 STATUS OFFENDERS AND NON-PROFIT YOUTH SERVICE AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS*

BY GENEVIEVE BURCH AND CAROLE DAVIS

Introduction

When the Pima County Juvenile Justice Collaboration offered free bumper stickers asking "Have You Hugged Your Kid Today?" 6,000 Tucsonians grabbed up three printings and four other local agencies began promoting the same slogan.

But when the collaboration followed that success with a new sticker proclaiming "Runaway Children Don't Belong in Jail," there weren't enough takers to exhaust the first printing.

While adults presumably agree that their loving offspring rate affection, what to do with the angels when they thumb their noses, ditch school, run away or indulge their sex drives does not find easy consensus on a bumper sticker. That question is "the hottest issue going" in juvenile justice, in the words of one national authority.

The above misbehaviors are called "status offenses," acts forbidden only to children because of their tender status. Along with disobedience, leaving home without permission, truancy, curfew are a vague range of health and morals concerns designed to control everything from promiscuity to choice of companions.

Nationally, status offenders comprise about a third of juvenile court caseloads, with about 70 percent of the complaints filed by parents and relatives who can't control them.

At the center of the current storm is the distinction between these misbehaving children and legally declared juvenile "delinquents," children who have been convicted of robberies, burglaries, assaults, rapes, homicides and other public offenses that are crimes at any age.

For years, juvenile courts have treated them virtually the same under a theory that unchecked misbehavior will lead to serious delinquency. They have locked up status offenders side-by-side with delinquents in county jails and detention centers awaiting hearings, and have committed both to state reform schools and other secure institutions designed to correct their behavior and protect society.

Led by Senator Birch Bayh, Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JDPA) in 1974. One of the major sections of the law, 223 (a)(12) requires that status offenders not be placed in detention centers but be served in the community where possible or in non-secure shelters if they need to be removed from their homes.

Because this law placed an initial financial burden on local governments while they changed from the former method of dealing with status offenders, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act carried with it some grant funds to be used by local areas as seed money for demonstration programs to facilitate the transition. The grants were called Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) Grants. The program is administered by the Justice Department under the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA).

One of the major forces behind the JDPA was a group of national non-profit service agencies interested in the treatment of children. Their members wrote to their congressional representatives; their leaders testified at hearings; they publicized the treatment of children in the system; they did research that showed the current treatment was much more detrimental to youth than no treatment at all. After the passage of the Act, 16 of these national organizations applied for one of the DSO Grants. They reasoned that if status offenders needed service in the community rather than in detention centers, then the non-profit service organizations should be changing some of their emphasis from serving only middle class "good kids" to including service and programs for status offenders and other children whose backgrounds suggest the potential for conflict with the law because of their juvenile status. Their rationale was:

1. Non-profit agencies can provide valuable services to status offenders. If status offenders are to be served in local communities, then local non-profit youth serving agencies should also be experimenting with ways to increase services to such youth.

2. Non-profit agencies can be valuable and powerful advocates for status offenders. If status offenders are to be served in local communities, then there must be a major effort to educate citizens, to change laws and to urge public service agencies to understand and accept status offenders in the community.

3. Services and advocacy provided by a collaborative effort are more effective than each agency providing a separate effort. Local services to youth are often fragmentary with a great deal of duplication in some areas and gaps in service in other areas. All local providers of service to a specific client group must work together to meet the needs of the clients in a more complete way. Police, probation, schools, social agencies, ...

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*This article is an adaptation of a portion of the CAUR Juvenile Justice Program Collaboration - Evaluation Report, which resulted from a 2-year evaluation project directed by Dr. Burch. Ms. Davis, a Masters candidate in the UNO School of Social Work, is a CAUR graduate assistant and has worked closely with the juvenile justice evaluation project.


2National organizations in the juvenile justice collaboration were American Red Cross, Association of Junior Leagues, Boys' Clubs of America, Boy Scouts of America, Camp Fire Girls, Girl Scouts of the USA, Girls Clubs of America, Jewish Welfare Board, National Council for Homemaker-Home Health Aid Services, National Council of Jewish Women, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers (temporary participant), Salvation Army, Travelers Aid of America, YWCA of the USA, and YMCA of the USA.
and public recreation must be aware of and supportive to each other's programs.

