

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!



2014 Achievement Awards



2014 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 2, 2014

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2014.**

Program Information

Locality Loudoun County

Program Title Loudoun Evening Reporting Center

Program Category Health and Human Services/Criminal Justice

Contact Information

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Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

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Title County Administrator

Signature 

Call for Entries

The Loudoun Evening Reporting Center (ERC) opened on January 22, 2013. The ERC addresses the need for supervision after school, recreation, appropriate social activities, tutoring and independent living skills for youths ages 14 to 17 referred by the Court or Probation. The mission of the Evening Reporting Center is to provide a community-based alternative to detention for moderate to high risk teens currently on probation who might otherwise be detained pending further court action.

Program goals of the ERC are to: eliminate the inappropriate or unnecessary use of secure detention; minimize failure to appear in court and minimize the incidence of delinquent behavior; repair harm done to the community with community service opportunities; support pro-social skills and behaviors with highly structured and well-supervised programs and group activities; and provide positive opportunities for youths while holding them accountable for their behavior.

This program was a collaborative effort with representatives from the Departments of Family Services; Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Services; the Public School System; Parks Recreation and Community Services; the Juvenile Court Services Unit; County Administration and a Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge. Each agency has donated money, time, or other resources that have contributed to the success of the program. The ERC was developed with no new local tax dollars. The ongoing budget is approximately \$5,000 per year provided from existing agency budgets. Currently, the Loudoun ERC costs \$40 per day per youth while the daily cost for detention is \$220/day per youth.

Although the program has only been opened for a short time, the preliminary data has been positive with very low recidivism for new offenses.

Problem Assessment/Awards Criteria

In 2009, the County of Loudoun (Virginia) and the Loudoun Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court joined a national and state project, the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). The overall goals of JDAI are to keep the public safe, reduce the unnecessary or inappropriate use of secure detention, re-direct public finances to effective community based alternatives, and generally strengthen the juvenile justice system. A task force was developed to look at Loudoun County's current programs and gaps in services. The data revealed that approximately fifty percent of youth detained in the Juvenile Detention Center were there on technical violations that did not deem them appropriate for detention. In addition, the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice expressed significant concerns that Loudoun County had the highest number of youth detained for probation violations in the state of Virginia. Upon further review, it was revealed that approximately 20% of youths deemed inappropriate for detention were in fact detained due to a parent unwilling or unable to provide adequate supervision often between the end of the school day and prior to parents returning home from work. Additionally, the data showed that many of the technical violations and repeat offenses by juveniles were occurring during those same hours. More than half of the youth who come into contact with the Juvenile Court Services Unit have parents who are working more than one job to make ends meet in a region which has one of the highest costs of living in the nation.

The Evening Reporting Center offers an innovative solution to the problem by promoting cooperation among local and state entities as well as private entities while addressing the issues identified by the committee. Several local and state government

agencies came together, identified a problem, developed a solution and pooled resources to initiate a new program without the need for new tax dollars.

Evening Reporting Center/Program Implementation

Strong data analysis and research on effective programs throughout the Region and the country led the JDAI group to appoint a committee with the goal of developing an Evening Reporting Center (ERC). The Evening Reporting Center concept has been recognized as a model program, sanctioned by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and recognized by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) as a best practice in reducing recidivism and the need for detention. This was truly a collaborative effort with representatives from the Department of Family Services (DFS), the Department of Mental Health Substance Abuse and Developmental Services (MHSADS), the Public School System (LCPS), Parks Recreation and Community Services (PRCS), the Juvenile Court Services unit (JCSU), a Juvenile Court Judge, and County Administration. The committee wanted to create a Loudoun ERC which would be a non-residential program to serve male and female youths ages 14 to 17. This program would serve the Loudoun County Court Service Unit and the Loudoun County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court as an alternative to secure detention for those low, moderate or high risk offenders awaiting further court action for technical violations of probation or facing new criminal petitions.

