



Science-Based Prevention Initiatives and Program Evaluation

How was this project initiated?

In 2008, the Los Alamos Juvenile Justice Advisory Board (JJAB) received a Con Alma grant to identify best practices and effective service delivery methods and models in science-based prevention initiatives.

Target areas:

- Alcohol and Substance Abuse
- Suicide
- Teen Pregnancy
- Chronic Diseases related to Poor Nutrition
- Deliverables

Target JJAB Programs:

- Diversion Program: Alcohol/Substance Abuse & Delinquency
- Girls Circle
- Envision Your Future for Boys
- Family Solutions
- *LifeSkills* Training

JJAB hired Davis Innovations, Inc. an organizational development firm based in Santa Fe, New Mexico to perform this work. The final deliverable was a Science-Based Prevention Initiatives and Best Practices Evaluation Report.

Los Alamos
Juvenile Justice
Advisory Board



Science-Based Prevention Initiatives and Best Practices Evaluation Report

Prepared by:
Davis Innovations, Inc.

June 22, 2009

This project was funded by a grant from the Con Alma Foundation.

Recommendations Based on Report Findings

Based upon the research findings and JJAB's commitment to quality programs, JJAB and its participating programs:

- Assessed program goals and objectives;
- Evaluated program outcomes and processes based upon the recognized best practices;
- Analyzed data and organize it in a summary report to be presented to JJAB, program staff, and other community leaders;
- Reviewed and supported organizational budgets to allocate funds to support recommended evaluation activities; and
- Supported continuing improvement in program development by acting on evaluation findings.

Evaluation Plan

DI staff worked with project staff to create evaluation plans for the following programs:

- Diversion Program: Alcohol/Substance Abuse & Delinquency
- Girls Circle
- Envision Your Future for Boys
- Family Solutions
- *LifeSkills* Training

DI staff :

- Met with program leaders;
- Reviewed program goals and objectives and program curricula;
- Identified evaluation objectives;
- Determined appropriate methodology;
- Identified evaluation tools used at the national level and designed instruments when necessary.

Citation Diversion



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Citation Diversion – Program Background

Citation Diversion is available to teens and their parents in LA. The program fulfills the need for local and immediate services to address juvenile offenses in LA. Youth are self-referred or referred by Teen Court.



Citation Diversion – Purpose

DI staff addressed three evaluation questions:

- 1) What are characteristics of youth who enroll in the program?
- 2) Do the parents and youth like the program?
- 3) What changes occur in youth over the course of the program?

Citation Diversion - Methodology

- All parents and youth who completed the Citation Diversion program were asked to complete a satisfaction survey.
- Additionally, pre-test and post-test evaluation forms were administered to all youth who were admitted into and completed the Citation Diversion program.

Citation Diversion – Methodology (Continued)

- The sample of participants that completed the satisfaction survey included 55 individuals (28 adults and 27 youths) who completed the program between fall 2009 and spring 2010.
- Additionally, 27 youth participants completed the pre-test and 16 completed the post-test evaluation form.

Citation Diversion – Participant Characteristics

- More than half (56%) of the youth participants were male and 44% were female.
- Approximately, 60% of the youth participants were white, 32% were Hispanic, 12% were African American, and 4% were American Indian (the sum of the percentages does not equal 100% because some of the participants identified with more than one race).
- All of the youth participants were between the ages of 14 and 18. The mean age was 16.

Citation Diversion – Satisfaction

- Nearly three-fifths (59%) of guardian participants and 34% of youth participants reported that the Citation Diversion program was *excellent* and 41% of guardian participants and 66% of youth participants indicated that it was *good*.
- Similarly, three-fifths (57%) of guardian participants and 70% of youth participants reported that the Citation Diversion program was *very useful* and 43% of guardian participants and 30% of youth participants indicated that it was *useful*.

Citation Diversion – Limitations

- In 2009, DI staff developed a survey instrument to measure changes in behavior. The tool was based on SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) GPRA (The Government Performance and Results Act).
- Several revisions to the tool were made during the period of data collection because participants were reluctant to truthfully complete the form.
- DI staff found that simplifying the instrument to fit onto one page increased participant response rates and reduced the number of questions left unanswered.
- Based on this, DI staff did not have adequate data to identify changes in behavior amongst youth in the Citation Diversion Program.

