

**Valencia County
Reception and Assessment Center Program (RAC)**

Year End Report for Fiscal Year 2010-2011

Program Description & History

The Valencia County RAC program accepts and provides services for youth ages 8 – 17 that are arrested or come in contact with law enforcement, school resource officers and JPPO's for status, misdemeanors and/or low level felonies. The goal of the program is to intervene swiftly and connect youth and their family to community resources to prevent further involvement with the juvenile justice system. It also ensures safety for youth by accessing shelter or alternative out of home placement when youth report neglect, abuse, or exploitation. At intake the RAC Intake Specialist performs an interview and functional assessment with the youth and caregiver. Based on the results of the assessment, families are offered services to help meet any identified needs. RAC staff follows families over the next 30 days to assure services are being accessed.

In July 2010 the RAC program initially consisted of Valencia County law enforcement having access to the Reception Assessment Center at New Day Shelter. Due to low utilization, in late fall conversations began regarding opening an office in Valencia County. These conversations culminated in several community meetings which resulted in the opening of a RAC program in Los Lunas in March of 2011.

Successes

- New Day participated as the community effectively organized to design a RAC program that would work for their locale.
- The Valencia RAC program was housed at the Century High School and youth from local public middle and high schools were brought to this location.
- In the span of 3 months the RAC program saw 47 youth who received intake and referral services.
- The Valencia County RAC program has also developed collaborative relationships with area behavioral health providers, including Hogares, Valencia Counseling, Southwest Counseling and Youth Development Inc. (YDI). As a result of these relationships Valencia County RAC youth have received drug rehabilitation services, family counseling and in home services.
- The Valencia County RAC staff attended all regular Juvenile Justice Board and sub- committee meeting and reported on the RAC program.
- The Valencia County RAC program has helped to strengthen the relationship with the Valencia County Sheriff's Department and Security Resource Officers from the public schools.
- New Day participated in the Los Lunas School Board meeting where a memorandum of agreement was created that clearly defined the roles and services provided by Los Lunas schools and New Day.
- Community members from the JJAC assisted in recruiting, hiring and training the RAC specialist.
- All reports were submitted in a timely manner.

Barriers

- Workload was more than what a part-time position could effectively handle though a strong collaborative effort helped significantly.
- There were some IT problems at the site (computer access internet problems) which hindered the implementation of the functional assessment. These were addressed by the end of the year.
- Due to the financial structure of the program, there was some unclarity regarding scope of work and reporting requirements. These issues have slowly improved and the addition of a Coordinator should make a significant positive difference.

Goals for 2011-2012

1. Fully implement the Juvenile Inventory for Functioning with 100% of the youth that are brought in to the program.
2. Create a Standard Operating Procedure for Valencia RAC that includes formalized policies and procedures.
3. Develop a quality assurance plan for RAC that includes consumer satisfaction surveys.
4. Work with Valencia County to expand coverage and services.
5. Implement stronger networking in the community to raise awareness and make it possible for full utilization of RAC services in the community.

In conclusion:

The Valencia RAC program has been a significant success story. While it took some time for it to develop as the community got organized, the planning and preparatory work paid off. Once begun the local program was quickly full effectively serving youth. The program has helped promote a better understanding of the role of the law enforcement and has educated students, parents and school personnel on alternatives to detention. It has helped the Los Lunas schools provide a safer learning environment and has played an integral part in keeping youth in school.