been located near the Plaza fountain. They trusted the police officers, that responded to this call. The officers had known these kids since the 3rd grade when they gave bicycle safety classes to them. The officers were sensitive and caring in their approach to kids. The kids fully appreciated the response and the opportunity to discuss their concerns.

They met with the team that Dr. Sanchez had assembled. An initial assessment identified some key areas for **future workshops for the kids as well as supplemental parenting classes for their parents**. Dr. Sanchez summed it up in his final report. These kids were not being heard by their parents or their peers. They were attempting to reach out and make a statement. Dr. Sanchez believed he had resolved a potentially dangerous situation. The monitoring of the students will continue and services will be available for them. **It was the quick thinking and sensitive team work that really brought about the effective closure of this incident.**

Future Scenarios

Worst Case

On May 5, 2008, shortly before noon, the organizers for the annual Cinco de Mayo parade were making the final arrangements on the floats prior to beginning the

festivities. This joyful celebration was soon disrupted by the **marauding gang of punks** on motorized in-line skates. They were known as the Neo-skinned Knees. They took their name from the characteristic damage done from the high speed falls that often occurred on this motorized version of a once peaceful activity.

This group had specialized in **anti-social and repugnant racist behavior**. They got their kicks from disrupting community gatherings and by a **violent display of hatred of almost anything**. As they approached the lead float, they released their weapons of disruption. It was a modified molotov cocktail device. This one was filled with a caustic corrosive. The chemical hit its target and was burning the skin and eyes of those in the area. "This land is my land," they shouted, "not yours.", as they sped away in their skates. They disrupted the parade and caused injury to over 30 people.

The Police were only able to capture two of the estimated 25 gang members. All of them were in the 13 to 15 year age group. **All were supposed to be in school today but no one seemed to want to enforce the old daytime curfew law**. Fortunately, there were two that missed the curb jump and hit the ground hard during their attempted escape. They were treated for their injuries to their knees and released to the police. These juvenile delinquents had been arrested before for similar crimes. Nothing seemed to get their attention or direct them to a more productive behavior.

In checking with the booking desk at juvenile hall, they were denied an "in-house" booking since there were no fatalities from their attack. "Cite them out to a diversion group.", was the message from the desk officer. The officers grumbled out loud that nothing would be accomplished with the diversion group. These kids will fail the diversion and be out terrorizing our community before the weekend. They all seemed to

acknowledge the truth to their dilemma. **“When will somebody fix this problem?”**, they muttered to themselves.

Future Scenarios

Midway Case

The Director of the Youth and Family Services Division of the Sonoma Police Department scanned her scheduling book. She noted that next Tuesday, September 2, 2008, marked the beginning of the new school year. This was the second year of the new school calendar with the modification of the schedule to increase in the number of school days. **It seems the School Board had been working on this for at least 10 years.** While September was just a week away, she felt it could not come any sooner. The summer had been long and hot in Sonoma. Juvenile activity was at an all time high. There were over 200 juvenile arrests since the close of the school year in late June. Mostly petty offenses including some alcohol related incidents. She was pleased that only 10 offenders needed booking at the juvenile hall. There were 8 from the East-side gang that were involved in a brutal hate crime that put two men in the hospital. Two others were booked for probation violations as a result of repeated drug sales. **It was somewhat sad to think that had juvenile hall kept those 8 offenders in custody when they first vandalized the home of the men, the aggravated battery might not have occurred.** But it seems that nobody pays attention to misdemeanor crimes anymore, well almost nobody.

Youth and Family Services pays attention to all juvenile crime in the valley, felonies as well as misdemeanors. She was right when she wanted Juvenile Probation to pay more attention to this **“gang of 8”** even though their crime was considered light, at

first. She knew they were capable of doing more harm if left un-checked. Oh well, perhaps they will listen next time.

It has been 10 years since she started in the Y&FS division at the Police Department. There were many accomplishments of which she could be proud, to be certain. She had a solid reputation in the county for developing a model program for community volunteers. The program had also received awards for the successful development of diversion groups for misdemeanor complaints. **Perhaps her highest achievement was the development of the School and Family Partnership (SFP) Program.** This program was designed to help coordinate counseling resources for both the school and the families. The program was designed to assist both the school and the parents in identifying and correcting behavior problems. The program's greatest successes have dealt with issues of anger, gang involvement, substance abuse, and parental responsibility.

