



SAN MATEO COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT



Family Preservation Program Annual Evaluation 2019-2020

About the Researcher

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Program Description

The Family Preservation Program (FPP) serves youths 12 to 18 years of age, with a primary focus on youths who have entered the juvenile justice system under specific circumstances. These circumstances typically include recent criminal charges that resulted from behaviors related to significant emotional or mental health issues, escalating familial issues, or a high risk of being placed out-of-home. The program is also appropriate for youths charged with low-level (non-predatory, non-violent) sex offenses, youths experiencing substance abuse issues, or those who have been or currently exposed to domestic violence. Additionally, the program is appropriate for youths whose families are currently in crisis or are experiencing serious issues that compromise family functioning. All youths in FPP are at high risk for out-of-home placement.

The Probation Department's FPP unit works collaboratively with Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), Child and Family Services (CFS), schools, and other strength-based collateral agencies to provide therapeutic services for youths and their families. Supervision is dictated by the department's Supervision Standards policy, whereby, participation in the program is monitored by meeting with the youth on a bi-weekly basis and the parents/legal guardians as often as needed to ensure compliance with counseling services and adherence to Court-orders. Court hearings occur every 90-days to update the Court on the progress made by the youth and the family.

The program's primary goal is to maintain youths in their homes by expanding the use of intensive supervision, flexible support services, and community-based resources. Each Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) in the unit has a caseload of up to nine youths who experience significant family, emotional, and/or mental health issues. The program offers intensive probation case management and therapeutic interventions by mental health providers.

Programmatic Challenges in Fiscal Year 2019-20

In fiscal year (FY) 2019-20, FPP officers reported a shortage of Spanish speaking therapists at BHRS, particularly for family therapy, which has challenged service delivery to families requiring these linguistically appropriate supports.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges. The services provided to youths transitioned to virtual Zoom services, which delayed some of the services. Some youths and their families did not have access to Zoom teleconferencing or other similar forms of video conferencing platforms. Lastly, in-field visits were temporarily put on hold due to the shelter-in-place (SIP) order, and in response to SIP measures, youths were thus monitored via telephone calls.

Evaluation Methods

Programs provided by the FPP are funded by San Mateo County Juvenile Probation's (Probation) Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA). FPP monitors programs and reports client, service, and outcome data to Probation and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect this data are:

Participants and Services: Grantee programs collected demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.

Risk Factors: Grantee programs used the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) to provide a standard measure of risk. This is a widely used criminogenic risk, strengths, and needs assessment tool that assists in the effective and efficient supervision of youths, both in institutional settings and in the community. The JAIS has been validated across ethnic and gender groups. It consists of a brief prescreen assessment (JAIS Risk), in addition to full assessment and reassessment components (JAIS Assessment and JAIS Reassessment). Each assessment has two form options based on the youth's gender. Probation has elected to administer the JAIS to all youths in institutions as well as in community programs. The JAIS Girls Risk consists of eight items, and the JAIS Boys Risk consists of ten items; each assessment yields an overall risk level of low, moderate, or high.

Outcomes: Like all Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funded programs, FPP collects data for several justice-related outcomes for program participants. Probation has elected to report these outcomes at 180 days post entry; the reference or comparison group reflects the past year's cohort of program participants to interpret FY 2019-20 outcomes. In FY 2019-20, FPP collected the following outcome measures:

- Arrests
- Detentions
- Probation violations
- Probation completions
- Court-ordered restitution completion
- Court-ordered community service completion.

Additionally, FPP also tracks progress toward its goal of keeping all youths unified with their families to avoid out-of-home placements.

Evaluation Findings

Fiscal Year Highlights

- FPP has experienced a steady decline in the number of youths in the program. In FY 2019-20, 29 youths participated, a drop from 36 youths in FY 2018-19.
- Nearly 72% of youths assessed had an alcohol or drug problem at entry, and 66% of youths were suspended or expelled in the last year. However, youths with an attendance problem slightly decreased to 72% in FY 2019-20.
- FPP served youths across the criminogenic risk spectrum: 35% scored Low, 39% scored Moderate, and 27% scored High on the JAIS Assessment (n=26). Of the 15 youths with follow-up reassessments, two youths moved out of high risk to moderate and low risk.

