

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Alternative Education Program

The *Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP)* is a therapeutic, educational setting that serves adolescents between the ages of ten (10) to seventeen (17) who have been expelled from their local school districts. Most of the students that we work with are at high risk of dropping out of school altogether. As such, a major priority of the JJAEP is to engage these youth in education by re-establishing a positive relationship between the schools, these students and their families. To accomplish this, the JJAEP is designed to recreate the student's view of a teacher/school administrator, create positive relationships with positive adult role models and focus on a student's strength. The JJAEP provides daily instruction, supervision and educational support.

Program Services

Through our experiences, we have found that at-risk youth and/or youth with behavioral problems respond best academically when a combination of teaching and learning methods are presented to students while, at the same time, addressing their emotional needs. JJAEP student participants are offered a unique mix of learning opportunities which include classroom instruction, experiential (hands-on) activities, and off-campus educational outings and events to provide an engaging and exciting learning environment for youth. Individual, group and family counseling is also available as needed to assist youth in addressing and working through personal, academic and family-based issues.

Education

A majority of the students come to the JJAEP with reading levels well below that of their grade level and have traditionally not performed well in a structured, mainstream classroom setting. Therefore, the JJAEP is designed to improve reading levels to at least that of their current grade level by incorporating innovative teaching methods to instruct students and help them practice their reading and writing skills. Experiential (hands-on) and cooperative teaching and learning techniques are also incorporated to increase students' competencies in other academic areas.

One of the primary goals of the JJAEP is to re-connect youth with the educational process, re-motivating youth and reawakening the natural learner in each. A great deal of the emphasis is placed on success in the educational component of the program and on instilling the value of life-long learning. Students gain competencies in core and enrichment curricular areas including reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science and work toward earning a high school diploma or GED.

Students participate in classes, small group sessions and individual learning situations. The academic component encompasses a number of educational options including:

- Basic academic skills
- Academic credit recovery
- Pre-vocational training and career exploration, and other programs aimed at enhancing social, cognitive and life skills.
- High school completion
- GED & TAKS preparation

Counseling

At Southwest Key we understand that a youth's academic problems are not merely a result of deficiencies in student learning and comprehension. Many students do not perform well academically because they face a multitude of personal and family issues that they are unable to address or manage on their own. As such, the JJAEP is designed to assist students in coping with emotional, social, and behavioral problems that interfere with the youth's educational success. Counseling services available include the following:

- Weekly individual counseling sessions with a licensed therapist is available and required for all students.
- Group counseling sessions are held daily for all students.
- Family counseling is available on an as-need basis.
- Drug and alcohol counseling/prevention with licensed chemical dependency counselor on a referral basis.

Supplemental Services

Educating students does not happen in isolation. There are numerous variables that affect whether youth are ready and open to learning. In many instances, youth become distracted by other factors in their lives. In order to appropriately and effectively serve our students, Southwest Key provides supplemental services which holistically serve our youth including parent support and training, community service opportunities, service learning activities and transitional services.



Transitional Services

Transitional services are provided to help students reintegrate back to their home campus upon exit from the program. In preparation for this transition, meetings are scheduled with the youth and the home campus one month prior to the student's scheduled return. Meetings include an exchange of information and recommendations for continued improvement and/or additional services. Southwest Key staff will continue to work with home campus staff to ensure that there is a smooth transition for the youth and will track the youth's progress for a minimum of one (1) month after they leave the JJAEP.

Parent Support & Training

Southwest Key staff will work in partnership with school districts to continue monitoring attendance, academic and behavioral progress of every youth enrolled in the Program. The youth will be provided with supplemental academic assistance in the form of tutoring or homework assistance to enhance basic academic skills during the evening support program. Additional educational activities, such as educational games or projects, may also be provided to assist youth in reaching their academic potential.

An educational goal will be established for each youth and will be based on input from the school academic support team, parents and the youth. The objective of this approach is to identify the youth's strengths and educational deficits in order to achieve academic success.

Community Service Opportunities & Service Learning Activities

A critical component of the JJAEP are the Community Service opportunities and Service Learning activities we offer for students. Through community service a young person can learn new skills, develop greater personal awareness, practical social skills and experience new means of success. Community services enables the young person to develop a greater understanding of their responsibility and obligation to the community in which they live. As a unique component to this program, Southwest Key incorporates service learning activities for students. The Program Director works with collaborating community resources, probation officers, and stakeholders to identify meaningful and needed community service learning activities in which our students can actively participate. Youth work in collaboration with community partners to assess, plan and address community needs, ultimately learning the importance of becoming active stakeholders in their community. By reinforcing positive values and beliefs, community service learning opportunities assist youth in their personal growth and development in such areas as social skills (ie: victim empathy, respect), self-esteem, exploration of new roles, identities and interests, personal efficacy, sense of responsibility and moral development.



Summary

Southwest Key has operated Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs throughout Texas for almost a decade. Our programs have shown tremendous success in providing alternative education programming to thousands of at-risk youth in Texas. By uniquely balancing academic curriculum, structured supervision and behavior management services, the JJAEP helps youth to make positive, sustainable changes in their lives.



To learn more about JJAEP or any other Southwest Key program, please visit our website at www.swkey.org or e-mail info@swkey.org or write:

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