

The CAO Weekly Report

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Monterey County Administrative Office

Lew C. Bauman, CAO

In this edition:

- Take a closer look at the Silver Star Resource Center



Silver Star Resource Center: Making a Difference

This article appeared in the Salinas Californian on June 30, 2014. The Californian has graciously allowed us to share it with Monterey County employees.

The Silver Star Resource Center is an important program of the Probation Department and its partners, and it plays a critical role in changing the lives of local youth.

Treatment, Not Prison



When you think about probation, you probably think of law enforcement. But in Monterey County, it's about that and much more — including preventing crime from happening in the first place. That's thanks to the Silver Star Resource Center, an innovative partnership of the Probation Department and social service agencies.

Silver Star seeks to reduce juvenile delinquency through treatment. In the following interview, Silver Star manager Robert Reyes explains

how the program saves young people's lives — while also saving taxpayers' money.

What makes the Silver Star Resource Center unique?

We look at risk factors in five areas: family, community, school, individual and peer group. Then we work together as a collaborative to provide services that will reduce those risk factors. Nine agencies are housed at Silver Star: California Youth Outreach; Second Chance Youth and Family Services; Partners for Peace; the Office of Employment Training; Children's Behavioral Health; Monterey County Probation Dept.; DA Truancy Abatement Program; Community of Human Services, Monterey; and the Monterey County Office of Education.

In the past, we had to send at-risk youth to two or three different agencies across town to find services. Now all agencies are in one spot. When we get a referral, all of the agencies come together to see how we can best address the needs of that individual and their family, and we provide the services right at Silver Star to remove any barriers that the family may have to seeking services.

How do you determine if a person is at-risk?

The most common factors we see are in the areas of education, mental health issues, family problems, gangs, and substance abuse. What we know from the research is that a youth with seven or more risk factors is 13 more times likely to join a gang. If we have a youth who has four or five risk factors, we know that, if we can reduce those down to two or three and connect them to some protective factors that buffer them from either joining a gang or being involved in juvenile delinquency, we can increase the likelihood of them being successful in the future.



Robert Reyes, Silver Star Manager

Are these services easily available?

Today, you don't have to get in trouble to get services. We can provide services right now to prevent your child from being involved in the juvenile justice system. Our studies have found that the youth and families that participate in programs at Silver Star have a less likely chance of being involved in the system than non-participants.

All studies show that treatment works over incarceration. There are few if any studies to show that long-term incarceration will reduce recidivism rates, whereas there are multitudes of studies that show that treatment works. For every dollar that is spent on drug treatment, society saves \$7 in health care and crime costs. Incarcerating a youth at the Department of Juvenile Justice costs taxpayers about \$180,000 a year. Re-investing that money in prevention and intervention reduces those rates.

Our truancy abatement program receives about 1,500 referrals a year at a cost of \$66 per referral, per at-risk youth, over six months. In comparison, putting someone in juvenile hall can cost \$283 a day, so that's a tremendous savings. Treating individuals up front actually saves society money.

Early intervention and treatment is the most successful approach. The longer you wait to treat someone, the less likely they are to change their ways.

What happens after risk factors are identified?

First we assess the needs of the individual. If we determine that a person is facing educational and substance abuse issues, for example, we'll address the substance abuse issues first, then reconnect them back to school, and then try to reconnect them back to some positive factors. If school was a negative factor in their life and they become engaged in school, school can become a protective factor in their life. So we've reduced two risk factors and increased their protective factors.

We have a lot of kids with educational problems who come to our on-site school and start doing better in school. When this happens, their family problems start to go down. Because that school issue is no longer there, there is less conflict within the family.

How does someone initiate the referral process?

The referral process is easy. We're located at 855 E. Laurel, Building H. Anyone can make a referral to Silver Star. They can come by or call if they need services at 831-796-1350. The services are free with the exception of Children's Behavioral Health, which is on a sliding scale.

Over the past three years, we have gone from 450 to 850 referrals per year. The community is getting more involved. They are identifying individuals with needs early, referring them and helping them get the help they need.

We know that treatment works. We have to start providing individuals with these services to address their needs. Especially now, after Assembly Bill 109 shifted the responsibility of parole from the state to the county level, and with more individuals coming out of incarceration, it's important that we emphasize treatment, programs, and services. We are a part of CASP (the Community Alliance for Safety and Peace), and we have the same principles and concepts as they implement: Everyone working together toward a common goal – to stop the violence.

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This article was written by Rachel Vallarta Davidson, a student at UCLA and Robin Aime who is a writer with marketing firm Boots Road Group LLC.

The Community Alliance for Safety and Peace is a group of organizations working to reduce gang violence in Salinas and Monterey County.