Profile of Youths Served

During FY 2019-20, FPP served 29 youths. Of these, ninety-seven percent (97%) identified as male, and the average age at program entry was 16.1 years old. Over three-quarters (79%) identified as Hispanic/Latino, and 7% identified as White/Caucasian, Black/African American, and Asian/Pacific Islander. Youths spent an average of 11.7 months in the program.

Table 1. Youth Services

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20
Number of Youths Served	48	61	35	36	29
Average Time in the Program (Months)	6.0	10.7	13.4	6.8	11.7

Risk Indicators

For each youth in the program, FPP evaluated risk indicators upon entry to determine whether youths experienced: 1) a drug or alcohol problem, 2) a school attendance problem, and 3) suspension or expulsion from school in the past year. In FY 2019-20, the percent of youths with two risk indicators increased from that of the previous fiscal year: 72% of youths had an alcohol or drug problem at entry, an increase from 59% in FY 2018-19, and 66% were suspended/expelled, an increase from 64% in the prior fiscal year. Nearly three-quarters (72%) had an attendance problem when entering, a slight decrease from 73% in FY 2018-19.

Table 2. Risk Indicators at Program Entry

RISK INDICATORS AT PROGRAM ENTRY	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20
Alcohol or drug problem	52%	39%	74%	59%	72%
Attendance problem	80%	72%	78%	73%	72%
Suspension/expulsion in past year	73%	67%	70%	64%	66%

FY 2019-20 n=29.

J AIS Assessment data were available for 26 youths, while intake and follow up J AIS Reassessment data were available for fifteen youths. The results of the initial J AIS Assessment indicate that FPP served youths across the criminogenic risk spectrum: 35% scored Low, 39% scored Moderate, and 27% scored High.

Table 3. J AIS Risk Levels at Initial Assessment

J AIS RISK LEVELS	INITIAL ASSESSMENT
Low	35%
Moderate	39%
High	27%

J AIS Assessment n=26. The percentages may not sum up to 100% due to rounding.

When looking at the smaller sample of fifteen youths with matched data from initial assessment to reassessment, two youths at reassessment changed their risk classification. Two moved out of the high risk category into low and moderate risk.

Table 4. J AIS Risk Levels at Initial Assessment and Reassessment

J AIS RISK LEVELS	INITIAL ASSESSMENT	REASSESSMENT
Low	33%	40%
Moderate	33%	40%
High	33%	20%

J AIS Assessment n=15; J AIS Reassessment n=15. The percentages may not sum up to 100% due to rounding.

Justice Outcomes

The table below presents justice-related outcomes for the 26 youths in the FPP program whose six-month post-entry evaluation milestone occurred in FY 2019-20. As presented below, the percent of youths arrested for a new violation remained the same, while the percent of youths with detentions and completion of probation at 180 days increased from the previous fiscal year. The percent of youths with probation violations slightly decreased to 46% in FY 2019-20.

Table 5. Justice Outcomes

JUSTICE OUTCOMES	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20
Youths Arrested for a New Violation	38%	N/A	36%	58%	58%
Youths with Detentions	79%	72%	76%	75%	88%
Youths with Probation Violations	N/A	N/A	48%	50%	46%
Completion of Probation at 180 Days	0%	0%	4%	0%	8%
Completion of Restitution	14%	*	*	*	*
Completion of Community Service	33%	33%	40%	*	*

*FY 2019-20 Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation n=26, Youths with Detentions n=26, Youths with Probation Violations n=26, Completion of Probation at 180 Days n=26, Completion of Restitution n=2, Completion of Community Service n=4. *Indicates that no youths were in that category in the fiscal year, or data were suppressed due to sample size below five.*

Program Specific Outcomes

The central goal of FPP is to keep youths in their homes. Of the 29 youths who participated in the program during FY 2019-20, three were given an out-of-home placement order (10%, n=3), which is a slight increase from FY 2018-19.

