

STATUS OFFENDER DIVERSION

The goal of the Southwest Key *Status Offender Diversion* program is to decrease the number of PINS/CINS cases that go to court and the number of youth placed in out-of-home care, by providing families with intensive, short-term crisis intervention services coupled with service referrals and linkages. Families receive services for a one- to three-month period during which time crises can be calmed, service needs identified and service referrals and linkages put into place. Our Family Support Caseworkers work in partnership with families - adults and youth - to de-escalate family conflicts, develop youth/adult contracts and identify helpful services, pro-social activities and supports available within the family network and the community.

Program Overview

Once a referral is received, our Family Support Caseworkers respond to all cases within a 24- to 48-hour time period. Staff attempts to make face-to-face contact with all families at least four times during a two week time period, however, the number of visits is dependent on the needs and interest of the family. As a result, some families receive more visits, while others receive fewer than four. Contacts may occur at home, in the neighborhood, at school, work, in the Southwest Key office or on a program activity. Casework staff work with the family to de-escalate the crisis and mediate the dispute. A family agreement is also developed with the young person, parents and other members of the household to articulate the desired changes in family interaction and set expectations for behavior and follow up. Throughout the two weeks the Family Support Caseworker is available for emotional support, to continue the assessment process, follow up on the implementation of the family agreement and provide on the spot skill building to address the issues that resulted in the crisis.

Southwest Key staff is available for crisis intervention services seven days per week, 24 hours per day, 365 days per year to the families served by the Status Offender Diversion Program. Families have a phone number where they can call any time of day, any day of the week and quickly receive crisis intervention services or immediate support.

Program Design

Immediate and Intensive Crisis Management

After receiving a referral, our staff conducts a meeting in the family's home or other appropriate place. During these first meetings Southwest Key staff work with the family to assess the crisis, complete a family information form and assessment, and determine the appropriate intervention.

This family information form and assessment serves as the basis for family service planning. Our staff assess the current situation, as well as the strengths and needs of all members of the household in areas such as the basic living situation, primary family relationships, peer relationships, substance abuse, school attendance, employment and health. Families are also provided information about the PINS/CINS process and likely outcomes. Many parents and youth have misconceptions about the realities and limitations of the PINS/CINS process, as well as the effectiveness of the court and social services system to address complicated family issues. We provide as much information as possible so that families can make informed decision.



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PROGRAM DESIGN *cont'd*

Short Term Intervention Plan

Once the crisis is calmed, Status Offender Diversion staff continues working with the family to implement an intervention plan. Through this process, families are empowered to address their needs and be assisted in accessing services. To adequately meet the needs of the family, service referrals are coupled with a plan to provide on-going support. This support is best provided through the community, including informal family and friendship networks, as well as the formal network of the service providing community. Our intervention plans therefore have two components: 1) a plan for accessing community services and supports, and 2) a plan for accessing support available through family, friends, and community networks for both the parents and the youth.

During this phase, staff may use a family agreement. The family agreement is a contract between the youth, parents and other persons living in the household that details the desired changes in family interaction and sets expectations for behavior and follow up for all family members. Program staff works with the young person and family to focus on roles, boundaries, process and coping strategies necessary to achieve the goals set in the agreement.

Long Term Support

In this phase an additional face-to-face contact may occur to assist in this transitional period. Once the crisis has stabilized and the intervention plan is in place, family and youth will need on-going support to help them utilize their strengths and address their challenges. Status Offender Diversion provides resource meetings for parents and youth, as well as organized family activities for all of our participants. These meetings serve as support and allow for resource sharing, the development of coping skills, as well as leadership development. The meetings and activities also provide an opportunity for families to have fun as a family.



Summary

The pre-existing PINS/CINS process created a climate in which families, desperate for services and support and believing they lacked viable alternatives, approached the court looking for help to what was often a long standing, complicated family problem. The crisis that propelled the parent to file a PINS/CINS petition was typically the tip of a deeper conflict. Once placed in the system, the conflict, often the root of the problem between parent and child, remained unaddressed and the challenging behavior of the young person unchecked.

Status Offender Diversion provides a meaningful alternative to families. Not only are Family Support Caseworkers available immediately, but services are also provided in their home. Families are offered a choice of services that meet their unique needs and are supported throughout the process by our Support Caseworkers. Status Offender Diversion gives meaningful options to families who feel they have none.



To learn more about Status Offender Diversion 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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