Family Solutions



Family Solutions – Program Background

- The Family Solutions was created in 1992 by the University of Georgia with the support of the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Georgia Children and Youth Coordinating Council as an alternative method to court intervention for first time juvenile offenders.
- Family Solutions – Los Alamos focuses on ending chronic family conflicts, improving family communication, clarifying family values, discovering family strengths, and giving youth a sense of power to positively change.

Family Solutions – Purpose

DI staff addressed five evaluation questions:

- 1) What are characteristics of families who enroll in the program?
- 2) Is the program being implemented the way it was intended to be implemented?
- 3) Do the families like the program?
- 4) What do families feel they have learned in the program?
- 5) How could the program be improved in the future?

Family Solutions – Methodology

- The sample of FSP-LA families who participated in the program evaluation consisted of 34 individuals (17 adults and 17 youths) who completed the program in fall 2009 - spring 2010.
- DI staff administered surveys at the final session of each intervention program.

Family Solutions – Youth Participant Characteristics

- Three quarters (75%) of the youth participants were male and 25% were female.
- Youth participant's ages ranged from 13 to 17 with a mean age of 15.
- Nearly, three-fifths (58 %) of the youth participants were white, 17% were Alaskan Native or Native American, 17% were African American, and 8% chose not to answer.
- Approximately, 42% of the youth participants were Hispanic of any race.
- On average, youth participants attended 5.5 sessions.

Family Solutions – Adult Participant Characteristics

- Almost, three-fifths (58%) of the adult participants were male and 42% were female.
- Adult participant's ages ranged from 36 to 56 with a mean age of 46.
- Approximately, 58% of the adult participants were white, 8% were African American, 17% identified with an “other” race, and 17% chose not to answer.
- One-quarter (25%) of the adult participants were Hispanic of any race.
- On average, adult participants attended 5.3 sessions.

Family Solutions – Fidelity

- Family Solutions was designed to be administered over 10 weeks. This includes 10 sessions at 120 minutes per session.
- Contrary to this, evaluation data indicates that Family Solutions – Los Alamos is only being administered over 6 weeks, with youth on average participating in 5.5 sessions and adults on average participating in 5.3 sessions.
- Although, the University of Georgia encourages deviation from the curriculum if program leaders and their families find other topics more interesting than the ones identified, the length of the program shall not be altered.

Family Solutions – Satisfaction

- The descriptive analyses indicate that participants are satisfied with Family Solutions – Los Alamos.
- On a scale from “1” to “5” where “1” means *poor* and “5” means *excellent*, the overall mean regarding satisfaction with class content was 4.3. Similarly, the overall mean regarding satisfaction with the presentations was 4.4.

Family Solutions – Likelihood of Recommending the Program

- On a scale from “1” to “5” where “1” means *not at all likely* and “5” means *very likely*, the overall mean for likelihood of recommending Family Solutions – Los Alamos to a friend was 3.8.
- Adult participants were slightly more likely to recommend the program than youth participants.

Family Solutions – Limitations

- The main limitation of this evaluation is that it does not measure program outcomes.
- To address this limitation, DI staff recently designed survey instruments to assess changes in youth and families over the course of the program.
- DI staff began administering these tools to participants in October 2010.

Girls Circle



Girls Circle – Program Background

- Girls Circle is a nationally recognized program, conducted by the Family Strengths Network, which is available to Los Alamos female teens who have violated the law or who are at risk of violating the law.
- The mission of Girls Circle is to instill self-confidence and improve girls' interpersonal relationships.

Girls Circle – Methodology

- The sample of Girls Circle participants, who participated in the outcome evaluation, consisted of 17 girls who completed the program between fall 2009 and spring 2010.
- DI staff, utilizing the evaluation tools and instructions provided by the Girls Circle Association, administered pre-test and post-test surveys to participants.

