



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Bringing the University to You

Fact Sheet-00-31

"MAGIC" (Making a Group and Individual Commitment) **A Program for Entry-Level Juvenile Tribal Offenders in Owyhee, Nevada**

Marilyn Smith, Northeast Area Specialist

The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation and Nevada Cooperative Extension signed a memorandum of agreement to begin a program for juvenile offenders in October 1999. This report outlines the collaborations that have been established and the results for the first year of the program.

During the discussions with the tribal council regarding the implementation of the program, it was agreed that the youth and parent/guardian would be referred by the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes' juvenile probation officer and ordered by the tribal court to participate. The instructors hired to teach the youth and parenting components of the program are members of the tribe and have adapted the original curriculum to include culturally relevant activities.

Program Need

Based upon the high juvenile incarceration rates in Nevada, "MAGIC" was developed in Elko in collaboration with the county probation district. After a successful pilot program, Battle Mountain and Winnemucca began participating in the program. Although Native American youth had participated in the program in the other communities, the Owyhee project was the first time the program had been offered on reservation with referrals coming from the tribal court.

Shoshone-Paiute Tribes' probation officer, Clarice Hall, contacted the project director to find out more about the program after a presentation for the Temoke Tribe in Elko. As a result of that contact, the project director began communication with potential Duck Valley Indian Reservation collaborators about the need for the program. Several documents were reviewed by collaborators to understand the juvenile problems on the Duck Valley reservation (Guilfoyle, 1995) and the trends in juvenile delinquency on reservations (Nielsen & Silverman, 1996). Additionally, OJJDP research on tribal youth indicated that "although violent crime rates have been declining throughout the Nation, they continue to rise in Indian Country..."

Of the numerous reasons that youth are referred to the program, drug and alcohol use is a common denominator among most referrals. Thus, it was decided that emphasis on drug and alcohol prevention taught with a culturally appropriate perspective is an important part of the curriculum. While current statistics regarding the prevalence of juvenile delinquency on the Duck Valley reservation are difficult to summarize, one fatal accident on the reservation in late May 2000 involving 3 juveniles who were drinking and driving is documented in this small community of 1,818 enrolled tribal members.

Data from a variety of sources describe this isolated rural community on the Idaho-Nevada state line. The nearest communities are Mountain Home, Idaho, 100 miles north, and Elko, Nevada, 100 miles south. A meandering two-lane blacktop road connecting Elko and Mountain Home is the only means of access to the reservation. During winter, even minor storms are sufficient to close the road, thus totally cutting off access in or out.

A few statistics about the area include:

- The unemployment rate is 60%. A tribal survey showed that most of the unemployed would like to work but there are no jobs available. The minimum commute of 200 round-trip miles a day for off-reservation employment is unreasonable for most people.
- Poverty is so pervasive that 95% of the students in the Owyhee Combined School (which serves grades K-12) are eligible for free or reduced lunch due to their families' low income.
- On the Terra Nova standardized tests in core subjects given to 2nd through 10th grade students, overall, four times as many students scored in the bottom quarter as in the top quarter. Some of the comparisons are quite shocking. For instance, in 8th grade, 80% of students in 1997-98 scored in the bottom quarter, and none in the top.

Based upon the need for the program, local staff were hired and trained to teach the program at the reservation. The first groups were offered in November 1999. Fourteen youth and their parent/guardians graduated and participated in the evaluation of the program (out of the 25 youth who were referred to the program by the tribal court system).

The Program

The purpose of Project "MAGIC" is to teach teens skills that will help them get out of the juvenile justice system and become productive members of the community. The main thrust of the program focuses on enhancing the juvenile's basic social and interpersonal skills of positive communication, problem solving, decision making, self-responsibility, conflict resolution, goal setting and aspiration building. Community leadership and career development are additional components for juvenile offenders and their families. Parents/guardians enhance their parenting skills through parenting classes that teach the adults some of the same skills the youth are learning so that those skills can be reinforced at home.

This project was implemented with a USDA federal grant. Evaluations include pre/posttesting, observations, and portfolio entries. Pre/posttesting on 14 teen graduates have been completed. Results indicate statistically significant increases in the areas of decision-making, conflict resolution, goal setting, and communication. Eighty-two percent of the parents participated in the self-paced education component. They reported significant gains in their parenting knowledge. A follow-up of project teens to determine long-term success and movement toward productive adulthood is currently in progress.

Research Base

Research conducted by the Search Institute (1995), provided the basis for the program. This research indicates developmental assets reduce negative behaviors and increase positive behaviors in youth. These assets include both external factors and internal factors. External assets surround youth in many different contexts such as adult support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Internal assets help youth make good choices and result in a commitment to learning, positive values, positive identity, and social competencies.

Classic research regarding juvenile offenders indicates that many of these assets are missing in this population. Dryfoos (1990) reviewed successful programs for high-risk youth. The design of this juvenile project incorporated many of the components Dryfoos identified as critical to program success. This project is designed to help youth and their families develop positive assets while reducing high-risk behaviors through small group meetings and community activities.

