

Alternatives to Lower Juvenile Recidivism Rates at James G. Bowels Juvenile Hall

By

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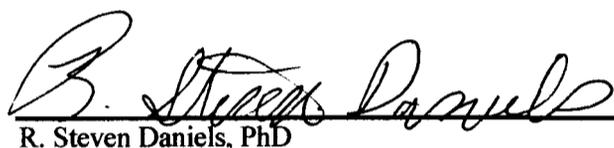
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## **Executive Summary**

America's future rests in the hands of juveniles. It is important to put a stop to the number of crimes being committed by juveniles and effectively rehabilitate them. Recidivism rates of juveniles released from detentions centers continues to remain high throughout the state suggesting rehabilitation programs are not working. Many juvenile institutions have been kept at maximum capacity forcing them to release detained juveniles early when they receive a new juvenile that has committed a serious crime. Many institutions currently have programs in place that attempt to provide positive reinforcements and intervention, but have failed to make a significant difference. Many of the programs that have failed to make an impact and are still in place.

There are many juveniles sent back to James G. Bowels Juvenile Hall to await another conviction and possibly another commitment program. The current programs at Juvenile Hall have kept juveniles busy during their time served, but the programs currently implemented have not rehabilitated juveniles. The increasing rate of juveniles returning to Juvenile Hall suggests that implementing other programs may be what is needed to increase the number of juveniles that leave rehabilitated and reduce recidivism rates. The purpose of this policy analysis is to present alternative programs focused on recidivism rates of juveniles being re-booked in Juvenile Hall and what is causing these juvenile offenders to recidivate. These alternative programs will help to identify beneficial programs and reduce the recidivism rate of juveniles returning to Juvenile Hall. If an alternative program succeeds then Juvenile Hall will be able to effectively rehabilitate more juveniles and start reducing the currently growing percentage of juvenile recidivism rates.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

America's future rests in the hands of juveniles. Many of the juveniles that are released from a detention facility or commitment program have the capability of turning their life around and following the right path no matter their age. Along their path to success, they will encounter many other juveniles and adults that will give them the opportunity to make a positive impact in the lives of many. Many offenders that are not getting the proper treatment while incarcerated run the risk of committing a new crime and being re-incarcerated. This risk of recidivism not only increases the risk that the offender will commit another crime, but it also puts people that they come in contact with at risk for being harmed, or becoming a victim.

Many of these problems occur because of the lack of treatment or the incorrect treatment the juvenile offender is receiving while incarcerated. It is easier to change and rehabilitate juveniles because they are still very impressionable and probation departments still have the capability to take them out of and away from negative environments. Many of the crimes that are being committed by juvenile offenders happen because of the negative influences that surround them, which can include family and friends. Gangs are a powerful influence over juveniles because of the pressures and the appealing attention that gangs offer. The gangs expose, influence, and encourage the juvenile to commit a wide variety of criminal acts from assaults, homicides, robberies, vandalism, burglaries, and fighting (Hixon, 1999).

Another problem related to juvenile criminal activity is the lack of parental supervision and discipline. Many juveniles who are committing crimes have parents that are absent or committing crimes themselves, which promotes bad behavior that juveniles view as normal and accepted. One effect the lack of parenting causes is that juveniles seek attention elsewhere, such as from gangs that offer attention to juveniles seeking it. Another correlation that occurs between juveniles and crime is the amount of income in the household. Juveniles have yet to grasp a full understanding of the proper way to obtain things they want, and most juveniles are unable to

work for it because of their age. This leaves some of them resorting to committing crimes to obtain what it is that they need or feel the family needs.

In instances dealing with abused or neglected juveniles that have been taken out of their home due to poor conditions, the removal leaves these juveniles feeling very vulnerable. Many of the children who are placed into group homes or foster care are very impressionable. The abused and neglected juveniles want to be accepted by adults and peers, which makes it easy for them to give into peer pressures of committing crimes, abusing drugs and alcohol, and leaves them drawn to negative influences. Many of these placement children end up in the juvenile justice system bouncing in and out of group homes and juvenile hall. Juvenile hall has many instances of juveniles who come from a variety of backgrounds and socio-economic statuses and are returning repeatedly for recidivating.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the United States, arrest rates for juveniles have doubled within the past ten years. In 2003, there were nearly 2.2 million juveniles re-arrested for new or repeating offences after they had been released from a detention facility (Katsiyannis, Ryan, Dalun, & Spann, 2008). The recidivism rate of second offense convictions against juveniles increased from 58% to 71% in the last 23 years (Katsiyannis, et al., 2008). This problem is occurring with juveniles in counties throughout the nation, especially in Kern County. There are many juveniles sent back to James G. Bowels Juvenile Hall to await another conviction and possibly another commitment program. In Kern County, there has been a recidivism rate of 37% in the fiscal year of 2007-2008 and so far, the mid-year results for 2008-2009 are 26%. Since 2006, the recidivism rates of Kern County juveniles have consistently increased, which is becoming a safety concern for the community. This is a problem for parents, people of the community, and school systems.

