



CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS

OF CALIFORNIA

Conference Spotlight: Sonoma County Probation

The Sonoma County Probation Department in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Central Sonoma County opened its own “Club” in the juvenile hall in 2011. The Club meets the needs of incarcerated youth who lack supportive relationships and pro-social activities as 70 percent of the participants report ties to gangs. Club staff see that the same teens cycle in and out of custody with 97 percent of juvenile re-offenses committed by gang members. Juvenile Hall and The Club serve the most at-risk teens in the county with high Adverse Childhood Experience Scores and higher recidivism rates. On average, 320 youth participate in the Club annually. Each housing unit in Juvenile Hall attends two Club sessions per week. Each Club session is two hours long and consists of one hour of structured learning and one hour of free time. During the learning portion, the club director, who facilitates the sessions, covers a multitude of topics such as Job Readiness, Healthy Habits, and Success Skills for Teens. Each topic covered is eight sessions long. The youth attending the sessions must attend five of the eight sessions to receive a certificate of completion for the topic.

The REACH Program – **Re-Entering** the community to achieve **A**cademic and career success, **C**haracter and **H**eady Lifestyles – was created and implemented in 2013. After participating in the Club at Juvenile Hall, members elect to continue making good choices with a case manager post release. For one year, REACH Members meet weekly with a case manager to set goals in the six following areas: work; education; relationships; community; health; and creativity.

For REACH members to decrease criminal behavior in the community, they need positive connections in each domain. Daily activities vary depending on the stage of the program. Case management is broken up into six phases and starts with pre-release mentoring, which occurs while the member is still in the juvenile hall. Members are interviewed to assess their needs, write a letter of commitment, and create goals. Family is contacted for consent and a trusting relationship is formed between Boys & Girls Club staff, the member, and the family. Lastly, members are required to meet their Mentor at the Boys & Girls Club in the community within the first 24 hours of their release, ensuring their level of commitment to the program and their success.

Post-release case management includes daily phone calls, home visits, and community meetings. The program aims to have members safely housed, enrolled in school, and employed within the first 30 days of their release.

To date we’ve connected members to the following community partners: local employers and county career centers, local colleges, the Volunteer Center, Foster Youth Services, low income & sober housing, free tattoo removal, Cal Fresh, tutoring, counseling and immigration services, and health care programs. In total, REACH collaborates with over 50 outside agencies.

The strongest indicator of success for the REACH program is when a member has followed through on their commitment to lead a crime-free life. The program aims to combat national re-offense rates which are currently as high as 80 percent for juveniles. The program's youth have a 30 percent re-offense rate, giving REACH a 50 percent reduction rate from the national average.