4. Non-profit agencies can develop the capacity to work with status offenders. Status offenders have not been a traditional client group of many non-profit agencies. Some citywide or countywide Agency assemblies, however, non-profit agencies will be in the community long after LEAA monies are gone. If these agencies have a community function, they may be responsible for aiding local agencies in setting up new programs or in identifying auxiliary services for children and their families. A non-profit agency can be involved primarily with "good kids," and the focus

The basic method of the program was to bring together organizations with common interest in status offenders. In order to work together more effectively and without duplication of effort to desinstitualization status offenders. The process to develop the common, cooperative effort called for the organization to work together with mutual exchange of information and ideas, sharing of resources and expertise, respect for each others' efforts and program and joint provision of needed services. A formal organization of these youth organizations would be formed and termed a collaboration.

A national collaboration to manage the program, work with the national organizations and assist in the development of local collaborations at 5 sites around the country. Each local collaboration is a formal organization of a group of local affiliates of the national agencies involved, other public and private youth-serving agencies and local government to participate. They were developed with the LEAA, the national collaboration. The separate organizations were to work together through the local collaborations to develop needed services for status offenders in the community.

In October, 1975, LEAA funded the juvenile justice program collaboration for 2 years. The local sites selected for collaborations were Oakland, Cal-for-nia; Spartanburg, South Carolina; Spokane, Washington; Tucson, Arizona, and a Connecticut region encompassing Danbury, Torrington and Waterbury.

In September, 1976, the Center for Applied Urban Research received a contract from the national collaboration to evaluate the collaborations and their efforts to develop new ways to work with status offenders. The evaluation is now complete. This article presents a summary of the findings in the evaluation: how the non-profit agencies in the 5 test cities organized to serve status offenders at risk.

The article is presented in 2 parts. The first portion presents some of the findings in the evaluation of the LEAA juvenile justice program collaboration. The second portion will be the findings of the continuing support of the collaboration.

How Non-Profit Agencies Organized to Serve Status Offenders and Other Children at Risk

The 5 local juvenile justice collaborations involved 02 local affiliate organizations. One of their major goals was to develop the capacity of these non-profit agencies to serve status offenders. Many of these organizations, such as Child Welfare and Family Service, traditionally have been involved primarily with "good kids," and the focus on programs for problem children was a fundamental change for many agencies.

In selecting indicators by which to evaluate this goal, there were 2 principal considerations. First, it was necessary to use indicators which could be measured in the context of agency operations. We therefore included items only in the collaboration project sites. The use of indicators of organizational capacity which were independent of the collaboration project sites was to allow for comparison between youth-serving organizations in the project sites and those without LEAA collaboration grants. It would also make it possible to obtain before and after measures to recognize any change over a period of time.

The second consideration was a question of definition. The capacity to serve was viewed not only as the formal delivery of service to the client group. The delivery of service was seen as an end product requiring internal organizational change. To achieve this end, the service organization must first define status offenders and recognize them as a legitimate group to serve. The organization must then allocate the resources for meeting the needs of the new client group, such as board time, staff time, training, space and program materials. The organization must also develop collaborative relationships with other youth-serving agencies and income of status offenders or those making decisions for them so as to provide service, and be accessible to them geographically, functionally and culturally. Finally, they must organize to deliver the service.

Ten indicators were used to measure the capacity of collaborating organizations to serve status offenders in Fall, 1976, and again in Fall, 1977.

1. Board attitudes toward the client group and their client services.


3. Board representation of status offender clients.

4. Efforts to sensitize the larger membership to the needs of this group.

5. Allocation of funds, staff time or other resources for planning and implementation of programs/services for status offenders.

