



Contra Costa County

County Administrator's Office • 651 Pine Street • Martinez, CA 94553 • www.contracosta.ca.gov

NEWS RELEASE

Contra Costa County Awarded \$3 Million Grant to Fund Youth Justice Initiative

DATE: February 19, 2015

CONTACT: Betsy Burkhart, PIO

Betsy.Burkhart@contracostatv.org or 925-313-1183

Improving outcomes for high-risk and in-risk youth in Contra Costa County is the goal of an innovative program to be launched with grant funds approved by the Board of State and Community Corrections. The County will receive \$1.045 million on March 1 and the same amount in each of the two following years to support the Youth Justice Initiative. The program is a new public/private initiative devoted to helping kids who are at the highest risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system, as well as those already in it.

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant funds will squarely target youth-related violence, recidivism and racial and ethnic disparities across the County. The Youth Justice Initiative will test two pilot programs. One will be a School Success Team to advance prevention and intervention efforts for some of the County's highest-risk students. The other will be a Reentry Success Team, which will provide comprehensive services to improve outcomes and reduce recidivism for juvenile probationers.

"We're excited to get funding for our innovative strategy to help young people who are at highest risk of entering our juvenile justice system," stated Board of Supervisors Chair John Gioia. "More prevention and intervention services will now be available for students and there will be greater support for youth in our juvenile justice system. The result will be more youth leading productive and successful lives and a safer community."

The Youth Justice Initiative will serve as a countywide coordinating agency to develop policy, identify and replicate best practices, and develop new methods of preventing kids from entering the justice system. Antioch Unified School District Superintendent Donald Gill is proud that his district will be part of the Initiative. "We believe this partnership will inform new policies and best practices," Gill said. "By leveraging local resources to reduce youth violence, recidivism, and racial and ethnic disparities, we can improve the quality of life for residents throughout the county." Antioch's pilot will be at a middle school, where a School Success Team will work on school-wide prevention and intervention efforts.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Initiative will focus on innovative ways to successfully transition young offenders back into their communities with skills aimed at keeping them on the right track. The Reentry Success Team will provide comprehensive advocacy and reentry services to juvenile probationers. The best time to focus on keeping kids from returning to the criminal justice system is when they're still in custody. They're usually facing a mix of factors that led to wrong choices in the first place. Tackling those influences with customized, coordinated case management will give those youths their best shot at staying out of the system.

Project Director Devorah Levine notes the end-to-end approach ensures the County isn't simply focusing on one side of the equation without regard to the other. "We envision the Youth Justice Initiative to serve as a hub for all of our youth-focused, justice-related efforts throughout the County," Levine added. "We expect to pilot innovative strategies and improve our efforts as we see which ones produce the best results."

###