This problem shows parents' lack of supervision and responsibility causing them to lose their children to the justice system. Recidivism is largely attributed to parent's lack of supervision which allows for unsupervised peer groups and has proved to lead juveniles towards committing violent and property crimes (Grunwald, Lockwood, Harris, & Mennis, 2010). Schools are affected because of the negative behavior being brought into them by already offending juveniles, which causes others to commit acts that are against the law. With this knowledge, it makes stakeholders question the effectiveness of juvenile rehabilitation and treatment programs. These negative outcomes stemming from this problem need to be evaluated.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to present alternative programs that would be more efficient, effective, and essentially cause a reduction in recidivism rates in juveniles that are re-booked into Kern County's James G. Bowels Juvenile Hall. The alternatives will provide the juveniles with skills and resources that will help them to become a law-abiding citizen once released from custody. The programs will offer the juvenile positive options, alternatives, and provide sound decision-making skills to help them decide what to be involved with once released.

The analysis of data will consist of information supplied by the Kern County Probation Department for the fiscal years of 2006-2009. The alternative treatment programs are ones not currently utilized for juvenile rehabilitation at Juvenile Hall. By providing these alternative rehabilitation programs, they will offer variety to rehabilitation methods and connect juveniles towards the right treatment. Listed are the areas of the study:

- Evidence Based Treatment programs that will target the juvenile's top three criminogenic needs that place them at risk for recidivism.
- Faith Based Treatment programs that will allow the juvenile to participate and connect with ideals of living based on their faith that they can continue to use once released.

- Academic Achievement treatment programs allowing the juveniles with mental disorders or learning disabilities to fully understand and have specialized programs.

By covering these alternative programs, it will strengthen juvenile rehabilitation in Kern County's juvenile institutions and detention facilities, as well as providing alternatives and ideas nationwide for juveniles' who are in custody.

### **Methods and Procedures of the Study**

The purpose of the study will determine what is causing the juveniles at Juvenile Hall to recidivate, and to implement alternative treatment program that will reduce these recidivism rates. The researcher will collect previous research done for budgetary purposes that is supplied in the budget unit section of Kern County's adopted budget. All the information collected will be used to develop alternative treatment programs to lower recidivism rates. The information collected supplies information of juveniles that have been booked into Juvenile Hall or committed to a current commitment program from 2006-2009. This will provide an abundant amount of information to show in detail the reasons for the re-offending.

### **Importance of the Study**

The importance of the study is to reduce the number of juveniles that are re-committing criminal acts and ultimately being re-booked into Juvenile Hall. The juveniles that are booked into Juvenile Hall are anywhere between the ages of 8-18 and those still under 18 after their release are re-booked again before reaching their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Juvenile Hall is an institution that takes all juveniles from various ages and has two treatment programs that are currently implemented. This institution is the beginning stage for the juvenile's rehabilitation process, which is the most crucial. With so many juveniles being released and re-booked into Juvenile Hall, it suggests that the institution needs to explore other rehabilitation methods.

The alternative programs being recommended for Juvenile Hall could have a positive impact on the juveniles by turning them into law-abiding citizens and giving them the ability to

succeed as an adult. If the alternative treatment programs are successful, Juvenile Hall can help by demonstrating and assisting with the implementation in other institutions and detention facilities throughout the nation. This will have an overall impact on the reduction rates of juvenile recidivism and crime.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The last chapter focused on the recidivism rates of juveniles being re-booked in Juvenile Hall and what is causing these juvenile offenders to recidivate. This chapter will focus on the treatment programs that are currently implemented towards rehabilitating juveniles and why they have not been successful. The treatment programs that Kern County uses are to keep juveniles from committing more crimes and staying out of the detention centers. Over the past few years reviewed, the treatment programs have not been successful in keeping juveniles from returning to Juvenile Hall. Juveniles that have been required to go through a treatment or commitment program have not received meaningful or influential information towards changing their criminal ways.

Recidivism rates of juveniles released from detentions centers continues to remain high. The California Division of Juvenile Justice conducted a study, which reported that approximately 70% of committed juveniles have been re-arrested within two years of their release (Steinhart, 2007). This same pattern is also occurring with juveniles that are released from James G. Bowles Juvenile Hall.

All these problems with recidivism have all stemmed from a pattern based on Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory explains the risks, causes, and predictors of recidivism by identifying particular variables of delinquency. It clearly displays how juvenile offenders are learning their criminal behaviors, and how the juveniles' criminal behaviors can be spread onto each other causing additional crimes to be committed by juveniles. This theory supports that people learn from one another through observation, modeling, and imitation (Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2008). For many of these juvenile offenders they have an older criminal family influence they have learned these behaviors through by their actions. A juvenile repetitively being exposed to criminal behavior and acts will cause them to learn that this type of behavior is acceptable.

## Definition of the Problem

Since the treatment programs implemented at Juvenile Hall have failed to reduce recidivism rates and rehabilitate juveniles, the number of juveniles being re-booked into Juvenile Hall has progressively continued to rise. This is becoming a problem for Kern County because Juvenile Hall is overpopulated and having to release juveniles early that have not been fully rehabilitated. In 2003, a study was conducted that showed the number of juveniles in custody is approximately 307 juveniles per every 100,000 juveniles (Grunwald, Lockwood, Harris, & Mennis, 2010). This alarming number of juveniles in custody leaves many states with overpopulation and housing issues in state and county run detention facilities ultimately leading to the early releases. With these overpopulation and housing issues, most juveniles are not getting the proper treatment or sentence from Juvenile Court. Juvenile Court is not reinforcing the seriousness of committing crimes and not giving the juveniles a strict punishment. Therefore, juveniles are not learning from their mistakes. The number of juveniles continues to rise with many states reporting recidivism rates as high as 55% (Grunwald, et al., 2010). This shows that a significant number of juveniles that are released have a high chance of being re-booked into Juvenile Hall for another crime.