Table 6. Out-of-Home Placements

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OUTCOMES	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20
Out-of-home placement	2%	5%	9%	3%	10%

FY 2019-20 n=29

Client Stories

Each year, FPP staff provide a client story to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. The following are two client stories provided by FPP for FY 2019-20.

FPP Client Story #1

Name of Client	Victor
Age and Gender	16, male
Reason for Referral	Victor has been known to associate with members of a local gang since the age of 14. The Minor was adjudged a Ward of the Court at age 15, after a sustained offense for assault and placed in the gang unit. Within three months, after several probation violations, the Court ordered him into the Family Preservation Program.
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program	Victor had a strained relationship with his mother, he spent a lot of his free time with negative peers that were involved in gangs and abused marijuana. The Minor was enrolled in a continuation school and his grades were low. When this officer first met with the Minor, he was very guarded with the information he provided.
Activity Engagement and Consistency	The family was referred to Behavioral Health and Recovery Services for intensive in-home family therapy. Their meetings were consistent with the clinician once a week, for approximately 14 sessions. Victor was also referred to StarVista for drug and alcohol counseling. His participation was consistent, and he graduated from the program in June 2020. The consistent meetings and accountability from Probation also supported the Minor in remaining focus in his goals.
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program	Victor began attending school consistently and joined the basketball team; unfortunately, it was short lived because of shelter-in-place order soon after. Victor actively sought employment and was hired at Safeway, where he is described as reliable and hardworking by his supervisor. Once Victor graduates high school, he plans to go to barber school. Victor’s relationship with his mother improved and the mother stated that “family therapy helped her understand Victor’s needs in a way that has resulted in a better relationship.”
What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program	FPP contacted the youth via telephone and asked him the next three questions. He stated the following: “that I don’t like being in the system, and I started to change my ways.”
What the Client is Doing Differently in Their Life Now as a Result of the Program	“I’m not going out as much, I’m not associating with people I’m not supposed to. I’m spending more time with my girlfriend, and I have a job that I like. I have a better communication with my mother, and I don’t stress her out as much.”
The Value of the Program in the Client’s Words	“The family therapy helped us to communicate better and to listen to one another. My girlfriend also motivated me to not do bad stuff, and she stayed beside me.”

FPP Client Story #2

Name of Client	Alex
Age and Gender	16, male
Reason for Referral	Alex was ordered by the Court into the Family Preservation Program (FPP) for sustained charges of (Misdemeanor-Receiving Known Stolen Property-Over \$950.00), and a sustained violation of Section 417.4 of the Penal Code (Misdemeanor-Brandishing a Replica Gun).
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program	During his interview, FPP asked Alex to describe himself when he first began the FPP, and he said, “My actions were mostly being influenced by my drug use and my emotions were really strong at the time, which made me act out.” The Minor barely attended school, and when he did so, he was under the influence of marijuana.
Activity Engagement and Consistency	At the time that Alex was ordered into the FPP, he did not participate in any extracurricular activities. However, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, he was actively participating in boxing. He now runs daily to get his exercise and has plans to resume boxing at the gym once the reopens.
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program	Alex always presented himself in a respectful manner. However, he would frequently disregard directives. He was not attending school as directed, he was not following his mother’s rules in the home, and he was chronically smoking marijuana, which further distorted his behavior.
What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program	According to Alex, “I have learned that hanging out with the same group of friends that I used to, I realized that I was wasting my childhood, and setting myself up for failure.”
What the Client is Doing Differently in Their Life Now as a Result of the Program	Alex is now taking responsibility for his actions and focusing on his goals. Alex said that he is now, “socializing with more positive people.”
The Value of the Program in the Client’s Words	Alex said, “I felt like being supervised often, kept me from getting in trouble. Because I was defiant, and I was not listening to what adults had to say which made me think that I could do whatever I wanted, which made me get locked up multiple times. I changed because I did not like where I was going, my parents did not like where I was going, and I wanted to make a change.”