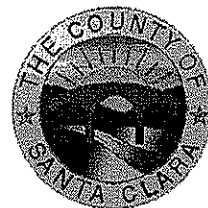


County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors

Supervisorial District Two
Supervisor George Shirakawa

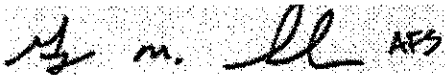
Inventory Item
#10



BOS2-060209-1

DATE: June 4, 2009

TO: Supervisor George Shirakawa, Chairperson
Supervisor Donald F. Gage, Vice Chair
Public Safety & Justice Committee

FROM: 
George Shirakawa
Supervisor, District 2

SUBJECT: Add-Back Request - Redirection of Funding for a County-wide Truancy Abatement Strategies Plan

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Consider adding back \$262,921 to the Probation Department to support a County-wide Truancy Abatement Strategies Plan and forward to the Fiscal Year 2009 - 2010 Budget Inventory List with a favorable recommendation. A County-wide Truancy Abatement Strategies Plan will be brought to the full Board for approval of expenditures.

CONTRACT HISTORY

The Probation Department contracted with Alum Rock Counseling Center and FLY to operate the community-based portion of the Evening Reporting Center (ERC). General Fund support in the amount of \$262,010 was allocated to serve youth on probation who were at risk of being detained at Juvenile Hall if they violated the terms of their court-ordered probation. The Recommended Budget calls for the elimination of this program and this funding. Given the Probation Department's ability to serve youth who would otherwise have gone to the ERC

through other alternatives to detention, I believe that the funds should be salvaged and re-directed towards the prevention and early intervention end of the juvenile justice continuum.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Fiscal Year 2009 - 2010 Recommended Budget eliminates \$262,921 in ongoing funding for community-based service providers that operated the Evening Reporting Center. This proposal seeks to strategically re-direct this funding to continue the County's commitment to reducing habitually truancy and work collaboratively with our schools to identify cost-effective methods of meeting the needs of our hard-to-serve youth and their families.

Expenditures associated with the County-wide Truancy Abatement Strategies Plan will be move through the Juvenile Justice Systems Collaborative, Public Safety and Justice Committee, and finally to the full Board of approval. This funding provides a framework to shore-up a crumbling system for returning youth to school and to assist schools to grow Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding to support themselves.

With the shift from the Juvenile Detention Reform initiative to the Juvenile Justice Systems Collaborative approach, an emphasis was placed on the earlier end of the juvenile justice continuum. The Prevention and Programs Work Group was created and members came to consensus that truancy abatement was the single most important issue to target with the highest positive impact on juvenile justice. Subsequent discussions at the Work Group level, and meetings with school district superintendents and administrators have begun in an effort to identify which current successful approaches to build upon, which services can be consolidated, how to improve consistent attendance policies and procedures, and what areas of the county are under-served and in need of new innovations. The needs among and within school districts are disparate. At this time, no single program or strategy is being advocated for.

I want to continue the County's commitment to truancy reduction as a means of preventing school failure, potential delinquency, and promoting long-term self-sufficiency. Habitual truant behavior is a key indicator of dropping out of school. Based on research collected by the Public Defender's Office, local county truancy rates range from 1% to 40% across school districts and are alarming at the select elementary and middle school levels. The Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Programs Guide states that "truancy has been referred to as a 'first step to a lifetime of problems' for youth." Truant students are at a higher risk of involvement in drug and alcohol use, violence, and gang

activity.

Truants are potential drop-outs. According to a recent report from UC Santa Barbara, California Dropout Research Project, a total of 2,328 students dropped out of middle and high schools in San Jose during 2006 - 2007. As we are all aware compared to high school graduates, dropouts have higher rates of criminal behavior and incarceration, increased dependence on public assistance, poorer health and higher rates of mortality. Santa Clara County had a 20% overall grades 9 -12 drop-out rate in 2006 - 2007.

BACKGROUND

The Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, under the leadership of the Probation Department, reviewed proposed changes to the programs funded by the State's Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act grant. Due to a 10% overall reduction and a loss of one-time funding methods from the current year, significant cuts were proposed. The Truancy Reduction Services program funding was eliminated in the amount of \$248,917 and community-based services in the Restorative Justice Program received a 64% reduction.

At that time, JJCC approved my plan to discuss improvements to the Truancy Reduction Services program model because recent findings from the JJCPA evaluation by Community Crime Prevention Associates indicated that 20% of the caseload are youth who have been absent for half of the school year. Youth with such severe truant behavior may not be impacted by a 120 day program. While there may be significant value to the other 80% of youth serviced through an intense case management setting at this time with reduced resources, we need to contemplate reaching more truant youth in a more cost-effective approach in collaboration with school districts.

I have met with a group of school district representatives with the assistance of the Sheila Mitchell, County's Chief Probation Officer and Mary Greenwood, Public Defender and Chair of the Prevention and Program Work Group of the Juvenile Justice System Collaborative. We are working on a series of strategies that meets the needs of the school districts since they are the referral source.

