

Diversion Through Community Youth Aid Panels in Berks County

DMC Action Network Annual
Meeting

May 13, 2010



County of Berks

- Total population: 401,149
- Juvenile population (ages 10-17): 43,844
- Berks County Latino population: 12%
- Berks County African American pop: 5%
- Reading School District Latino enrollment: 73%
- Reading School District Af-Am enrollment: 13%

Berks County Juvenile Probation

- Juveniles referred in 2008 (non CYAP): 1192 (1086 in 2009)
- 921 (77%) male and 271 (23%) female
- Race and Ethnicity of Youth Referred in 2008:
 - Hispanic/Latino: 503 (42%)
 - White non-Hispanic: 482 (40%)
 - Black non-Hispanic: 192 (16%)
 - Other: 12 (1%)

Berks County Community Youth Aid Panel Program (CYAP)

- Program began in Berks County in 2000
- Offers an alternative to traditional case processing of juveniles
- Juvenile Probation model used in Berks County (other models include district attorney, police, contracted private provider)
- A collaboration between community members, police, juvenile probation

What is a CYAP?

- Groups of carefully screened and trained community volunteers
- In Berks County panels are based on police department jurisdiction
- Represent the communities they serve
- Non-adversarial process- juvenile must acknowledge responsibility
- First time offenders
- Voluntary

What is a CYAP?

- Prosecutable Offense
- Only 1 panel opportunity
- Referrals primarily from the 34 participating police departments directly to the panel program
- Referrals sometimes pulled from official JPO referrals with District Attorney approval
- Mainly summary and misdemeanor offenses but also limited felony property offenses
- List of eligible offenses grew as the program developed and positive outcomes continued

CYAP Process

- Panels meet with juvenile and parent/guardian
- JPO liaison and police liaison present
- Question and answer period with panel, juvenile, parent/guardian
- Discuss charge; family, school and community info; activities and hobbies; and any other info necessary to develop a contract
- Goal to hold the juvenile accountable for the specific offense

CYAP Process

- Panel meets privately to develop an individualized contract which is then presented to juvenile and parent
- Reasonable, Relevant and Enforceable conditions
- Contract obligations may include apology letters, restitution, essays, projects, community service, oral presentations, book reports, interviews, etc.

CYAP Process

- Ongoing monitoring by assigned panelist by telephone contact and follow up review and discharge meetings
- Panels show a willingness to work through adolescent behavior
- Victim Input

Panel Records

- No formal court record with successful completion of CYAP
- Unsuccessful CYAP discharge results in official referral to JPO or MDJ
- Records not available to any JPO staff outside CYAP assigned
- Following successful completion, panel info not available even with subsequent arrest
- Expungement

Key Benefits

- Community needs met with community resources
- Effective, early intervention
- High successful completion rates
- Low recidivism
- Provides another option for the referral source to handle juvenile arrests
- Speedy case processing
- Provide accountability for delinquent behavior

Key Benefits

- Competency development
- Juvenile spared formal court record
- Community enrichment and empowerment
- Reduces referrals to juvenile court
- Victim and community reparation and input
- Speedy restitution collection and dispersement

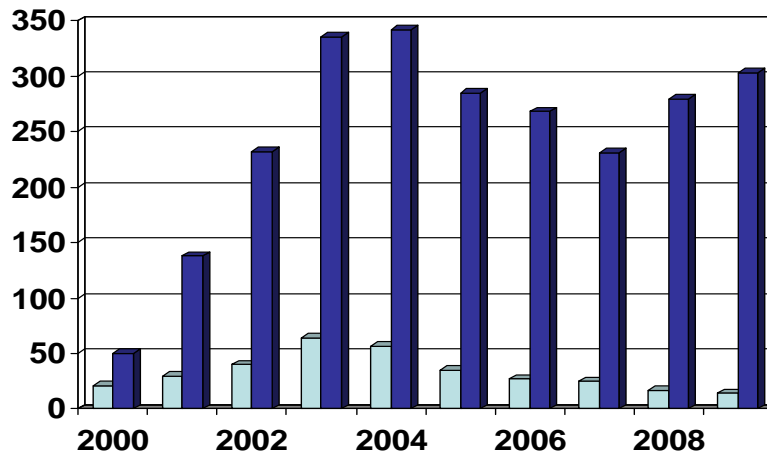
Program Statistics/Outcomes

- Currently 14 panels and 84 active volunteers
- 34 participating police departments
- Over 2550 youth referred since 2000
- On average, 89% of youth who sign a contract successfully complete the program
- Only 9% of these youth have a subsequent referral to JPO

Program Statistics/Outcome

- Over the last 5 years, restitution collection averaged \$10,612 a year and community service hours completed averaged 2,831 a year
- 303 total referrals in 2009
- 211 (70%) male and 92 (30%) female
- 248 (82%) non-Hispanic
- 46 (15%) Hispanic
- 9 (3%) Unknown

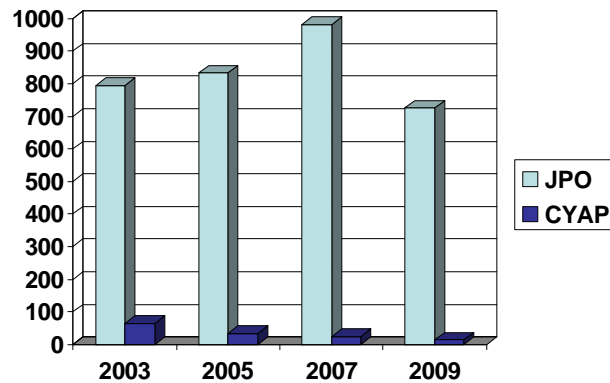
CYAP Referrals by Year by Reading P.D. and Total Program



Berks County CYAP Challenges DMC related

- Volunteer recruitment can be challenging at times
- Panels should be representative of the communities they serve
- Spanish speaking volunteers
- Low percentage of referrals from Reading Police despite numerous attempts to increase referrals and support Reading's participation

City of Reading Referrals to JPO and CYAP



Percentage of Referrals by Year Official JPO and CYAP

- In 2009 – Reading Police referred 725 (32%) of the 2247 offenses to JPO. They referred 14 (5%) of the 303 referrals to the CYAP Program
- In 2005- 33% of JPO referrals and only 12% of CYAP referrals
- In 2003, 41% of JPO referrals and only 19% of CYAP referrals

Reading Issues

- High crime area
- Police focus on serious offenses
- City financial crisis and possible reduction of police officers
- Police workload
- Dismantling Reading P.D. Juvenile Division
- Lack of priority and attention to juvenile crime
- Ignoring minor offenses doesn't allow for early intervention
- Union Issues

Ongoing Attempts to Increase Referrals and Address DMC Issues

- Meetings/conversations with Mayor, Police Chief, Police Supervisors and Officers with Probation Staff and Administrators, Judges, District Attorney, CJAB, etc.
- CYAP presentations at 3 shifts of police roll call
- Ongoing conversations with Reading P.D. CYAP Liaison Officer
- Media attention, newspaper articles, letters to the editor

Ongoing Attempts to Increase Referrals and Address DMC Issues

- Volunteer attempts
- Period of time when JPO staff assisted Reading P.D. in completing police portion of the referral process
- Closer examination of JPO official referrals from Reading P.D.



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