The table below illustrates the statistics of juveniles that have been re-booked into Juvenile Hall for additional crimes in the fiscal years of 2006-2008. The table shows how Kern County's recidivism rates continue to grow and are not showing any sign of decreasing.

**Table 1. Percentages of juvenile probationers who have new violations (recidivism rate)**

<b>FY 2006-2007 Actual Results</b>	<b>FY 2007-2008 Actual Results</b>	<b>FY 2008-2009 Actual Results</b>	<b>FY 2009-2010 Proposed Goal</b>
<b>31%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>39%</b>

Source: Kern County Budget Unit

The results from the table above show that the recidivism rates of juveniles in Kern County have not improved. Each year the rates have steadily continued to increase. The proposed goal for the FY of 2009-2010 is one percentage rate lower than the actual percentage of 2007-2008. However, based on the consistency of the continual growth in recidivism this proposed goal is likely to be incorrect and it is probable that the actual rate will be higher than the previous year. With this continuing growth in recidivism rates, it clearly shows that the treatment programs implemented in Juvenile Hall are not achieving the positive outcomes they desire towards rehabilitation juveniles and reducing recidivism. This shows that new programs are desperately needed in order to stop this continuing growth of recidivism.

The next table will point out the recidivism rates of juveniles in Juvenile Hall, and the commitment programs in Kern County over a three-year span. The table displays that Juvenile Hall shows a slight decrease, but Kern Crossroads and Camp Erwin Owens both contribute towards Kern County's recidivism rates because all juveniles start in Juvenile Hall before being sent to a commitment program.

**Table 2. # Of individual that have been recommitted within 2 years in Kern County**

Year	Juvenile Hall	Kern Crossroads	CEO	Total
2005	41	99	25	165
2006	38	121	42	201
2007	27	129	26	182

For the FY 2005-2007, Kern County has had a total number of 548 juveniles being recommitted to a detention facility or commitment program. With the large amount it shows that Juvenile Hall is not being successful in rehabilitating the juveniles because this is their first stop before being sent to a commitment program. Most juveniles that come in for their first offense

are not ordered to complete a commitment program and it is not until another crime has been committed that they are sent to a commitment program. Juvenile Hall's treatment programs are not being successful in rehabilitating the juveniles, which leads to the increase in crimes and commitments.

The goal of this research project is to put forward alternative programs that will be successful in lower the recidivism rate in Juvenile Hall and ultimately throughout Kern County. As shown above the treatment programs at Juvenile Hall and not helping the juvenile to overcome the obstacles they face towards in their home life that leads them to committing additional crimes. The treatment programs that the juveniles go through while they are detained are not persuading them or giving them the resources needed to become law-abiding citizens.

The following programs were developed to help juveniles lead a different lifestyle, give them the resources they need to make the right choices, teach them how to be responsible, and hold them accountable for the actions. During the time juveniles serve at the facility they have the opportunity to work in different areas around the facility such as the; kitchen, laundry, and grounds to learn about work ethic and working as a team to get a common goal achieved. The counseling program that juveniles are provided with is Juvenile Probation Psychiatric Services (JPPS) where they are given the opportunity to speak to someone about their mental health needs or other issues they might have going on. The detention facility also provides them with education to help the juveniles stay on track with graduating from high school. The juvenile is also held accountable for the negative actions during their stay and are exposed to firm but fair disciplinary actions. There are two commitment programs Pathways and Furlough Treatment and Rehabilitation (FTR) at Juvenile Hall and the rest of the population is waiting for their sentence or just serving a specific amount of days. There are currently four programs implemented at

Juvenile Hall towards reducing recidivism: Pathways, Furlough Treatment and Rehabilitation (FTR), schooling, and counseling.

### **Pathways**

The Pathways commitment program is a girl's treatment program. It houses 20 girls at a time and provides them with a variety of rehabilitation programs. The major treatment in the Pathways program is relapse prevention therapy. Most of the girls committed to Pathways suffer from drug and/or alcohol addiction that has caused them to commit crimes. The purpose of this treatment is to identify high-risk situations that the girls put themselves in and point out how these can lead them to relapsing (Roget, Fisher, & Johnson, 1998). The other important aspect of this program is to show the negative effect drugs and alcohol can have on their lives, bodies, and families. With relapse rates being anywhere from 60% and 80% it shows that relapse preventions is not preventing them from relapsing and only identifying high risk situations for relapse is not enough (Roget, et al., 1998).

The other treatment program the girls can choose to receive is counseling from JPPS where they are individually counseled over a wide variety of mental health issues. Here the counselor and the juvenile talk about the issues and devise plans and steps to take to resolve the issues. The juvenile girls are provided with school to keep them on track with other non-delinquent juveniles their age and ensure that they do not fall behind towards graduating. The girls are also allowed to participate in a running team and compete in events to raise their social skills and teach them how to work together productively as a team. While here the girls must also take on responsibilities and clean the unit, set up for meals, and distribute laundry. The juvenile girls are graded daily on their behavior and performance to determine if they pass their week or if they fail a week. With the grading system, it holds the juvenile girls responsible for their actions.

## **Furlough Treatment and Rehabilitation**

FTR consists of an all male treatment program. They can house up to 20 males at a time and are a short treatment program. The males who enter FTR have made a simple violation during their furlough time and it sends them back to the detention facility into this specific program. The males are there anywhere from seven to forty-five days depending on the seriousness of their violation, and if it is their first violation or not. The most common type of violation with the juvenile males in this unit is drug and/or alcohol related. Therefore, this unit similar to Pathways focuses on relapse prevention therapy. The difference is that they have specialists come in to conduct Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings with the juvenile males. The problem with that is the males can choose not to attend so the success rate is very low.

