



CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS

OF CALIFORNIA

Conference Spotlight: Butte County Probation

By combining funding from the Youthful Offender Block Grant (YOBG) with other community based services funding Butte County Probation has reduced juvenile hall admissions as well as seen a reduction in out of home placements. Over the past five years intakes into Juvenile Hall have decreased approximately 30 percent. Since 2007, Butte County Probation has seen the number of out of home placements drop by over 80 percent.

As part of the addressing of the needs of youth and strengthening their families while maintaining them in the community, the Butte Probation Department has implemented many services and/or strategies which include:

- detailed assessments on all juvenile referrals to help categorize the level of supervision warranted and to provide targeted interventions to address the specific criminogenic needs of offenders;
- increased use of Electronic Monitoring in lieu of detention;
- hired their own Marriage and Family Therapist and LCSW to work directly with youth both in the Juvenile Hall as well as within the community – this has provided a continuity of care not previously realized;
- started a welding program within Juvenile Hall and developed partnerships with other community based partners;
- implemented the Strengthening Families Program to provide services to hundreds of Butte County youth and their families who have come into contact with the criminal justice system; and
- run community restoration projects to include local park cleanup and habitat restoration as well as the Fresh Start Youth Farm as explained below.

The Fresh Start Youth Farm was developed to provide youth with work readiness skills, critical thinking skills, while increasing vocational and educational skills. The farm was built from the ground up by the youth. They have learned to build raised beds, install irrigation systems, plant, tend, and harvest vegetables. During the last two seasons, the youth have sold (by suggested donation) the produce at a farmer's market style booth in front of the juvenile hall. The money raised from the sales of the produce are placed in a scholarship fund and at the end of the season youth apply for a scholarship. The money they receive from the scholarship fund is first used to pay off any outstanding victim restitution or Court obligations.

Youth are trained in customer service, food handling, and financial literacy. Youth involved in the program leave with a work readiness portfolio. The portfolio includes the following: a

resume, their social security card, birth certificate, California identification card, California Food Handlers Certification, First Aid and CPR card, a customer service training certificate, certification from Hunter Irrigation, and any additional certifications they complete. The youth working at the Fresh Start Youth Farm leave prepared to obtain employment.