In checking her schedule further she noted that she had an appointment with the patrol supervisors to discuss the new enforcement of the daytime curfew law, the law that was recently adopted. "Oh well, many good things take a long time to develop.", she mused.

Strategic Planning

What does all of this "futures research" mean for us today? Well, the truth is it means absolutely nothing. It means nothing, unless we plan to respond to our future vision. If we plan for our vision, we often have a better control of it.

Strategic Planning is a process to bring about the anticipations of an unknown future to bear on today's decisions. It is a systematic way to create and manage a desirable future.

“Plans may be useless, but planning is indispensable.”

General Dwight Eisenhower

Defining the Future

The basis for a strategic plan is to start with a vision of the future. This is the process that the NGT participants worked at defining. They examined the possibility of future trends and events and its possible impact on the world of tomorrow. This process does not complete the strategic plan, it does however provide it some direction.

The process continues with an analysis of the current assessment of where we are relative to the desired future. This assessment is an examination of our desired goals as well as an assessment of our ability to achieve those goals. The ability to achieve the goals is a measure of our commitment as well as a measure of the commitment of other stakeholders in this process.

Stakeholders

Who are those stakeholders? They are the individuals and groups that are impacted by what we do as well as those individuals and groups who can impact what we

do. These are the people who will make the process a success. They also include the people who can derail the success of this project.

In this issue, the following people have been identified as stakeholders:

The patrol officers

The school teachers and counseling staff

The service providers in our community that are working with us

The service providers that are unable to work with us

“At-risk” families

The community

The City Staff

The City Council

The County Officials

The Probation Department

The managers of the department

Mission Statement

There is an additional element of the strategic plan that needs consideration and agreement: The Mission Statement. The purpose of the mission statement is to define the area of operation, express the values and beliefs of the group, provide foundation for strategies and decisions, build commitment, guide behavior, and insure consistency. There is a general need for the stakeholders to agree to this mission statement.

Develop Key Strategies

In this process an action plan is assembled. The development of key strategies for the future should not be the continuation of the same strategies of the past. It should include plans to increase successful elements of the operation as well as methods of improving the delivery system. The NGT process identified key events and trends for the future. The development of the strategies should attempt to address those trends and events.

Implement the Plans

The plans cannot remain on the shelf, they must be put into practice. At this phase, it is the test of the strength of the elements of the program. The stakeholders will be involved and new stakeholders may be identified as the plans get underway. When starting with something new, it is recommended to start with a plan to that is likely to lead to a successful beginning. The process of implementation also will require a process to fine tune the program.

Feedback and Control

In this phase of the Strategic plan, an evaluation of the plan as well as strategies to modify the plan, should that be necessary, need to be designed. While there are traditional methods of evaluating the success of a program, there are also non-traditional measures of success. Some traditional measures include the quantifiable aspects such as a measure of the number of referrals made to juvenile hall or the number of arrests of juveniles. The

measure of non-traditional evaluation methods is not quantified by the numbers of arrests or referrals that are made. Non-traditional methods of evaluating the program's success would include the direction and tools provided to families as they participate in therapeutic counseling.

Impact on Future Services

The futures research that was conducted via the Nominal Group Technique has provided a basis to help define the kinds of future services that will be provided for "at-risk" families. Of course, futures research is not a crystal ball into the future. There is a possibility, although not likely, that an unforeseen event could change the entire nature of police services to "at-risk" families. Barring a remote event and assuming the validity of the NGT process the services in our future will continue to address specific needs that present themselves.

The emerging concerns that surfaced in the NGT revolved around the following issues: gang activity, violent behavior towards others, self-destructive behavior, and limited government services. In many ways, the work that has just begun with diversion specialty groups mentioned earlier in this paper are on the right track to address the dawning issues of tomorrow. In particular, the services directed towards Anger Management, Mentoring Programs, and Parenting Skills appear to be aptly suited to these future concerns.

The use of volunteer service providers from the private sector blends in well with the shifting and reduced services provided by government providers. Our current weakness as well as an area of significant importance is found in addressing the needs of

the Hispanic community. In many ways, this process has helped focus our attention on this current deficiency.