While in FTR, they are also provided with education to keep them on track with graduating from high school and on the same pace as their non-delinquent peers. They are also offered counseling services through JPPS to deal with any mental health issues. This is the most productive unit in doing work for the detention facility. They often help with grounds around the facility and laundry that is washed and dried for the whole facility. The work involvement is to encourage the males' social skills and to produce large amounts of work as a team effort. This job responsibility helps the juvenile males become more productive and holds them accountable for projects. The juvenile males are graded daily on their performance and behavior while in the program to determine if any extra days will be added to their original commitment time set by the Probation Officer. This holds them accountable for their action and helps to enforce their responsibility.

## **Schooling**

The rest of the population at Juvenile Hall also attends school daily. This part of the program at Juvenile Hall is labeled as Central School. Central School is operated by Kern

County Superintendent of Schools and is run year round. There are six different classes taught by six different teachers. There are three instructional aides that help teachers, a secretary, and a principal. All of the juveniles at the facility are required to attend school daily unless they have already graduated or they have a medical reason keeping them from attending that day.

Central school is run year round and five days a week. There are only breaks on major holidays. Many of the juveniles that come into Central School are not at the correct grade level and require remedial work. Therefore, each time a new juvenile arrives they are tested to see where they stand academically and placed into a group that shares the same needs. The school material taught in each class is geared specifically towards the level of the group of juveniles they are teaching during that class period. There is special education, but it is provided minimally. The special education pulls them out of class for a short amount of time to work with the juvenile one on one, but no more to that extent.

### **Counseling**

Throughout the detention facility, all juveniles are provided with Juvenile Probation Psychiatric Services if they ask for it, or if it is deemed necessary. Many juvenile that are detained first have thoughts of hurting and killing themselves and are automatically referred to JPPS. Along with being referred to JPPS, staff will also attempt to counsel the minor to the best of their abilities and keep a log where they must document any negative actions or expressed feels witnessed during each shift. Less severe needs are still referred to a JPPS counselor and the counselor meets with the juvenile over the issues they are experiencing as often as the counselor deems necessary. Deeper issues or mental health problem that a JPPS counselor cannot resolve on their own refer the juvenile to the psychiatrist. The psychiatrist meets with the juveniles at least once a week and issues medication, handles crisis intervention, and reevaluation the juvenile's condition.

### **Chapter 3: Policy Alternatives**

The last chapter reviewed the programs that are currently in place at James G. Bowels Juvenile Hall. This chapter will present alternative programs and show how they will help reduce juvenile recidivism rates at Juvenile Hall. Juvenile Hall is one of the many institutions in California that is looking for alternative programs to eliminate this growing problem with juveniles and recidivism. Unlike other juvenile institutions, Juvenile Hall aims at rehabilitating juvenile offenders before the juvenile is ordered to complete a commitment program. The goal of this study is to examine why the current programs in place at Juvenile Hall have not been effective towards reducing recidivism rates and to reveal programs that will work. The California Juvenile Justice Reentry Program reported that approximately, 70 percent of juveniles are sent back to a juvenile institution shortly after their release from an institution (Steinhart, 2007). This means that only about 30% of juveniles are being rehabilitated, or receiving the treatment they need.

The current programs at Juvenile Hall have kept juveniles busy during their time served, but the programs currently implemented have not rehabilitated juveniles. This is mainly due to the programs lack of identifying juveniles' criminogenic traits and providing them with the correct resources and skills to change their negative behavior or thinking. Rehabilitation to be most successful on juveniles when it assessed their exact criminogenic traits, determined their risks for reoffending once in society, and then applied proper treatment to those specific traits and risks to reduce their recidivism rate (Whitehead, Ward, & Collie, 2007). Juveniles leaving Juvenile Hall are not learning anything from the programs they go through while serving time because the programs are unsuccessful or incorrect in assessing their criminogenic traits. Very few juveniles leave rehabilitated with the skills and resources needed for changing their lives to become a law-abiding citizen. The increasing rate of juveniles returning to Juvenile Hall suggests that implementing other programs may be what is needed to increase the number of juveniles

that leave rehabilitated and reduce recidivism rates. The following are the proposed alternative programs:

- Faith Based Treatment
- Academic Achievement
- Evidence Based Treatment

### **Description of Alternatives**

#### *Faith Based Treatment*

Faith based treatment programs can establish a basis of reentry for the offender once released from an institution (Mears, 2007). In this type of treatment, a juvenile offender can gain and improve social skills because of the interaction and discussion that takes place during a religious class or service. In this, the juveniles gain a benefit of learning to interact with various different personalities and being sensitive to other thoughts and opinions. Faith based treatments offered to juveniles can be the traditional worship groups, but there are also personal development classes, parenting classes, mediation groups, anger management, or life skills classes. All these classes offer a concrete basis because they are all taught and centered on the juvenile's religion of choice. Many of these classes will help to build and increase a juvenile's self-esteem and the ability to grow into a productive and responsible individual (Mears, 2007). These programs can keep hope and motivation in the juveniles instead of just make them institutionalized with no resources to help cope with mental illness, or negative behaviors.

#### *Academic Achievement*

Academic achievement programs will help juveniles grow as individuals and keep them up with their age group on an educational level. These types of programs would help close the significant gap in educational levels between juvenile offenders and non-delinquent juveniles. Many juvenile offenders suffer from learning or mental disabilities, which contributes to them falling behind even more from their non-delinquent peers (Katsiyannis, Ryan, Dalun, & Spann, 2008).