The curriculum materials were designed to address research that shows adjudicated youth are likely to be raised in families with high rates of conflict (West & Farrington, 1973); a history of low educational achievement (Hawkins & Lishner, 1987); and personal problems (Beschner, 1985; Hawkins, 1985). Frequent use of drugs is also common among juveniles who engage in delinquent behavior. In the National Youth Study, a self-report survey of a nationwide sample of adolescents, Elliot and Huizinga (1984) found that nearly 50 percent of serious juvenile offenders were also illicit drug users. Some authors suggest that serious and persistent delinquency, and frequent use of illicit drugs, emerge from common roots (Donovan & Jesson, 1984; Elliot, Huizinga & Ageton, 1985).

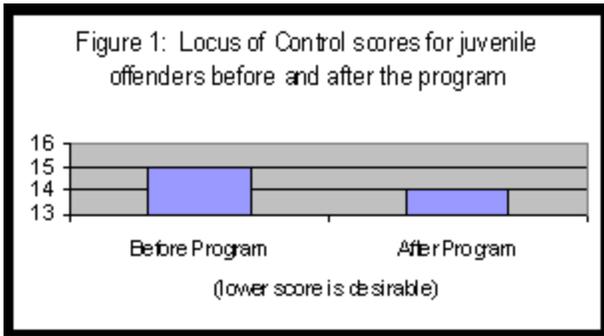
In reviewing the literature on delinquent youth and drug use, Hawkins & Lishner, (1987) summarized the following risk factors within the four basic areas of an ecological model. The first risk factor related to drug use involves individual behaviors and beliefs (early initiation and frequency of antisocial behaviors in elementary school, and individual attitudes and beliefs related to delinquency and substance use). The second risk factor is family related (parent and sibling drug use and criminal behavior, poor and inconsistent family management principles, family conflict, and family social deprivation). The third risk factor involves school attachment (school failure, low degree of commitment to education, and attachment to school). The fourth risk factor involves peers (association with delinquent and drug-using peers, attitudes of peers, and perceived use of drugs).

Based on previous research, Bernard (1991) outlined protective factors in four areas. The first area is related to the individual (social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and sense of purpose and future). The second is related to the family (caring and support, high expectations for children's behavior, encouraging children's participation and responsibility). The third is related to school (caring and support, friends, high expectations for all children, support for high achievement, positive expectations of children's capabilities, and youth participation and involvement). The fourth is related to communities (an environment which facilitates a sense of belonging, and a sense of power and control over one's life, availability of resources for healthy human development, high expectations for youth, and opportunities to be contributing members of the community).

Program Evaluation

Fourteen juveniles from the Shoshone-Paiute Indian Reservation and their parent/guardian completed the program from November 1999 to June 2000. Results for these students are shown below.

Youth Data



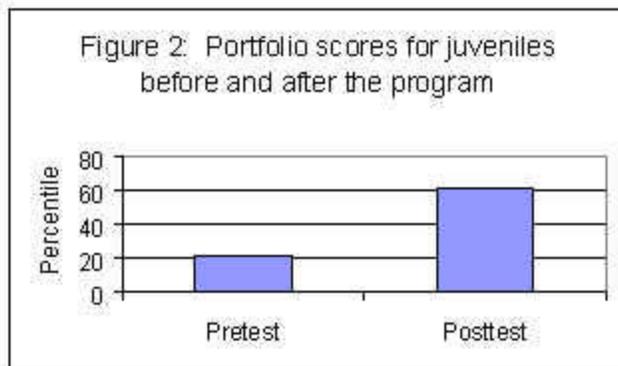
Locus of Control

Juvenile offenders completed the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control (1973) as a pretest before the 20-session program began and as a posttest at the end of the program. Locus of Control measures the perception of connection between actions and outcomes. For example, a juvenile with the desired internal locus of control (lower score) believes that luck has little to do with getting a good

grade in school. The 40-item questionnaire is a standardized test. As shown in Figure 1, the mean pretest score on the Locus of Control for the Owyhee juvenile offenders was 14.51. This score on the posttest was 13.59. The lower score on the posttest is desirable as it indicates more internal control.

Portfolios

Additional program evaluation data were collected from the portfolios that juveniles completed during the program. Portfolios showed student development in the skill areas taught. The portfolio scores were based upon a 100-point continuum. Throughout the 20 sessions, juveniles completed portfolio tasks demonstrating their abilities in positive conflict resolution; enhanced communication skills; increased cooperative behaviors; decreased aggression; and increased school performance and involvement. Student self-evaluations were also included in the portfolio, as well as completed interactive parent postcards. Each week youth wrote to a parent/guardian, and the parent/guardian wrote back regarding family progress in the areas mentioned above.



