

Our Children, Our Families Council
Summary of Juvenile Advisory Council

April 23, 2015

Goals of the Effort

The Juvenile Advisory Council, (JAC) is part of San Francisco's ongoing commitment to providing spaces and platforms for young people to become the change they want to see in the world. Initially, JAC was focused on leadership development for its members. From there, the council has taken steps toward being the youth voice in the probation department and a support group for juveniles incarcerated or on probation.

The JAC serves as a link between the Probation Department and its clients by, (1) Translating the Court's expectations using youth-friendly language, (2) Articulating a client's perspective to help improve the Probation experience, and (3) Educating youth in general about Juvenile Justice in an effort to prevent youth incarceration and further involvement with the Juvenile Justice System.

JAC's goals are:

- To share JAC member's experience of going through the system with both clients and Probation staff
- To communicate JPD's rules and expectations so youth & parents thoroughly understand
- To promote self-determination and progress for youth coming onto and exiting probation
- To inspire youth to make a positive change in their lives and communities

Focal Population of the Effort

JAC provides leadership development to formerly incarcerated young adults and supports juveniles currently incarcerated or on probation.

Impact

The JAC officially began in 2008 with its first set of JAC members and the development of the Saturday Probation Orientation. Over the span of the JAC's history, various successes have been accomplished including the following:

- Over the past five years approximately 30 JAC members have been trained and served as previously system-involved change makers. Each consistent core JAC team is made up of five to six individuals.
- Approximately 400 probationers and their parents have participated in and completed the Saturday Probation Orientation.
- Probationers who participate in the Probation Orientation have an 82% achievement rate of completing probation successfully.
- Recidivism rates for youth who participate in the Probation Orientation are 32% lower than youth who did not.
- Each parent/guardian is provided a 'Parent Tool Kit' upon completion of the Probation Orientation.
- All parent & youth orientation surveys are shared with each respective case carrying Probation Officer to provide additional background information on the probationer.
- Over the past year and a half, JAC's 'Choices and Consequences' workshop has been presented to approximately 600 students, youth, and young adults.
- The JAC assisted with developing the youth component of the Probation Enhancement Program (PEP) and sends one representative to each monthly session.
- JAC was fully involved in the statewide Prison Rape Elimination Act legislation. They created posters and a film to inform juveniles of their rights.

- JAC reviewed and rewrote the juvenile hall handbook, as well as the SF ACT handbook, to make them more juvenile-friendly.
- JAC partnered with the SF Public Library to form the library advisory council. They oversee the content of the books available in juvenile hall. They created a section in the juvenile hall library where formerly incarcerated youth suggest books and provide reviews.

JAC's greatest strength is the peer to peer mentorship it provides.

Challenges

JAC's greatest challenge is having only one staff member to lead the efforts.

Origins of the Effort

The JAC was created in 2008 by the SF Juvenile Probation Department to incorporate various youth development strategies into its practices and programs. Through the leadership of Chief Siffermann and initial funding from the Zellerbach Foundation, a team of Juvenile Advisory Council (JAC) members visited Chicago's original JAC and developed processes and protocols that evolved into a full-fledged youth leadership program for San Francisco.

Leading the Effort

Ricardo Garcia-Acosta is an employee of the Juvenile Probation Department and leads the JAC. The council is funded by the Juvenile Probation Department and a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Members of the Effort

Approximately every 6-8 months, the JAC releases a new application to recruit new JAC members. Recruitment takes place primarily through recommendation from Probation Officers and community partners. On average, The JAC receives 15-18 applications to fill about 4-5 available slots. Previous JAC members are allowed to remain on the JAC if they have been participating and taking on leadership roles.

- Applicants are recruited who have been system-involved and are no longer on probation. The position is described as an on-call hourly leadership position.
- Outreach is strategic and intentional. JAC staff speak with Probation Officers and hand deliver applications to each unit. Outreach is also conducted to previous Probation Orientation participants who articulated interest in being a future JAC member. JAC staff make an effort to recruit JAC members that reflect the Probation Department's client demographic.
- Once hired, JAC members participate in 8 hours of training and observe a Saturday Probation Orientation. Each applicant completes a 'JAC New Hire Packet' which was developed in coordination with SF JPD's Human Resources Department.
- On average, about 20% of the new hires become long-term core JAC members. This is due to a range of issues; primarily because an on-call position with only a few hours of work per week isn't enough and consistency amongst this population is key.

Current Membership Includes:

- Angel Carrion
- Claudia Mendez
- Dylan Martinez
- Jamon Balberan
- Jesus Martinez
- Joe Drake Fr.
- Kimberly Butler
- Tina Dang

Structure of the Effort

The JAC members meet officially each Friday for training, debriefing review of presentations, and preparation. Throughout the week, JAC members are working on various duties and presentations. They lead probation orientations every first Saturday of the month. They meet the following Monday to process information received at the orientations. A couple of the JAC members attend the Probation Enhancement Program on the second Saturday of each month. About 90% of JAC members are usually in attendance at meetings. The JAC communicates via email and text message.

The Role of Data

The JAC compiles feedback from its probation orientations to discern which topics are most useful and engaging to juveniles entering probation. They use this feedback to drive their future presentations.

In 2012, Julia Globus-Sabory wrote a thesis on the effectiveness of the Juvenile Probation Department's efforts to reduce probation violations, which included analysis of the Juvenile Advisory Council's work.

Related Documents

- More information about the Juvenile Advisory Council is available at sfgov.org/juvprobation
- JAC memo
- Membership Roster
- 2014 Probation Orientation Year-End Summary
- Orientation Feedback Data 2009-2014
- 2015 SF Juvenile Advisory Council Report
- Impact Analysis on the SF Juvenile Probation Department's Effort to Reduce Probation Violations