With special education classes, tutors, or even one on one time with a teacher, it would help to close the gap. The program will help them re-enter society and be at the same level as their peers. These programs will reduce the educational gap and difficulty for juvenile offenders to keep up with their peers once released. Juvenile offenders would have the same ability, knowledge, and skills to function in society and gain a job as their non-delinquent peers. Juvenile offenders would not be left with just minimum wage paying jobs or no jobs at all which in result can lead to them continuing their life of crime. This could help them become productive law-abiding citizens and help them from recommitting another crime.

### *Evidence Based Treatment*

Evidence based treatment is specifically set up to target and treat the juvenile offenders top three criminogenic traits. An assessment determines the juvenile's top three criminogenic traits so the juvenile can be properly treated. There is an emphasis on the top three criminogenic traits because the top three traits are the most critical reasons that can lead the juvenile to re-offending once they are released (Gendreau, 1996). For every juvenile an assessment would be done over several identified categories that have been known to contribute towards a juvenile's risk of offending. The general categories would be education, lifestyles habits, peer relations, and family relations. Specific questions would be asked in each category to determine exactly what risks the juvenile has in their life that would contribute towards their reoffending. Targeting the juvenile's top three high-risk traits helps properly rehabilitate them by providing the treatment they specifically need to reduce their overall risk of reoffending (Lovins, Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2007). This will help to eliminate the wasted treatment done on low risk traits that have no effect on the juvenile's risk towards reoffending.

### **Future Consequences**

Recidivism rates will continue to rise in the future if there are no changes to the policies currently implemented towards rehabilitating juvenile offenders. Rehabilitation has proven to be

successful when it provides offenders with a systematic layout of assessing the offender, planning treatment, formulation, and monitoring of a violent high risk juvenile in the community (Whitehead, Ward, & Collie, 2007). Currently, juveniles are getting incorrect treatment that targets their low risks traits while others are getting treatment in areas they have no risk in at all. The justice system will continue to fail towards the rehabilitation of high risk juvenile offenders if a change is not made. Juveniles with a low risk will continue to be treated for reasons that should be of no concern ultimately increasing their criminal behavior and actions. If we fail to incorporate programs that actually work into rehabilitation, we will continue to see a rise in crime, recidivism rates, and be unable to provide support for offenders at risk by encouraging positive non criminal actions (Whitehead, Ward, & Collie, 2007). The recidivism rates need to be lowered not increased, or increasing the number of criminal offenders.

By using faith based treatment programs, it will offer a variety of treatments to offenders, but they will all be based around religious principles. This program is a growing concern because of current issues dealing with the mixture of church and state (Mears, 2007). Therefore, the state cannot make faith-based programs mandatory because the state runs the risk of mixing church and state. Faith programs must optional so only juvenile offenders that wish to participate will gain any type of benefit. If all programs were faith based, only those that elected to seek treatment would get it. There would be little to no effect on the reduction of recidivism or successful rehabilitation. Many of the juveniles that are serving time have little to no background of religion or religious influences in their home lives. Through research, it displays that offenders do poorly once released from prison because there is little help and support offered to the juvenile once released (Allison & Clark, 2008). If there is not reinforcing of religion outside of the institution it is likely that the religious treatment is not taken seriously and is not continued once released.

If academic achievement programs are used it will help target those juveniles in the institution that are struggling with education. Implementing academic achievement programs will cause other programs to suffer because of the majority of funds being given to academic achievement programs. Juveniles will come out with a better education and skills to help them in life, but they might also have other problems that need to be treated in order to reduce the likeliness of recidivism. Many of the juveniles that come in are struggling with school because they fail to go, but that is not something that requires one type of treatment program to be focused on more so than others. These changes will show minimal improvement on reducing recidivism rates because only the students that are struggling can benefit.

Using evidence-based treatment will help to narrow day specific risk areas the juvenile offender has that would increase their likeliness to recidivate. The problem with these types of programs is that it requires asking juveniles personal questions to discover their risk areas. When asked personal questions juveniles may give a false answer or give an answer they think would want to be heard. This could potentially lead to the juveniles being put in programs to treat a criminogenic trait that is not that big of a factor towards them re-offending. The juveniles is going to answer the way they think they should and the treatment that they will be placed in may or may not help immediately, but will have a lasting effect. There would be multiple treatment programs available as there are now, but the juvenile offenders would only go through the ones that they need to reduce their risk of recidivism.

### **Spillovers and externalities**

The Probation Department Division Director and administration staff can implement changes to treatment programs and processes of determining treatment, but they will not be able to make the juveniles responsive to new treatment. Juvenile Hall will face several spillovers when any types of new treatment programs are implemented. Any new program will not work as efficiently as it should in the beginning because there are bugs in the style and process of

delivering treatment that will have to be worked out. Any juveniles receiving treatment during this transition period will be affected because they will not receive the maximum benefit of treatment from the new programs.

Regardless, if Juvenile Hall's rehabilitation programs are being completely changed or just amended, Juvenile Hall could potentially face a spillover of increased recidivism rates for a short period of time. Juvenile Hall will not begin to see a reduction in recidivism rates until all new programs have been perfected and juveniles are receiving the maximum benefits of treatment. The programs will be unfamiliar and will require training of Juvenile Hall staff so they can properly reinforce treatment methods and solutions that have been used towards decreasing juveniles risks. Juvenile Hall will have to arrange to train all staff on the new programs and hire specialized trained professionals that know how to deliver the new treatment program.