Portfolios were scored using a continuum of behaviors constructed for this project with guidance from Far West Labs, a consulting group from San Francisco, California. The continuum ranges from 0 to 100. For descriptive purposes, the continuum was divided into four levels. Beginning level portfolio scores ranged from -10 to +15. Emerging level portfolio scores ranged from 16 to 45. Developing level portfolio scores ranged from 46 to 75. Maturing level portfolio scores ranged from 76 to 100. A score of 100 indicates that the juvenile was able to demonstrate mastery of all skills taught in the project.

Figure 2 shows the portfolio results for the Owyhee groups. Mean portfolio scores were 21 (emerging) on the pretest activities and 61 (developing) on the posttest activities.

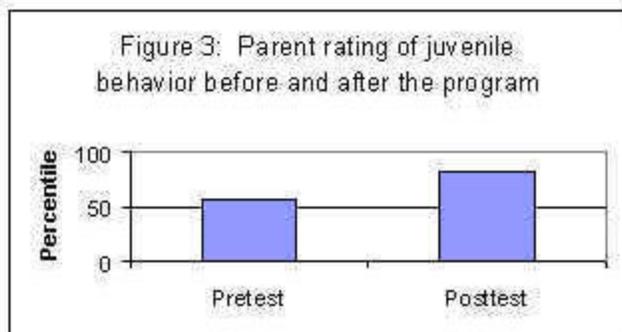
The average developing level project graduate demonstrated a mastery of skills in seven areas. Those seven skill areas were: (1) use of "I" statements; (2) ability to ask for help from others; (3) positive communication techniques; (4) ability to revisit behavior and propose alternatives without prompting; (5) shows remorse and can say "I'm sorry"; (6) knows steps to reach long-term goals; and (7) pays attention to needs of others.

Community Component

During the 20-session program, one of the program components was community leadership. Each group of students was asked to choose and plan a project that would make their community a better place to live. Projects the juvenile offenders completed included the following: school assembly for elementary students to promote staying drug free; Christmas baskets for the needy and a clothes drive for the needy.

Parent Data

An evaluation instrument was used by parents/guardians to rate their children's behavior changes. Parents reported the changes in behavior they observed in their child before and after the program. Scores are based upon 100 as a perfect score and 0 as the lowest score. The average parent/guardian rating of juveniles' behavior before the program was 57 percent. After the program, parents rated behavior at a 81 percent level (Figure 3).



In addition to reporting on their children's behavior, parents also completed a pre and post survey of knowledge/skills they gained in the program's parent component. The parent survey was administered at the end of parent training. Parents were asked to think back to the start of the program and rate their parenting knowledge about helping youth develop positive skills. Then, they rated their knowledge/skills at the end of the program.

The parents rated their own skills in six different areas that were directly tied to the objectives of the parent component. The first area rated was awareness of the strengths and resources they bring to parenting. The second area rated was skills in praising and encouraging their children. The third area rated was realistic expectations for themselves and their family members. Use of positive communication and constructive conflict resolution skills was the fourth area rated. Confidence and skills in their ability to make decisions that promote the well being of their family was the fifth area the parents rated. Finally, they rated family functioning through teamwork and family recreation. These skills are shown in the results as a composite score. Parents noted an increase in knowledge and abilities of 19 points between the pre- and posttest (Figure 4). Pretest scores were 53 and posttest scores were 72.

Conclusion

The results of this prevention program for Shoshone-Paiute juveniles on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation indicate the program is successful. It is currently being expanded to include a larger number of juveniles and families, and follow-up activities including a parent support group. Grant funding is in place until 6/30/01. A new grant to continue the program has been submitted. This funding is expected to be in place before the current grant expires. This funding will provide the Owyhee project with five years of funding.

In addition to the work with youth and parents in the above-described project, several accomplishments are noted during this first year of the project.

- The Tribe granted classroom space in the human development building in Owyhee. This space is near the school so it is easily accessible for the after-school program.
- Grant funds furnished the classroom with desks and computers/printers.
- The computer has access to the internet and students may use the computer for research.
- Kyle Prior authored a grant to expand the after-care component of the program.
- Three Owyhee MAGIC graduates attended the 4-H Tech Conference at the University of Maryland during summer of 2000.
- MAGIC staff traveled to Reno to meet project collaborators at the University of Nevada.
- MAGIC staff have e-mail accounts for communication with other MAGIC instructors, UNR collaborators, and others.

Staff working on the Owyhee project in addition to Marilyn Smith include: Kyle Prior, youth instructor; Zanetta Hanks, parenting instructor; and Naomi Mason, home visitor

In 1997, Project "MAGIC" received a 2nd place national award from the National Rural Institute on Alcohol and Drug Abuse. In 2000 the program received the Excellence in Teen Programming award from NAE4-HA.

References Available Upon Request

**UNIVERSITY
OF NEVADA**

The University of Nevada, Reno is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, creed, national origin, veteran status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, in any program or activity it operates. The University of Nevada employs only United States Citizens and aliens lawfully authorized to work in the United States.