



2021 - 2022

SAN MATEO COUNTY **PROBATION DEPARTMENT**

FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAM
ANNUAL EVALUATION



*Helping People
Build Better Communities*

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Program Description

The Family Preservation Program (FPP) serves youths 12 to 18 years of age, primarily focusing on youths who have entered the juvenile justice system under specific circumstances. These circumstances typically include recent criminal charges that resulted from behaviors related to significant emotional or mental health issues, escalating familial issues, or a high risk of being placed out-of-home. The program is also appropriate for youths charged with low-level (non-predatory, non-violent) sex offenses, youths experiencing substance abuse issues, or those who have been or are currently exposed to domestic violence. Additionally, the program is appropriate for youths whose families are currently in crisis or are experiencing serious issues that compromise family functioning. All youths in FPP are at high risk for out-of-home placement.

The Probation Department's FPP caseload Deputy Probation Officers (DPO)s work collaboratively with Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), Children and Family Services (CFS), schools, and other strength-based collateral agencies to provide therapeutic services for youths and their families. Supervision is dictated by the department's Supervision Standards policy, whereby participation in the program is monitored by meeting with the youths on a bi-weekly basis and the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) as often as needed to ensure compliance with counseling services and adherence to Court-orders. Court hearings occur every 90 days to update the Court on the progress made by the youths and their families.

The program's primary goal is to maintain youths in their homes by expanding intensive supervision, flexible support services, and community-based resources. For fiscal year (FY 2021-22 the DPOs that maintain an FPP caseload average six youths who experience significant family, emotional, and/or mental health issues. The program offers intensive probation case management and therapeutic interventions by mental health providers.

Programmatic Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to present many challenges in FY 2021-22. The services provided to youths had transitioned to virtual Zoom or phone services and this continued through this fiscal year. Some youths and their families did not have access to Zoom teleconferencing or other similar video conferencing platforms. Also, some families found video conferencing less personal and were not as receptive to counseling. The engagement was more challenging for the youths and their families.

Lastly, field visits resumed in July 2020, after the shelter-in-place (SIP) order was lifted. Unfortunately, in January 2022, another SIP was ordered, and in-field visits were temporarily put on hold but have since been lifted. During the SIP, DPOs monitored the youths via telephone calls and video conferencing. Currently, DPOs are in the field meeting with the youths and families regularly. DPOs continue to assess the needs of the youths and their families with whom they work and provide referrals for services as needed.

Evaluation Methods

Programs funded by San Mateo County Juvenile Probation (Probation) monitor their programs and report client, service, and outcome data to the department and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect this data include:

- **Participants and Services:** Grantee programs collected demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual participants. Program staff entered these data elements into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.
- **Risk Factors:** Grantee programs used the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS) to provide a standard measure of risk for youths. This individualized assessment is a widely used criminogenic risk, strengths, and needs assessment tool that assists in the effective and efficient supervision of youths, both in institutional settings and in the community. It has been validated across ethnic and gender groups. The JAIS consists of a brief initial assessment followed by full assessment and reassessment components (JAIS Full Assessment and JAIS Reassessment). The JAIS assessment has two unique form options based on the youth's gender. Probation has elected to administer the JAIS to all youths receiving services in community programs for at-risk and juvenile justice involved youth. The JAIS Girls Risk consists of eight items, and the JAIS Boys Risk consists of ten items. Each assessment yields an overall risk level of 'low,' 'moderate,' or 'high.'
- **Risk Indicators:** Grantee programs evaluated certain risk indicators upon entry for JJCPA youths, including if the youths had an alcohol or other drug problem, a school attendance problem, and whether they had been suspended or expelled from school in the past year.
- **Outcomes:** Like all JJCPA funded programs, the FPP reports on five justice-related outcomes for program participants. They are:
 - arrests
 - probation violations
 - detentions
 - court-ordered restitution completion
 - court-ordered community service completion

In FY 2021-22, the outcome measures reported for FPP include Arrests and Probation Violations within 180 days post entry. The prior year's cohort of program participants serves as the reference or comparison group to interpret FY 2021-22 outcomes.

Additionally, FPP tracks progress toward its goal of keeping all youths unified with their families to avoid out-of-home placements.

Evaluation Findings

FISCAL YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

- FPP has experienced a steady decline in the number of youths in the program. In FY 2021-22, 14 youths participated, a 33% drop as compared to FY 2020-21 (n=21).
- Risk indicators evaluated at entry for FPP youths including an alcohol or other drug problem, an attendance problem, or suspension/expulsion in the past year were suppressed due to extremely small sample size (n=3).
- FPP primarily served youths who scored ‘low’ and ‘moderate’ within the criminogenic risk spectrum: 60% scored ‘low’, 30% scored ‘moderate’, and 10% scored ‘high’ on the JAIS Reassessment (n=10). Of the six youths with follow-up reassessments, all risk classifications remained the same at the second reassessment.
- The number of youths arrested for a new law violation or committed a probation violation was zero in FY 2021-22.