If the current policy is not changed, Juvenile Hall's recidivism rates will continue to rise and money will be wasted. Money will be wasted on treatment programs that are not solving the growing problem and concern towards juvenile re-offending after being released from custody. Kern County will continue to be faced with money and budget issues over providing institution housing and treatment for new and returning juvenile offenders. From 1982 to 2006, correctional expenditures have increased by approximately 660% (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). Institutions will continue to be overpopulated, kept at their maximum capacity, and face issues over money.

Changing policy and treatment programs will help effectively rehabilitate juveniles, but it is just a stepping-stone towards lowering recidivism rates. However, some new externalities may arise such as, Kern County having to allow a bigger budget for Juvenile Hall during the implementation of the changing policy and treatment programs. By having to allow for this

temporary increased cost, other departments throughout Kern County may suffer because of the reduction in their budget allowed.

After changing current policy and treatment programs, training will have to be given to all of the Probation Department administration, Juvenile Hall administration, and Juvenile Hall staff. During this transition phase, it should also include juvenile offenders and families so they understand exactly what is changing, how it will benefit them, and how to continue to apply things learned in treatment in the juvenile's home life. The required training that will be necessary, as part of the transition towards reducing recidivism rates by implementing more effective juvenile rehabilitation programs needs to be given to anyone that is involved with the process and Juvenile Hall.

A positive externality will occur if the evidence based option selected changes current policy and treatment programs for juveniles. This alternative will give juveniles many different treatment programs that can be specific to fit their criminogenic traits that are considered a risk towards future recidivism. Allowing for various different treatment programs will also bring new job opportunities for both Juvenile Hall staff and specialized professionals that are brought in to run the treatment programs. This option will uphold the Probation Departments slogan of their commitment to a safer community.

### **Constraints and political feasibility**

Probation Department administration and Juvenile Hall administration that change the policies are willing to accept and support the change in juvenile treatment programs. In the past Juvenile Hall tried out two other programs that have unfortunately failed to successfully rehabilitate and reduce juvenile recidivism rates. They have gone back to old programs that do not reduce, but do not increase recidivism rates continuously.

The constraints for the policy and juvenile treatment change falls within the funding available to allow this change. Due to a recent economic recession and county budget crisis, this

change may be hard to make happen at once. All changes in policy and treatment programs have to be made at once to see the positive impact they have on juvenile recidivism. Until everything can be put into action at once, the effectiveness of the new treatment programs and policy will remain unknown. Administration will have to adapt to the amount of funding allowed to educate, train, and put the new policy into action. Issues will come up because of this constraint, but administration will have to step up and guide staff, juveniles, and families through this difficult situation.

## **Chapter 4: Alternative Selection**

Chapter one exposed the problem and highlighted issues that are contributing towards a juvenile reoffending. Chapter two discussed Juvenile Hall and the programs that are currently implemented and their negative impacts. Chapter three identified and described the alternative programs recommended to the institution towards reducing their recidivism rates. This chapter will present the dynamics that were selected for determining the most effective program to keep juveniles from being rebooked into Juvenile Hall. This chapter will also discuss limitations of the recommended program and the effects it will have on juveniles.

### **Criteria for recommending alternatives**

With the funding for change in juvenile rehabilitation, there is still the possibility of implementing an alternative. With a wide choice of promising alternatives, the alternative used to reduce juvenile recidivism rates should take into consideration feasibility, effectiveness, efficiency, and adequacy.

The feasibility of the policy alternative will be based on the ability to make policy changes and the probation department's ability to implement the change throughout Juvenile Hall. The effectiveness of the policy alternative will be based upon the change in juvenile recidivism rates. Efficiency of the policy alternative will be based on the number of juveniles that successfully complete each program. With any selection of a new policy alternative and change from old, the new policy alternative will produce spillovers. The number of spillovers along with how detrimental they are will be taken into account.

Feasibility is a critical component because it is the first step towards making a change in the process of rehabilitating juveniles. If the alternative is not attainable, then the change should not be implemented. The next critical component is effectiveness because you want the policy alternative to produce a positive change. If the alternative does not generate reduced recidivism

rates then it was a failure and essentially a waste of money spent on a big change. The appropriate alternative must be feasibly attainable and produce strong effects towards reducing juvenile recidivism rates.

The next two components of efficiency and spillovers also play an important role in selecting a useful policy alternative. Efficiency of the alternative is important because you want to see productive programs that are being successfully completed by more juveniles than in past programs. Efficiency of programs is a key component because increase in the number of juveniles that successfully complete programs needed ultimately leads to reduced risk of recidivism and lower recidivism rates. Spillovers are important because with every change there are different reactions some expected and other not. The alternative must be based on the potential spillovers that it could cause. While the solution may be favorable in one aspect, you must weigh potential spillovers to make sure they do not outweigh the favorable aspects produced.

### **Determination of preferred alternative**

Considering the components of feasibility, effectiveness, efficiency, and spillovers the best policy alternative for Juvenile Hall to implement to reduce juvenile recidivism rates are evidence-based treatment programs. The foundation for this alternative comes from the social learning theory. Juveniles learn by the influences surrounding them and they imitate others actions. With this alternative based on social learning theory it will guide and teach juveniles to think differently and imitate positive behaviors. Feasibility and effectiveness are the two most critical components to consider for the selection of a policy alternative because feasibility determines whether the policy alternative is attainable and effectiveness determines if it resolves the problem of rising recidivism rates. The additional two components also play a significant role in the selection process as well.

