

DA 20-21 JJCPA PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

DA youth crime prevention services consist of early intervention and prevention strategies that benefit elementary, middle and high-school at-risk youth. The goal of these services is to enhance public safety and to support youth by promoting education, positive decision-making, youth safety and to prevent truancy, chronic absenteeism, delinquency, substance abuse, gang affiliation, and entry into the juvenile justice system. None of these services constitute a program of supervision pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code Section 654.

The DA youth crime prevention services under this proposal includes extensive expansion of the Student Attendance Review Board program (SARB); extensive expansion of the Gang Awareness, Mentorship, and Education program (GAME); the introduction of the De-escalation and Assistance Response Team (DART); and additional crime prevention projects and youth support services that prevent youth victimization and delinquency. These additional projects and services will be at the direction of the DA and will work in partnership with other community stakeholders, such as community-based organizations, law enforcement agencies and school districts.

SCOPE

The critical scope of DA activities under this proposal is based on the following evidence-based research and empirical information:

1. Each year there are approximately 150,000 chronically absent and truant youth in Riverside County. Riverside County has a higher truancy rate than the state average. This is extremely problematic because statistically we know our chronically absent and truant students are at a significantly greater risk to struggle academically, to drop out of school, and to not graduate from high school. This in turn significantly impacts our criminal justice system, where again 82% of adults incarcerated in US penal institutions are high school dropouts and over 70% have difficulty reading above a fourth-grade level. Additionally, truancy is the number one predictor of juvenile delinquency in California and truants are more likely to become victims of a crime. Special focus on attendance and student achievement is therefore imperative to meet the overarching intent and purpose of the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act. Finally, pursuant to the Education and Welfare & Institutions Codes, the DA has a very important, and sometimes, exclusive role in the SARB process. Therefore, under this proposal, the DA will engage in extensive chronic absenteeism and truancy prevention efforts with schools, students, and parents/guardians. This will be a countywide effort in association with the County's 23 local school districts, which currently enroll approximately 420,000 students.
2. Under current social, technological and criminogenic climates and conditions, our schools, parents/guardians, and students are expressing grave concern regarding a wide variety of issues that jeopardize youth safety, including bullying, internet safety, sexting, human-trafficking, improper youth/adult relationships, unhealthy teen relationships, and street and prescription drug abuse. Therefore, the DA will provide countywide group presentations and other forums to address these issues. These presentations will educate the general public, parents/guardians, educators and youth about the dangers associated with the activities described above, educate youth about the social and penal consequences associated with voluntary involvement in risky and illegal activities, and inform youth and the community where to go for help, resources, and potential solutions. These group presentations will be offered countywide, in English or Spanish,

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during the day, evenings or weekends, and will be accessible at a myriad of sites such as schools, churches, community-based organizations, and all other private and public agency locations.

3. Schools routinely struggle with the aftermath of violent incidents, racially motivated fights and hate speech, student or faculty accidents, deaths and suicide attempts, on-campus overdoses and serious crime arrests, and must manage the resulting, often negative, impacts on school climate, campus safety and student emotional well-being. In response, the DA will assemble and spearhead a comprehensive and quick response team called DART. The purpose of this team will be to: a) help de-escalate tension, fears, stress and anxiety; b) prevent violence and retaliation; c) provide education regarding penal consequences that can occur if students respond in a manner that violates the law; d) suggest healthy, helpful, and appropriate responses to incidents of hate, anger, violence, or injustice; and e) provide resources to help students deal with anger, depression, fear, or anxiety. DART will include partners such as Probation, local law enforcement, the Department of Behavioral Health, counseling organizations, drug and alcohol recovery organizations, the Riverside County Family Justice Center, youth shelter and safety organizations, and other public and private organizations that specialize in the issues described above.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

DA shall:

- Coordinate with schools and community partners to identify and implement school site strategies to reduce truancy and chronic absenteeism;
- Coordinate with school districts and community partners to identify and implement district-wide strategies to reduce truancy and chronic absenteeism;
- Meet with chronically absent or truant youth to educate and inspire them regarding the importance of education and daily attendance, and to educate the youth about the personal, social and penal consequence associated with truancy and chronic absenteeism;
- Meet with the parents/guardians of chronically absent or truant youth to educate and inspire the parents/guardians regarding the importance of education and daily attendance, to educate the parents/guardians about the personal, social and penal consequence associated with truancy and chronic absenteeism, and to offer referrals to community-based resources and services for parents/guardians and minors;
- Attend school site Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meetings;
- Attend school district SARB hearings;
- Conduct DA SARB mediations pursuant to the Education and Welfare & Institutions Codes;
- Provide parenting (Parent Power) presentations;
- Provide group youth and community presentations that cover one or more of the following topics: the importance of education, career development, positive decision-making, deterring youth victimization and delinquency, the juvenile justice system, bullying, sexting, internet safety, human trafficking, unhealthy relationships, etc.;
- Develop the DART program;
- At the request of the school districts, provide DART presentations and resource referrals;

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- Attend training and seminars that will educate participating deputy district attorneys regarding best practices to serve and support at-risk youth and families;
- Represent the DA at school and community events and engage in DA approved crime prevention activities that benefit youth; and
- Attend meetings and other activities required to meet the objectives of the DA youth crime prevention services and the terms of the DA's executed MOU with Probation.