6. Initiation of programs to train board/staff/members to understand or work with status offenders and children at risk.

7. Extent of services to status offenders and other children at risk.

8. Efforts to locate programs accessible to client popula­tion.

9. Extent of service to status offenders.

10. Extent of service to other children at risk of becoming status offenders.

The board attitudes were measured by administering an attitude scale to boards of directors of local youth serving organizations near the beginning of the program, except for the San Jose site. This attitude scale was 3 items: personal/local distance attitudes about status offenders, status offenders, and general attitudes on the children. Several general attitude items on status offenders and the offenses were also included with the attitude scale for the administration. Much of the use of the national board meetings by local researchers in Fall, 1976, and again in Fall, 1977, using standardized procedures.

Second, the most negative change in attitudes occurred in items related to punishment as a lesson to teach status offenders and detention of status offenders to protect society. There was either little change or a negative change on the 2 detection items.

Third, attitude changes which most consistently in the 5 collaboration sites from September, 1976, to Fall, 1977, were toward personal socialization of status offenders and treatment of status offenders. This was a move toward personal relationships with status offenders, such as encouraging their children to have them as friends or having a halfway house in their neighborhood.

The individu als and the organizations they represented varied widely in background and emphasis, and the duration of the study period was only one year. However, even with this general analysis, it appeared that some board members' attitudes toward status offenders changed during the year. Three of the sites showed an increase in positive attitudes about non-profit agencies mixing status offenders with other children. Since these board members are the people who make the decisions, their attitudes are significant.

A policy statement by the local board indicated that status offenders and other children at risk are proper board members, or that the organization should make an effort to serve such youth. This was considered a necessary capacity building effort. This indicator was collected from board members, program goals, annual meetings and other running records of organizations. Four organizations (60% of the collaboration members) in Spartanburg, North Carolina, and 1 (17%) in Oakland and 1 (9%) in Tucson had such policies toward status offenders. Of the 15 members of the national collaboration, 8 (53%) reported policy statements in 1974 and 12 (80%) had policy statements in 1976. National organizations appeared better able than local to make policy public policy statements perhaps they were more oriented toward the public relations aspect of the programs. The allocation of board time was determined through an item analysis of board minutes at the beginning of the study period in Fall with the collaboration year. In the local meetings, boards of member organizations of the Spartanburg collaboration showed the most increase. The average increase in indicators of status was 50% in the year of collaboration.

Only 8 of the national organizations which released board minutes for this report, only 1 showed an increase in discussion of status offenders. However the data indicated that all had had a general conversation or board discussion during the base year. These were among the 7 most active members in the national collaboration.

The capacity to manage the larger membership to the client group was measured by the amount of information that related in any way to status offenders and other youth at risk in regular publications, national collaboration, conference materials and special communications such as technical assistance and program materials. The content of these data was analyzed for references to status offenders.
and other members of local agencies in the 5 cities.

Direct experience in working with status offenders was gained in implementing collaboration programs. The experience varied in both depth and variety. In Oakland the experience was limited to 2 direct service programs. In Spartanburg 67% of the collaboration affiliates were involved in implementation, but they were involved in only 2 programs, and Spokane collaboration members in only 1. Tucson collaboration affiliates gained the most experiences in a variety of ways: writing, program planning, implementation and evaluation. Six direct service programs were let by contract to affiliates in that site.

Data to measure change in location of program units were not easily accessible. These data were necessary to determine any change in the number of program units in high impact areas locally. Local organizations did not appear to keep records in this way. This indicated that the location of new units was not planned on the basis of where the need might be. Since the data were sketchy, the conclusions appeared to be that density of status offenders and other youth at risk was not an important consideration in placing program units.

Nationally, new units to serve status offenders and other children at risk had begun around the country in other than collaboration sites. Some groups, such as the Camp Fire Girls and the Girl Scouts, reported efforts to locate new program units in the inner city, in children’s institutions, and in ethnic neighborhoods. However, the record keeping procedures on numbers and locations did not indicate the extent to which this was a change from previous policy.

An important type of service to status offenders is through external advocacy to increase awareness of their needs. The change in advocacy was measured in 2 ways: The amount of regular communication to members on external societal change toward a more positive stance on status offenders and youth at risk, and introduction of any new advocacy program specifically related to external societal change.