The current policy is not keeping juveniles from committing new crimes. The change is unlikely to completely stop all juveniles from recidivating because there is no way to completely keep criminogenic traits from influencing a juvenile again especially if they are still in the same negative influential environment they learned these traits. A number of studies have proven that juvenile recidivism is based on key neighborhood environment level predictors of economic disadvantage, juveniles with delinquent attitudes, and drug and alcohol availability (Grunwald, et al., 2010).

Treatment is intended to help mainly new juvenile offenders while also reducing the amount of juveniles who have already re-offended. A feasible and effective policy alternative will allow Juvenile Hall to reduce the future rates of recidivism of both first and multiple time offenders with minimal spillovers. A policy alternative that posses these critical components will be implemented effectively.

When making a change and replacing policies that have been in place for years it takes time to see a change with a new policy and is not noticed instantly. For a government agency, it will take time for the new policy to be put in place because of the procedures that must be followed when implementing a major change within the institution. Issues of concern will also have to be addressed with family and guardians, juvenile offenders, and staff. Everyone will need to be informed of the change and his or her role towards implementing the new policy and making it effective. Administration will be responsible for the majority of the policy change because they decided what needs to be done, how it needs to be done, and when it will be done.

The probability that Juvenile Hall will be able to implement this policy alternative is good. The issues of recidivism have been an ongoing problem and with this alternative set in place and administration committed to the new policy, the change will be feasible. Since, the current programs in place are not working they will be cut freeing up funds for the new program

making it feasible for the Juvenile Hall to implement a new policy with new programs. Changing current policy to a new policy will not change Juvenile Hall's mission towards rehabilitating juvenile offenders and their commitment to a safe community, but make it more effective. Making this necessary change to evidence based programs will stop the increasing rates of juvenile recidivism and allow for effective implementation of the new policy only producing minimal spillovers. Implementing evidence-based programs has proven to drop recidivism rates by approximately 10 to 20 percent (Paparozzi & Guy, 2009).

With the new program, the efficiency rate of being able to help juveniles successfully complete the treatment programs is also important. Evidence based programs offered the least amount of wasted treatment and the most productive treatment programs targeted at the juveniles criminogenic traits. Given that, offender's criminogenic traits differ from one offender to the next the different programs we have established are effective when the offender is in a program that meets their specific needs (Whitehead, Ward, & Collie, 2007). These programs lead to an increase in the number of juveniles completing treatment. When targeting the top three criminogenic traits an increase in the number that completed treatment rose to approximately 75% and made juveniles about 50% less likely to reoffend (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004). The spillovers from transitioning to this policy alternative are minimal and do not cause any harm or damage to anyone. With any program, there are spillovers, but planning for the unexpected and expected will make it a well-executed policy change.

### **Outline of implementation strategy**

This change is on the horizon for the Juvenile Hall and is being researched. The alternative to implement evidence based treatment programs into Juvenile Hall is easy and can be accomplished with a simple implementation strategy. Since, some of the programs currently in place are ones that will be needed in evidence-based treatment there will not be as much to implement. The major change is implementing treatment programs that are not currently

available to juveniles and correctly assessing what treatment programs the juvenile needs to be put into. This alternative will give each juvenile the treatment needed to specifically reduce his or her top three criminogenic traits. Juvenile offenders will no longer be put into programs that they do not need and do not have a criminogenic trait risk in. The alternative will allow treatments to fit each individual risk of the juvenile. There will no longer be a pre-selected number of treatment programs used in the institution.

To determine a juvenile's top three criminogenic traits staff will have to be properly trained to do an evidence-based analysis. The analysis will consist of specific structured questions that will be asked about the various categories that lead to juvenile's risk of recidivating. This type of training has already began for administration and upper level staff so when changes are made there are people ready to train the lower levels of staff. This training is also necessary so that administration and supervisors have a concrete knowledge and understanding of the new policy to make the transition as smooth and effective as possible. When any new policy is implemented there will be confusion and questions, but having some already trained will make for a solid and organized transition with staff ready and willing to make the necessary changes. Staff will be made aware of what will be changing and what will not. Lower level staff will all receive formal training and education once the implementation is in place so all staff can conduct evidence based treatment principles, assessments, and determine treatment.

### **Provisions for monitoring and evaluation**

Once a minor is released, they are typically still on probation and are assigned to a probation officer. Therefore, the probation officer will be responsible for assessing the juvenile's surroundings to make sure the change has been implemented successfully through the treatment they received with minimal spillovers. The probation officer will need to determine how the treatment helped and give reinforcement strategies of the juvenile's treatment.

### **Limitations and unanticipated consequences**

A limitation to this alternative is that it may require additional money to bring in programs that are needed and not currently available. There will be an increased need for professionals that specialize in each different type of treatment. The increased number of professionals will cause issues towards the budget and making sure that Juvenile Hall has the funding for all treatments. This is one of the important aspects of implementing this change because if a juvenile has risk in an area that Juvenile Hall does not have a treatment program for it must be brought. A risk that is ranked as one of the top three cannot be ignored in order for evidence based treatment to be successful. So, there lies the issue over if the extra cost is worth the amount the recidivism rate is reduced.

An unanticipated consequence for the alternative would be the juvenile lying or making up a response to a question and ultimately put into the incorrect treatment based on an inaccurate response. There will be ways to prevent this from happening, but there is no way fully to stop this from happening.

