

**Quick Stats**

| Agency                  | Program/Policy Start Date | Number Served Annually | Annual Budget |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Department of Probation | Summer 2012               | 100                    | \$2,000,000   |

**Problem Statement**

Disconnected young people, defined as not in school and not working, who are also currently involved in harmful/risky behaviors, require interventions far more intensive than traditional youth programs to achieve significant results. These young people are often involved in high-risk street activity within their communities. As a result, youthful probation clients between the ages of 14 and 18 are likely to be deeply involved in the criminal/juvenile justice system. In addition to community safety concerns, they are among the most expensive population to serve from a taxpayer perspective, in policing, incarceration, hospitalization and social services. Enabling them to improve their life trajectories will have positive effects on their communities, families and peers, in addition to saving taxpayer dollars.

**Research and Evidence**

Criminal behavior and repeat arrests are not only harmful to communities but serve as obvious obstacles for high-risk youth in turning their lives around. Forty-five percent of all out-of-home-placements of juvenile delinquents are the result of violations of the conditions of probation. A study funded by the National Institute of Justice found that 63% of young people sent to Office of Children and Family Services facilities are rearrested within two years of their release, with 43% of those arrests involving felony charges.<sup>i</sup> Young people involved with the criminal justice system also face other barriers, such as educational deficits, that hinder their progress. For example, nearly 60% of adolescents age 16-18 in New York City jails read below a fifth grade level<sup>ii</sup> and two thirds of them will not return to school after their release.<sup>iii</sup>

Despite these alarming statistics, there are approaches that have proven effective in serving this group of young people. The Coalition for Juvenile Justice recently released a comprehensive review of the research surrounding Positive Youth Development (PYD) and its application in the Juvenile Justice System.<sup>iv</sup> As the report outlines, rigorous research has established strong evidence in support of the efficacy of youth development programs. Key elements include: frequent and consistent mentoring, strengthening relationships between youth and their families/educational institutions, and participation in structured extracurricular activities.

The same report found that some adolescents who are unresponsive to other interventions may be more tolerant of services to the family depending on the family situation. The youth's family can provide expanded opportunities for interactions with the youth that would not be possible were the approach simply a youth advocate-adolescent pairing.

**Program Description**

AIM (Advocate, Intervene, Mentor) is an Alternative to Placement program that seeks to enhance community safety by providing intensive mentoring and advocacy to increase the positive outcomes for adolescents on juvenile probation who are in jeopardy of being incarcerated due to a probation revocation. Utilizing an intervention strategy that pairs youth with paid advocates, the AIM Program seeks to provide participants with the structure

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| <b>Implementation Timeline</b> | <p>and guidance they need for success.</p> <p>Advocates will educate and empower participating adolescents and their families to foster alternative behaviors more conducive to personal and social success. In addition to one-on-one mentoring, advocates will build and strengthen social bonds between the young probationer and the community in which he or she lives. Advocates will play the role of a connector, linking clients with community-based resources and facilitating healthier relationships with known institutions, such as school. This model works best when all involved are committed to family involvement and support. Supervision of the youth must always remain the primary responsibility of the family, not the advocate, so it is essential that the youth and the advocate come to see themselves as part of a team effort.</p> |
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| <b>Implementation Timeline</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three contracts awarded in June 2012 to begin in July 2012</li> <li>• Two contracts awarded in July 2012 to begin in September 2012</li> <li>• Family Court began making referrals in July 2012</li> </ul> |
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| <b>Target Population</b> | <p>Program participants are adolescents on juvenile probation, between the ages of 13-18. Program participants must be facing a violation of probation due to chronic absenteeism and/or unresponsiveness to interventions and engagement strategies, and/or facing a violation of probation due to a felony re-arrest or who are facing institutional placement as a result of a Family Court disposition. AIM targets neighborhoods with high percentages of juveniles on probation in all five boroughs.</p> |
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| <b>Expected Outcomes</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% of the participants will not be arrested for a felony while in the AIM program;</li> <li>• 60% of program completers will remain felony arrest-free for a period of 12 months after program completion.</li> <li>• 85% of program completers will have an identifiable positive social support system outside of the family unit when they complete the program—e.g. school/education, employment, pro-social use of leisure time;</li> <li>• 85% of program completers will be reconnected to their family support system or develop a viable one.</li> </ul> |
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<sup>i</sup> Susan Mitchell-Herzfeld, Vajeera Dorabawila, Leigh Bates, and Rebecca Colman, "Juvenile Recidivism Study: Patterns and Predictors of Re-Offending Among Youth Reentering the Community From OCFS Facilities and Voluntary Agencies," PowerPoint presentation. At the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, April 27, 2010.

<sup>ii</sup> Vera Institute of Justice, *Just 'Cause*, Vol. 15, No. 3, fall (2008).

<sup>iii</sup> Public Private Ventures. (2000). *Getting Back to Work: Employment Programs for Ex-Offenders*. Philadelphia, PA: Buck, Maria.

<sup>iv</sup> The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2010). *Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development*. Washington D.C.: Butts, Jeffrey A., Gordon Bazemore, & Aundra Saa Meroe