

## **Multipurpose Juvenile Home Program Annual Program Evaluation 2000-2001**

### **Program background**

The Multipurpose Juvenile Home program grew out of the 1990 Prison Bond Referendum that provided the capital construction funding for the facilities. Upon completion of the construction phase in 1993 a statewide, competitive bidding process resulted in the selection of two private non-profit agencies to operate the programs. Methodist Homes for Children won the contract for 5 of the homes and Mountain Youth Resources was selected to operate the sixth home.

For the 2000-2001 fiscal year the program consisted of six eight bed group homes serving exclusively those youth identified by juvenile court as in need of either secure detention or training school commitment. Each home serves one or two judicial districts, all of which are located in rural parts of the State, which have few alternative residential programs available.

The 1998 Session of the General Assembly in response to a major reform initiative by Governor Hunt enacted the Juvenile Justice Reform Act. A major component of that reform was the adoption of a new disposition procedure known as Graduated Sanctions.

Much like structured sentencing in the adult system, the intent of Graduated Sanctions is to require longer and more certain sentences for violent or repeat offenders. The further intent is to redirect the less serious (misdemeanor) offenders out of the more secure training school facilities (now known as Youth Development Centers) and into community based, treatment oriented, Intermediate Sanctions. One of the most promising "Intermediate Sanctions" authorized by the 1998 General Assembly was the Multipurpose Juvenile Home program. New funding was approved to support four new homes.

Included in the funding authorization for these new homes was a requirement that the Department of Juvenile Justice provide an evaluation of the Multipurpose Juvenile Home program. This report is intended to fulfill that requirement.

### **Status of Program Expansion**

In the spring of 1999 the Department of Juvenile Justice surveyed the state to assess the level of need and local interest in expansion of the Multipurpose Juvenile Home program. A needs assessment instrument was developed and mailed to all judicial districts. Responses were received from 9 districts. A review committee was formed to rate the responses and make recommendations to the Director of the districts where this resource could be most beneficial to the State of North Carolina.

Factors that were considered in this assessment included: training school commitment rate, use of secure detention, number of delinquent juveniles, isolation of the counties (travel concerns), relative wealth of the county and the total number of out of home placements made by the court. Based on that assessment the Department announced through a Request for Proposal that has been developed and published the following target areas for program expansion:

Home #1 to serve Districts 27A and 27B shall be located in either Gaston, Lincoln or Cleveland County.

Home #2 to serve Districts 19A and 19C shall be located in either Cabarrus or Rowan County.

Home #3 to serve District 19B shall be located in Randolph.

Home #4 to serve Districts 17A, 15A and 15B shall be located in Alamance County.

The Request for Proposals was mailed during the summer of 1999 with a pre-bidders conference in August and final submission date in October. When the submitted bids were reviewed it was noted that one had been submitted by a for profit organization. Given the fact that the RFP had specified that only "county governments and 501-C-3 private non-profits" could submit bids a ruling was requested on the legitimacy of the bidding process. Upon advise from the Attorney General's Office and the Office of State Purchase and Contract the Office of Juvenile Justice made the decision in December of 1999 to nullify the original RFP without opening the proposals.

A new RFP was subsequently developed that opened the bidding process to any agency or organization licensed to do business in North Carolina. This revised process culminated in June 2000 with the selection of Methodist Home for Children as the provider agency for these new programs. The expansion contract calling for the phasing in the new homes was signed in July 2000.

The first two homes were targeted to open around the first of the year 2001 in Burlington and Asheboro. In Burlington a residential home on the campus of Elon Home for Children was leased to house the program that will serve the Alamance, Orange, Chatham and Rockingham area. Staff was hired and trained, but do to a last minute fire marshal inspection opening was held up. The Alamance County Multipurpose Home received its first youth in June of 2001.

A suitable home was purchased in Asheboro and hiring was in process when the city planning and zoning board refused to issue a permit to open. This matter delayed further hiring until the zoning issue could be resolved. Unfortunately, that issue has not been settle, but direct services are being provided to youth and families in the three counties of the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. At any given time, staff of Methodist Home is programming to as many as eleven youth and their families. The Randolph County home is anticipating receiving its first youth by the end of March 2002.

A third Multipurpose Juvenile Home has open in Concord, North Carolina. Staff has been hired and trained. The Concord home received its first youth in November 2001. Local opposition has been minimum. This home serves 19A and 19C Judicial District with three beds each. The intent is to provide 4 additional foster care beds beyond the six treatment beds.