Long-term spillovers will be the getting the parents or a guardian to reinforce and support what was taught to juvenile in their treatment program. There are some parents and guardians who are involved in criminal activity themselves and do not support the change of juveniles resistance to participate. Others are not financially able to move out of their neighborhood filled with negative influences leaving the juvenile to fall into back into the criminal cycle. Juveniles are left to make the best out of their outside living situation and influences with the resources that have been taught through treatment.

Long-term externalities of the alternative will be the cost to maintain the use of evidence based programming. It will cost more to implement the new alternative at first because of the additional programs added and training required, but after a few years it should level out. The extras in the budget will have to allow for regularly updated training over assessments and

treatment programs. There will have to be money spent towards new research so that areas of concern can be fixed and perfected. There will always be better methods that come out to conduct evidence-based treatment and these changes will have to be implemented to continue successful juvenile rehabilitation.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion, and General Recommendations**

### **Summary**

Over the past four years, Kern County statistics have only shown an increase in the percentage of juveniles re-committing crimes or violating their probation once they have been released. The overall goal of Juvenile Hall is to stop this pattern and effectively rehabilitate juveniles that are currently detained. Rehabilitation is set up to teach juveniles healthy lifestyles and develop traits that will lead to them being a productive law-abiding citizen. Juvenile Hall wants rehabilitation to give juveniles the tools they need to succeed and deter them from participating in criminal activity.

With the current policy that is in place, it has not made an impact on the reduction of recidivism rates. The current policy in place is actually causing more juveniles to re-offend once they are released from Juvenile Hall. Each year recidivism rates have increased by approximately 3% per year for males and 5% per year for females (Lovins, Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2007). In order for Juvenile Hall to continue towards their goal of rehabilitating juveniles and their mission of a commitment to a safer community they must look at alternative methods.

### **Conclusion**

Juvenile recidivism rates are a problem for law enforcement agencies nationwide. The crimes that are being committed by juveniles are a serious problem that has had a negative effect on many people that have encountered these juveniles. Many of the crimes committed by juveniles are against other members of the community making it difficult for the community to feel safe and protected. Therefore, the change in policy towards the rehabilitation of juveniles is something that is long overdue. The Kern County Probation Department has been seeking an alternative to replace the old that will make their goal a reality.

Implementing evidence-based treatment programs will only benefit Juvenile Hall and cause minimal spillovers. Allowing a variety of programs to meet the juvenile's needs will alone

reduce their risk of re-offending, but assessing what criminogenic traits put them at the highest risk for re-offending is the key factor. With this assessment tool, probation department and institution staff will be able to identify the top three criminogenic traits of a juvenile and put them in the proper treatment groups. Using evidence-based treatment programs and assessment tools has proven to drop recidivism rates by approximately 10 to 20 percent (Paparozzi & Guy, 2009). With successful implementation and the proper training for staff, this alternative can produce significant results for James G. Bowels Juvenile Hall.

### **Recommendations**

Besides the recommendation of the other two alternatives, funding for the program should be secured for at least the following five years. This will allow the bugs to be worked out and for areas to be improved that are not working as effectively as expected. This will also give the program a chance to run through a full cycle of juveniles to show the results that it can produce towards reducing recidivism rates. Without a minimum of five years the results can be skewed and not give an accurate account on the long-term effects the new policy had on the juveniles. The funding will also allow for additional training that is required to keep staff and administration up to date on the most effect ways to deliver the policy and its treatments.

The second recommendation would be to follow up will all probation officers assigned to juveniles over their progress once they have been released. This will determine what areas have been the most successful in rehabilitating the juvenile and what areas need to be strengthened. Along with the institution following up with the probation officer, the probation officer should conduct a reassessment. Reassessing a juvenile that is out in the community will help to determine what areas of their treatment has actually helped them once they were released from Juvenile Hall. A new assessment will also identify other risks that they have developed since being released. With a new assessment, additional treatment can be implemented into the juvenile's probation terms to reduce all potential risks of a juvenile re-offending. The new

assessment will help with the reinforcement of treatment and the juvenile's ability to change and become a productive member of society. With these recommendations added to the alternative policy, the program will be a positive solution for lowering recidivism rates of juveniles re-booked into Juvenile Hall.

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## **Appendix A: IRB Approval**



# CSU Bakersfield

Academic Affairs

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**Date:** 15 March 2011

**To:** Samantha Archuleta, PPA Student

**cc:** Paul Newberry, IRB Chair  
R. Steven Daniels, Public Policy & Administration Department

**From:** Steve Suter, Research Ethics Review Coordinator

### Subject: Protocol 11-48: Not Human Subjects Research

Thank you for bringing your protocol, "**Alternatives to Lower Juvenile Recidivism in Kern County**" to the attention of the IRB/HSR. On the form "*Is My Project Human Subjects Research?*" you indicated the following:

I want to interview, survey, systematically observe, or collect other data from human subjects, for example, students in the educational setting. **NO**

I want to access data about specific persons that have already been collected by others [such as test scores or demographic information]. Those data can be linked to specific persons [regardless of whether I will link data and persons in my research or reveal anyone's identities]. **NO**

Given this, your proposed project will not constitute human subjects research. Therefore, it does not fall within the purview of the CSUB IRB/HSR. Good luck with your project.

If you have any questions, or there are any changes that might bring these activities within the purview of the IRB/HSR, please notify me immediately at 654-2373. Thank you.

Steve Suter, University Research Ethics Review Coordinator