The regular communication to members of local organizations showed practically no advocacy-related messages in either Fall, 1976, or Fall, 1977. The national organizations showed advocacy communications in both the base and current years. There was an increase in 10 national organizations and a decrease in 2 organizations. The latter included one of the most active and involved organizations.

No new advocacy activity was reported at collaboration sites by local affiliates from Fall, 1976, to Fall, 1977. Nationally, the Junior Leagues and the National Council of Jewish Women reported an increase in advocacy activity at other local sites around the country. There was little evidence of formal advocacy activity among national direct service organizations.

Much informal advocacy activity was reported by national organizations. Some of them, such as the YMCA, were active in getting youth-related legislation passed. The YWCA was actively seeking to get its locals involved in legislative concerns for systems change.

Several of the national organizations developed special programs in the recent past. The Junior Leagues produced a film which was shown on national television and is available for local information and education. The National Council of Jewish Women published a book reporting a national survey on the juvenile justice system and its detrimental impact on youth. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency sponsored an advertising campaign about status offenders. It also published a newsletter relating directly to legislation, research and other activity in the juvenile justice field.

While much of this activity preceded the juvenile justice program collaboration grant, the national organizations have continued to deepen their awareness and educate their locals. Our perception is that gradually they are taking status offenders as a legitimate, on-going concern.

For these reasons the numbers of status offenders and children at risk served in collaboration programs by local affiliates cannot be consistently reported here. Eight organizations in Tucson, whose program started several months early, served a total of 127 status offenders and children at risk in several different programs. Seven Spartanburg affiliates served 73 youth and 6 Oakland affiliates served 113 youth. In other sites, the affiliates were not involved in implementing direct service programs at the end of data collection.

The implementation of the direct service programs by the affiliates required a great deal of input of the organization’s own resources. One executive reported a match of thousands of dollars. It was certainly true that expenditures for buildings, recreational equipment, and executive, financial, secretarial and other staff time were not reimbursed. The average cost per day of the service to each youth excluding salary to the youth was lower than cost per day services reported by DSO Grantees in several sites.

Many organizations reported a change in services to status offenders in their own programs over the year. This may have represented only a change in definition in the minds of respondents. However, at the very least, it represented an increase in sensitizing program people.

Many of the national organizations mentioned new programs around the country specifically related to status offenders. In the 5 local collaborations, new monies have been generated to serve status offenders. Tucson reported $86,000 from CETA and other new sources to support some of the collaboration programs. Spartanburg reported $4,660 in new money.

Nationally, several organizations received money from an LEAA prevention grant to continue the efforts by non-profit agencies toward developing alternatives to correctional institutions for young people convicted of status offenses and other children at risk. National organization data indicated other national programs under way. Some of the national organizations are making services for status offenders or children at risk at a national priority. The National Council of Homemaker Health Aide Service has a new priority of family stability. Juvenile justice programs have become a high priority for the Girls Clubs. The Boys’ Clubs are giving emphasis to alcohol programs.

The growing involvement, continuing participation and deepening commitment was difficult to document consistently because of the limited time and funds allotted for this evaluation, the inconsistent record keeping of the organizations, and the organizational nature of the nationals. However, the indicators we had point to substantial growth in capacity of many local organizations to serve status offenders and youth at risk.

How Non-Profit Agencies in Omaha and Lincoln Serve Status Offenders and Other Children at Risk

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JDDA) of 1974 was passed as a model for state judicial systems in handling juvenile cases, but it did not impose restrictions on state court systems. Many of the JDDA policy changes would require extensive revisions of the court system, such as the stipulation that status offenders must be treated through some method other than institutionalization with other juvenile offenders. The State of Nebraska has thus far elected not to comply with the JDDA model. Consequently status offenders can still be detained along with juvenile delinquent and adult offenders.