The fourth home to be located in 27A&B Judicial District was eliminated by a budgetary mandate from the North Carolina General Assembly due to budget cuts. That resulted in a loss of \$500,000.00.

The balance of this report examines the effectiveness of the Multipurpose Juvenile Home Program during FY 2000-2001 in the six homes that were begun in 1993.

A three-year evaluation of the Multipurpose Juvenile Home program of the six original homes that serve 31 counties or 7 Judicial Districts was conducted at the end of fiscal year 2000-2001. The sample (N-307) consisted of youth that exceeded 45 days in the

treatment component of the program. This study did not include any secure custody youth. The average length of stay for the youth included in the findings was 141 days for the six homes. The period covered was fiscal years 1998-99, 1999-2000, 2000-2001. Each home submitted a list of youth that fell into the minimal criteria, excluding any short term secure custody youth.

The inquiry and submission resulted in 307 youth from the seven districts. These 307 youth using the client tracking identification information was submitted to DJJDP's MIS Division to determine of the 307 youth, how many were committed to Youth Development Centers after discharge from the Multipurpose Juvenile Home system. The findings suggest that of the 307 youth who were in the six homes that exceeded the 45 minimal days in the three-year period, 69 were committed to Youth Development Centers after discharge. That figure represent 23% overall recidivism. It is believed based on the program's plan of care, continuum of services, family interface offering parenting skills training, admitting appropriate placements and given adequate days in the Multipurpose Juvenile Home, the recidivism could have been even better. That belief is support by the following information.

<u>Home</u>	<u>Total Youth Served</u>	<u>Average Length of Stay</u>	<u>Committed to YDC</u>	<u>% Recidivism</u>
Chowan Co.	36	149	4	11%
Craven Co.	47	125	10	21%
Hertford Co.	44	119	12	27%
Robeson Co.	74	69	11	15%
Wayne Co.	70	71	30	43%

The per district commitment to Youth Development Centers are as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> District: 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> District: 3, 3<sup>rd</sup> District (3A: 3, 3B: 8), 6<sup>th</sup> District (6A: 7, 6B: 5), 16<sup>th</sup> District (16A: 3, 16B: 8), 8<sup>th</sup> District: 30.

The population mentioned in the three-year finding received different days of service by home. The following information indicates the average length of stay per home.

Craven County Multipurpose Juvenile Home had an average of 142 days per youth.

Chowan County Multipurpose Juvenile Home had an average of 199 days per youth.

Hertford County Multipurpose Juvenile Home had an average of 168 days per youth.

Robeson County Multipurpose Juvenile Home had an average of 100 days per youth.

Wayne County Multipurpose Juvenile Home had an average of 80 days per youth.

Macon County Multipurpose Juvenile Home had an average of 191 days per youth.

The average for the six homes was 147 days for the population.

FY-2000-2001 the Multipurpose Juvenile Home program served 276 youth in the six original homes. 162 males or 59% and 114 females or 41%. 55% were White, 33% Black, 8% Indian, and 4% other.

Total appropriation for the six homes was \$2,751,912.00 for FY 2000-2001. That yields a cost/youth of \$9,970.70.

### **Conclusion**

The Multipurpose Juvenile Home Program has clearly brought a needed service to many counties that were under represented in the availability of residential care for juvenile court involved youth. The program has been well received and is maintaining an impressive occupancy rate. The strongest component of the Multipurpose Juvenile Home program is its ability to program to the families and youth within their communities. If given cooperation on the part of parents/guardians, the Multipurpose Juvenile Homes program will return the youth to the community with a better support system. In all our efforts to serve the youth, if nothing is done for the home environment, parent involvement and responsibilities, many youth will return to our system.

The offense records, and school suspensions of the youth in this program make them clearly at-risk of more serious criminal activity. The impact on the individual behavior of the youth served and the training school commitment rates compared to other juveniles on probation make it apparent that the services are effective.

The failure of the program model to impact on training school rates calls into question the perhaps over-simplistic assumptions regarding the local factors that cause these counties to historically be over represented in the training school population. Powerful forces were clearly at work throughout the state and nation during the past decade that were resulting in rising crime rates, juvenile arrests and the need for more secure placements for serious and violent offenders.

The original assumption was that if all else remains the same the addition of these eight beds would measurably impact training school use within these judicial districts. Unfortunately many unanticipated changes did occur, not the least of which was a significant increase in drugs and weapons among juveniles. Further study is needed of these and other possible causal factors to fully understand the impact these and other needed services can and should have on something as complex as training school commitment rate.