

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY UNIT

OBJECTIVE

The Educational Advocacy Unit's objective is to complement the efforts of the field probation officers and work with the school system to reduce the risk factors that contribute to a youth's delinquency and increase the youth's protective factors in an effort to reduce recidivism.

GOALS

Collaborate with the school systems to increase the youth's academic and social skills that will result in the youth developing a connection with the school community, competency skills, and independent living skills.

Empower families to work with the school system to obtain appropriate educational services for their children

Collaborate with families, schools, detention center staff, and community providers to develop comprehensive services for youth in the juvenile justice system in an effort to reduce recidivism.

TARGET POPULATION

The primary populations are those youth involved in the juvenile justice system and are not at the age appropriate level of academic functioning; have a history of poor social/emotional development as evidenced by multiple school suspensions and expulsions; and experience difficulties enrolling into school.

Referrals generally are made by field probation officers, judges, and attorneys.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The unit is separated in two categories, educational advocates and re-entry specialist, of specially trained probation officers. Specifically, the educational advocates work with families to obtain additional educational services needed for the youth who are not at the appropriate grade level. These officers are responsible for facilitating a youth's return to their neighborhood school when appropriate, working with the family to advocate for appropriate educational services, and collaborating with the schools, community providers, and families to encourage the youth to remain in school to increase the youth's academic and social functioning in an effort to reduce further entry into the criminal justice system.

The re-entry specialist works with a team comprised of representatives from the detention center, schools, mental health professionals, and the youth's family to facilitate a smooth transition from secure custody back into the community and school. This team meets weekly to examine a discharge plan for a select population of youth to determine the appropriate school, continued therapy or counseling services if necessary, and other services as determined by the team.

The re-entry initiative strives to reduce the number of days that it takes for youth to re-enter into school and connect the youth into appropriate services after being discharged from the detention center.