

Department of Youth Services Drug and Alcohol Program

Report No. 92-8 -- Report Summary

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

A management audit of the Department of Youth Services (DYS) Drug and Alcohol Program was requested by the 1992 Chair of the County Council Fiscal Management and Human Services Committee. The purpose of the audit was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the DYS Drug/Alcohol Program, to include program administration, operations, services, funding and staffing.

The State Omnibus Alcohol and Controlled Substances Act of 1989 allocated \$435,000 to provide structured residential drug/alcohol services for DYS youth, including assessment, intervention, education, and community-based aftercare. Currently, staffing for the DYS Drug/Alcohol Program is fully supported by Omnibus grant funds. A Drug/Alcohol Program supervisor (1 FTE), Drug/Alcohol Program specialists (2 FTE), and a secretary (1 FTE) staff the Program. Grant funds are available to support an additional 1 to 2 Drug/Alcohol Program specialist

positions.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The audit scope was limited to a review and evaluation of the DYS Drug/Alcohol Program design, operations, administration, funding and staffing. Specifically, Program goals and objectives, services, client demographics, and staffing qualifications and tenure were examined. The audit methodology included a review of the Drug/Alcohol Program in relation to the contractual requirements of the agreement between King County and the State Division of Juvenile Rehabilitation, and in relation to the drug/alcohol programs operated by other counties receiving Omnibus grant funds. In addition, the Drug/Alcohol Program's integration within DYS and the community was reviewed. Three previous studies of the Drug/Alcohol Program were also reviewed.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

The general audit conclusion was that the effectiveness of the Drug and Alcohol Program needs to be improved. Specific areas of improvement identified in the audit included enhanced admission criteria and screening protocols for the Drug and Alcohol Program, more consistent service delivery to DYS youth, strengthened coordination between the DYS Program and the local service community, and increased management oversight of the Program, particularly during the implementation of DYS' newly developed service objectives and protocols.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1. Program not consistent in delivering services and not well-integrated in facility or community.

The DYS Drug/Alcohol Program had not met the goals, objectives or intent of the Omnibus grant program, which were to provide effective drug/alcohol services to incarcerated youth. Specifically, the audit found that the Program was not consistent in delivering the various services of an effective drug/alcohol program, including assessments, individualized treatment plans, and aftercare services. In addition, the audit found that the Drug/Alcohol Program was not well-integrated either within the facility or the local service community. Specific issues included the inadequacy of the daily structure to facilitate DYS youth in dealing with their drug/alcohol dependency issues during detention, and the need to strengthen relations with the local service community to assist youth in making the transition back to the community. However, the audit did find that the drug/alcohol education component provided by the Seattle School District was

consistently excellent.

According to Washington State officials, all seventeen (17) Omnibus grant drug and alcohol programs experienced problems during the initial phase of implementing the Omnibus grant. However, each program was eventually successful with the exception of the DYS program, even though King County received substantially more financial resources and sanctions from the State.

The audit recommended that DYS management and Drug/Alcohol Program staff continue to work closely with DJR, KCDASAS, and the local service community to ensure that an acceptable Drug/Alcohol Program is developed and implemented for DYS youth. DYS management and Drug/Alcohol Program staff should also ensure that each youth placed in the Program receives appropriate and consistent services based upon the youth's specific needs, that the daily structure in the SAU is compatible with a positive treatment setting, and that JCO staff are trained to provide the related drug/alcohol activities for youth assigned to the SAU. In addition, DYS management should work toward the full integration of the Drug/Alcohol Program within the detention facility and improve coordination with the local service community. Finally, basic internal procedures should be established to provide guidance for JCO and Drug/Alcohol Program staff on routine operational issues.

Finding 2. No classification and prioritization policies for placement of youth in substance abuse unit.

The Drug/Alcohol Program did not have policies for the classification and prioritization of youth for placement into the Substance Abuse Unit. Thus, youth most in need of services may not have been placed in the unit.

The audit recommended that DYS management and Drug/Alcohol Program staff develop policies and procedures for classifying youth into the SAU. These procedures should clearly identify the population to be served by the SAU, and list the criteria for prioritizing youth for transfer into the SAU. Supervisory approval should be required for SAU transfers that supersede the established classification listings. DYS management should integrate the SAU classification policies and procedures into the facility-wide classification system to ensure appropriate coordination among all DYS staff.

Finding 3. Minority representation consistent with general population.

While specific policies targeting drug/alcohol services to minorities were not developed, the proportion of minority youth placed in the SAU was representative of the general facility population.

The audit recommended that DYS management and Drug/Alcohol Program staff, in the development of its classification policies and procedures for the SAU, establish a formal mechanism to ensure that sufficient services continue to be targeted to minority youth.

Finding 4. High staff turnover impeded service delivery.

Chronic staffing issues in the DYS Drug/Alcohol Program resulted in diminished service delivery to Program clients. Specifically, high turnover in professional positions and concerns related to the qualifications of Drug/Alcohol Program staff resulted in service disruptions and lack of continuity in the program.

The audit recommended that DYS management consider revising the Drug/Alcohol Program supervisor and specialist job descriptions to include, as a requirement for these positions, State qualification or certification as a chemical dependency counselor. In addition, to maximize the funds available for direct drug/alcohol services, DYS management should consider hiring a lead worker, rather than Program supervisor, who would report to a detention supervisor.

Finding 5. Three separate studies conducted on drug/alcohol program; few recommendations implemented.

Three separate studies of the DYS Drug/Alcohol Program had been conducted since the Program's creation. Although the three studies contained similar recommendations, few of the recommendations were implemented by the Drug/Alcohol Program.

The audit recommended that DYS management, in conjunction with KCDASAS and community service providers, implement the measures recommended by the three consultant and CAC studies of the Drug/Alcohol Program, including the implementation of newly established Program mission, goals and objectives, and protocols.

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