Implications for the Community

There are some people in our society that feel it is important to provide alternative services for youthful offenders. There are also those that feel the system should be directed at a more punitive program. For this latter group, there is no doubt little that can be done to convince them of the value of diversion services. However one feels about these alternative programs, one thing is clear, for the people living in the Sonoma area, diversion services for “at-risk” families will continue into the foreseeable future. They will exist because at this time (and hopefully for future times) there is a driving energy within the service providing community to supply the energy needed to sustain them. There is also a heavily burdened judicial system that cannot effectively absorb the existing number of youthful offenders. While it is possible that the judicial system could be expanded, both financially and with staff resources, so that it could accept the case load of youthful offenders, it does not seem likely. The success of this program then seems to be dependent upon the good will and support of the community members and professional that are willing to provide assistance to “at-risk” families.

Implications for Department Leadership

This examination of the future services for “at-risk” youth and their families provides Law Enforcement managers an opportunity to make a current assessment, as well as plan for a future response, for services to this group. Leadership in this area is not found by ignoring the “at-risk” youth or their families. It is found in creating dialogue

with the community, establishing partnerships with service providers and creating an open atmosphere where schools, families, law enforcement, and the community have an opportunity to participate in the solution to the risk factors for these families.

In seeking to define the types of future services that will be provided to “at-risk” youth and their families a curious future was seen for the Sonoma Valley. There were many events that were discussed at the NGT meeting that did not make the top list of future events that would impact the community. These included issues of teen pregnancy, teenage alcohol/drug abuse, “gateway” criminal behavior resulting in early intervention and diversion, failure in the education programs resulting in a high dropout rate, as well as properly addressing the behavior problems that can arise with being in a “divorced” and/or “blended” family.

It is interesting to note that our current response in services that are provided to “at-risk” youth and their families seems to focus on many of these lesser issues and events. It seems clear that if we stay on this course, then we will miss the future needs.

Much like the stories listed in the future scenarios, our ability to provide services will be assisted by advances in technologies, greater understanding of human behavior, and continued partnerships with the community as well as the other service providers of the community. The challenge for leadership is not just to build a future like the above described version in the “best case scenario”. It is perhaps best to focus on avoiding a future world depicted in the “worst case scenario”.

While it is certain, no one has that precise view into the world of tomorrow, it is certain that if we are to be the leaders of tomorrow, we must be open to new issues as well as be willing to respond to the challenges of new problems.

Recommendations

“Marty, the future is what you make it.”

“Doc” Emmett Brown

The process of developing a model for service to “at-risk” youth and their families has an economic and pragmatic driving force. There just is not enough room at the juvenile hall to house all juvenile offenders. There is also has a philosophical force that is perhaps more compelling. The role of a police department should be more than one of merely enforcing the laws by identifying and arresting the suspects.

We are in an era of “Community Policing”. In this era, we build partnerships with the community, we collaborate with new and often under utilized people and resources. We recognize that law enforcement does not, nor can it, have the answers to all the questions. We recognize that in trying to provide services to the “at-risk” youth and their families we must acknowledge that we have limitations to reaching them and to changing them. However, we do not need to give up our goals nor abandon our intentions.

If the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow, and if our tomorrow is going to have a good leaders, then providing services to “at-risk” youth and their families is the right thing to do, simply because our future depends on it.

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Appendix

Nominal Group Technique Participants

Douglas Anderson, Ph.D.	Therapist
Rebecca Bailey, Ph.D.	Therapist
Leslie Bayan	Police Officer
Karen Busch	Sonoma County Mental Health
Katy Gomez Madrigal	Administrative Assistant
Mary Holmes	Police Officer
Fran Meinenger	Director of the Valley of the Moon Boys and Girls Club
Gordon Perlow	Police Sergeant
Patricia Shepperd	Ecumenical Youth Group
Debbie Swanson	El Nido Teen Center
Robert Wedell	Facilitator

ABSTRACT

In an effort to provide alternative programs to reduce the number of juvenile offenders that are being admitted into the criminal justice system, the Sonoma Police Department has created criminal diversion and assistance services to these "at-risk" youth and their families. The services that will be provided through the year 2008 will be structured to address the specific needs of the community and are enhanced by establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial agreements with the community service providers. This model of community policing is an effective blend of alliances between families in need and those providers that are skilled at delivering appropriate, competent, and professional services.

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