PROFILE OF YOUTHS SERVED

During FY 2021-22, FPP served 14 youths. Over four out of five youths (86%) identified as male, and the average age at program entry was 15.3 years old. About two-thirds (64%) identified as Hispanic/Latino, 14% identified as White/Caucasian, 14% identified as another ethnicity (Other), and 8% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander. Youths spent an average of 5.9 months in the program, significantly lower than the prior year.

Exhibit 1. Youth Services

YOUTH SERVICES	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Number of Youths Served	35	36	29	21	14
Average Time in the Program (Months)	13.4	6.8	11.7	16.6	5.9

RISK INDICATORS

For each youth in the program, FPP evaluated risk indicators upon entry to determine whether youths experienced: 1) an alcohol or other drug problem, 2) a school attendance problem, and 3) suspension or expulsion from school in the past year. All data for FY 2021-22 have been suppressed due to an extremely small sample size (n=3).

Exhibit 2. Risk Indicators at Program Entry

RISK INDICATORS AT PROGRAM ENTRY	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Alcohol or Other Drug Problem	74%	59%	72%	94%	*
Attendance Problem	78%	73%	72%	76%	*
Suspension/Expulsion in Past Year	70%	64%	66%	59%	*

FY 2021-22 n=2-3. *Indicates that data were suppressed due to a sample size below five.

J AIS Reassessment data were available for 10 youths (Exhibit 3). The results of the first J AIS Reassessment indicate that FPP primarily served youths within the 'low' (60%) and 'moderate' (30%) criminogenic risk spectrum, with only one youth who scored 'high' (10%).

Exhibit 3. J AIS Risk Levels at Reassessment

J AIS RISK LEVELS	REASSESSMENT
Low	60%
Moderate	30%
High	10%

J AIS Reassessment n=10. FPP youths only took J AIS Reassessments in FY 2021-22.

When looking at the smaller sample of 6 youths who were reassessed twice during the year, no youths changed their risk classification at their second reassessment.

JUSTICE OUTCOMES

Exhibit 4 below presents justice-related outcomes for the six youths in the FPP program whose six-month post-entry evaluation milestone occurred in FY 2021-22. As presented below, the percent of youths arrested for a new violation decreased markedly from the previous fiscal year. Too few youths were on formal probation (n=2), thus data on probation violations is suppressed.

Exhibit 4. Justice Outcomes (180 Days Post Entry)

JUSTICE OUTCOMES	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Youths Arrested for a New Violation	36%	58%	58%	48%	0%
Youths with a Probation Violation	48%	50%	46%	52%	*

FY 2021-22 n=6 for Youths Arrested for a New Law Violation, n=2 for Youths with a Probation Violation. *Indicates that data were suppressed due to a sample size below five.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

The central goal of FPP is to keep youths in their homes. Importantly, of the 14 youths who participated in the program during FY 2021-22, no youth was given an out-of-home placement order (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5. Out-of-Home Placements

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	FY 21-22
Out-of-home placements	9%	3%	10%	0%	0%

CLIENT STORY

Each year, FPP staff provide client stories to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. FPP provided the following client story for FY 2021-22 (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6. Client Story

Name of Client	Fernando
Age and Gender	17, male
Reason for Referral	Fernando was adjudged a ward of the Court at age 15, for a theft related offense. Within a year, he continued to have police contact with his friends for multiple auto burglaries. He was truant from school, and marijuana use was a daily habit. The Court ordered him into the Family Preservation Program.
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program	Fernando had a strained relationship with his father; therefore, he had no contact with him. He was raised by his mother who worked an evening shift. He spent most of his time with peers that were truant from school, smoked marijuana and frequently had contact with the police. One of his close friends died of an overdose. Fernando was in the process of being transferred to a continuation school. When this officer first met with the minor, Fernando was very guarded with the information he provided.
Activity Engagement and Consistency	The family was referred to Behavioral Health and Recovery Services for intensive in-home family therapy. They met consistently with the clinician once a week for one year. The family completed the required sessions; however, they asked to continue for a second round and beyond. Fernando was referred to StarVista for individual drug and alcohol counseling. He completed the program and continued meeting with his therapist voluntarily. The consistent weekly meetings and accountability from Probation also helped him stay focused and on track, in addition to bi-monthly family meetings with the probation officer. This officer referred him to the Fresh Lifelines for Youth Program, where he continues to be an active participant.
Client’s Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program	Fernando moved in to live with his father. He had no choice, as his mother moved away from the area. He began spending more time with his father and grandfather and enjoyed it. At the end, he acknowledged it was the best that could have happened to him, to be with his father. He made a plan with his school counselor and his goal is to graduate a semester early.

<p>What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program</p>	<p>“I learned that actions have consequences.”</p>
<p>What the Client is Doing Differently in Their Life Now as a Result of the Program</p>	<p>“I’m surrounding myself with good people because you know what the outcome will be.”</p>
<p>The Value of the Program in the Client’s Words</p>	<p>“I think family therapy helped my mom more than it did me, it helped her understand me more, to understand what was going on with me and she changed the way she was. It was also having you as my PO. You were just real, you believed in me. You built a relationship, like a mother type vibe, it was different from the other PO’s I had. Something about you, I respect you.”</p>