Practicalities/Use of Existing Resources

The most challenging aspect was developing a new program without the benefit of additional funding. The program required space, staffing, programming, materials, food, transportation, tutoring and mentoring. The County had recently opened a second

youth shelter facility that included a new kitchen and dining area that would serve both facilities. Staff identified three rooms in the older shelter, which included a small kitchen that could be modified to house the ERC. Each agency on the committee scoured their budgets to see what they could contribute, both in terms of staff resources and operational funding. The Department of Mental Health Substance Abuse and Developmental Services (MHSADS) and the Juvenile Court Services Unit (JCSU) provide 1 part-time staff each to fill the role of co-coordinators for oversight and direction to all aspects of the program. MHSADS reallocated \$15,000 to purchase equipment and supplies, and DFS has committed to \$5000 per year for ongoing operations support and oversight of the physical space. MHSADS, DFS and JCSU each provide part-time staff for program support and supervision of the participants. The Department of Parks Recreation and Community Services provides 4.5 hours per week of structured recreation which includes going to a fitness center to use the gym facilities, playing games such as basketball, using the Wii gaming system, etc. The Loudoun County Public School system provides daily transportation from school to the program and conduct educational groups on topics relevant to this population such as substance abuse. Twice a month, staff from the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter, a local non-profit, provides groups on teen dating, violence and bullying. The program actively recruits volunteers and currently has three trained volunteers that assist with tutoring and homework. Citizens and staff have donated games, equipment, furniture & supplies. In the first six months of the program, a local sub shop donated meals one day per week. Program staff will continue to involve the support from the community.

The Evening Reporting Center Begins Services

The Loudoun ERC opened on January 22, 2013. The ERC provides structured and well-supervised group activities during the high-risk time period between 3:00 PM and 8:00 M-F during the school year. Currently the program can serve five to seven youths at one time based on the size of the available space. Services provided include: tutoring; homework time; group work to include mental health and substance abuse discussions, independent living topics; anger management; recreation; educational and cultural activities offsite; menu/meal planning; budgeting and shopping skills; and preparation of the evening meal each night of the program. The staff at the ERC report that the most popular activity of each evening is dinner. The teens enjoy helping to prepare the meal, but the most enjoyment comes when the youth and staff sit down together to eat and talk about the events of the day. One staff stated that the conversation is basic to what one would expect at most dinner tables and it is clear that most of these young people have rarely had the experience of a family dinner with productive, supportive and engaging conversation.

The goals of the Evening Reporting Center are to: eliminate the inappropriate or unnecessary use of secure detention; minimize failure to appear in court and minimize the incidence of delinquent behavior; repair harm done to the community with community service opportunities; support pro-social skills and behaviors with highly structured and well-supervised programs and group activities; and provide positive opportunities for youth and hold them accountable for their behavior.

Since the program began, 32 youths have been served by the program. The average length of stay is 31 days. Currently, the Loudoun ERC costs \$40 per day per youth while the daily cost for detention is \$220/day per youth.

Measurable Outcomes/Lessons Learned

In order to determine the success of the program, a broad spectrum of data is collected. The program was operational for the last 4.5 months of school year 2012-2013 and 5 months of the current school year. Although, the number served to date is small and the time frame is short, the preliminary data has been positive. Of 32 juveniles served:

- One youth (3%) was detained for a probation violation while in the program.
- One youth (3%) was detained on a new delinquency charge six months after leaving the program.
- Five youth (16%) were detained for a probation violation six months after leaving the program.
- Three youth (9%) were detained for either a probation violation or delinquency charge one year after leaving the program.

A big lesson learned during the two year planning process and opening of the program revolves around multi-agency involvement. Loudoun County agencies have a long history of collaboration, but when multiple agencies are involved, it takes strong commitment by participating agencies and County leaders to assure that all program details are managed and there is a willingness to resolve problems effectively and efficiently. Another lesson was “where there is a will, there is a way”. This project took

effort, resources, commitment and resolve, but it was accomplished without the use of any additional tax dollars and is a complement to other youth serving programs in Loudoun County.

Lastly, and perhaps the biggest lesson of all is that young people cannot aspire to what they have not experienced. The ERC allows the opportunity to experience normal expectations, respect for others and the sense of contributing and belonging, all factors that will support these teens in becoming healthy and productive adults.