A 1975 study by the Creighton Institute for Business, Law and Social Research reported 703 status offenders confined in secure detention in 1974.4 This figure represented 93% of all status offenders sentenced during that year. Patterns varied by county, however. Forty-eight (48) counties reported no status offenders detained and 21 counties reported 10 or more status offenders detained.5

5Ibid., p. 111-9.
Counties which reported the most status offender deten-
ions were Lancaster (176), Scotts Bluff (102), Lincoln (129) and Douglas (114).

The most recent data were difficult to obtain. Omaha police have observed fluctuations in the number of runs offically reported from year to year. Figure 1 shows the trend.

The indications from community service agencies have been that many runaway and other status offenders are never reported to the police. Nevertheless, there are indications that there has been a rapid increase in status offenses since the mid-60's. The Incidence of teenage alcoholism, prostitution, runaways, and other offenses related to their juvenile status has risen in Omaha and the rest of Nebraska. Local affiliates of the non-profit agencies involved in the national collaboration serving youth

The Girls Club of Omaha reported receiving a Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Grant from LEAA this year. It was used to open a new center, the Omaha Girls Club, in February, 1978. It is a 2 year pilot program after which some other sources of funding must be found. In addition to a basic care program, the Girls Club offers a Career Awareness Program which encompasses status offenders and children at risk along with other youth. The program was started in 1976 with local LEAA funds. Involving about 25% of the clients were status offenders or had had contact with the courts. PREP has been funded by the Department of Labor. Now about 20% of those youth going through the preprogram are status offenders. The main focus of the program is girls aged 16 to 19 whose backgrounds suggest potential problems. Through the program they learn employment skills and how to deal with their relationship. Their career interests are explored and they are placed accordingly to their career interests. The importance of a job for juvenile and for long-term employment is stressed. Furthermore, they do not conduct programs specifically for status offenders as distinct from other youth.

The Red Cross and the YMCA reported serving those youth referred to the court in their camping programs. Again, they have refined their programs or added new emphasis as a direct result of the youth's involvement in the juvenile justice collaboration. Others have refined their programs or added new emphasis as a direct result of their participation in the collaboration project.

Non-profit youth serving organizations in Omaha and Lincoln have not had the benefit of an LEAA collaborative environment. Nebraska courts have not been committed to treating status offenders differently from juveniles convicted of other crimes. Despite these disadvantages, a majority of the local affiliates of the national organizations involved in the collaboration project have offered many services to children at risk of conflict with the law as well as to the children who have traditionally served.

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 rehabilitation and involvement in the youth's community and are attempting to increase their participation in the community.

Several organizations mentioned programs specifically related to this client group. For example, the Junior League of Omaha is currently working with Operation Bridge on a program that includes Volunteers in Diversion and Advocacy (VIDA), which offers assistance to runaway and status offenders. The program is located in South Omaha Court. Referral sources to this program are various from sources (county attorney, police, schools, etc.). The staff then does an intake and diagnosis of the apparent problem. The youth and/or the family is involved in the assessment process and an intervention based on that assessment which could range from help in finding a job to help in getting back into school. Follow-up is also an important aspect of this program. The program was started in 1976 and has served nearly 450 clients.

The Boys' Club reported having a Youth Employment Skills and Services program which is designed to be a youth development program. Since January, 1978, nearly 190 children have been involved in the program, approximately 40% of whom were referred by the courts. The program is primarily funded by LEAA. The Omaha Boys' Club is one of 9 field testing sites throughout the United States which received LEAA funds to develop delinquency prevention programs. The program is quite involved, encompassing many aspects of service. Overall, it is intended to improve the self-esteem of these youths, both male and female, by involving them with other people who have genuine needs of their own. Referrals are from police officers. Upon being referred each individual makes the choice whether or not to be involved in the program. Further decision-making opportunities are available in terms of determining themselves what services the program is designed to work in. For example, they may enter a training program to help younger children, the elderly or the handicapped, as Preparation for Parenthood or a Youth Effectiveness Program.

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This includes 126 runaway surveys reported to the children's workers by Lincoln County authorities. Among the 25 Lincoln County cases were the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

7ibid.

8There are many other non-profit agencies providing services to status offenders. However for comparability we have limited our local report to the national agencies affiliated with the LEAA juvenile justice collaboration project.