Girls Circle – Methodology (continued)

- The pre-test survey measured participants' perceptions of themselves, others, and their experiences; decision making skills; problems solving skills; and self-efficacy.
- The post-test survey measured participants' perceptions of themselves, others, and their experiences; decision making skills; problems solving skills; self-efficacy, as well as their satisfaction with the program.

Girls Circle – Participant Characteristics

- Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the Girls Circle participants were white, 24% were Latina, 6% were African American, and 6% were other (the sum of the percentages does not equal 100% because some of the girls identified with more than one race/ethnicity).
- Approximately, 6% of the Girls Circle participants fell between 10-13 years of age and 94% were 14 to 18 years old.
- Almost half (46%) of Girls Circle participants lived with their mother 24% lived with their mother and father, 12% lived with another family member, 6% lived with a foster parent, and 12% lived with someone else.

Girls Circle – Fidelity

- During the course of the evaluation, DI staff learned that Girls Circle was only being implemented over seven weeks.
- Moreover, some girls were beginning the program after it had already begun, whereas others were missing several classes.
- To ensure the fidelity of the program, Girls Circle should be implemented over 8 – 12 weeks. It is essential that the girls participate in all of the sessions and do not start the program after it has already begun.
- Family Strengths Network has worked to make the appropriate changes to ensure the fidelity of the program.

Girls Circle – Quantitative Outcomes

Statistical analyses indicated a positive change in participant's willingness to *try to talk things out, when they are mad at someone* after participating in Girls Circle.

Girls Circle – Qualitative Outcomes

Participants were asked if they had changed after being a part of Girls Circle. Selected responses to the question are included below.

- *“I have started to journal about my problems.”*
- *“I think I have become more open to people and understand people’s lives a lot better. I’m more understanding of people’s problems.”*

Girls Circle – Satisfaction

Overall, the participants rated the program positively, with mean scores ranging from 3.5 to 3.8 on a series of seven attributes. The scale ranged from “1” to “4”, with “1” meaning “Never True” and “4” indicating “Always True”.

Girls Circle – Satisfaction

Survey Question		Mean
E1	I could share what I was thinking in Girls Circle.	3.5
E2	I could ask Girls Circle leaders for help.	3.5
E3	Everyone supported me when I made decisions about my life in Girls Circle.	3.5
E4	Everyone respected me in Girls Circle.	3.7
E5	Girls Circle leaders focus on what I'm good at.	3.7
E6	Girls Circle is fun.	3.8
E7	No one shares others' secrets in Girls Circle.	3.5

Envision Your Future for Boys



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Envision Your Future for Boys – Program Background

- Envision Your Future for Boys is a gender specific program conducted by the Family Strengths Network.
- It is available to LA male teens who have violated the law or who are at risk of violating the law.
- The program assists young men ages 14-19 to make better decisions and to acquire leadership skills.

Envision Your Future for Boys – Purpose

- The primary purpose of the evaluation was to describe the outcomes of the program.
- This would be reflected through changes in participants' social bonding, personal competence, and social competence protective factors.
- A secondary purpose of the evaluation was to measure changes in participants' attitudes concerning alcohol and other drugs.

Envision Your Future for Boys – Methodology

- The sample of Envision Your Future for Boys participants, who took part in the outcome evaluation, consisted of 14 boys who completed the program in fall 2009 – spring 2010.
- DI staff administered the Individual Protective Factors Index (IPFI): A measure of Adolescent Resiliency measurement instrument to Envision Your Future for Boys participants at the first class of each session, as well as the last class.

Envision Your Future for Boys – Participant Characteristics

- The ages of the Envision Your Future for Boys participants ranged from 9 to 17 years old with the average age being 13.
- Approximately, 22% of the participants were in the third grade, 14% in the fourth grade, 43% in the eighth grade, 14% in the ninth grade, and 7% in the 11th grade.

Envision Your Future for Boys – Participant Characteristics (continued)

Slightly more than half (53%) of the boys who participated in Envision Your Future for Boys were White, 18% were Latino, 12% were American Indian, 12% were African American, and 6% identified with an “other” race (the sum of the percentages does not equal 100% because some of the boys identified with more than one race/ethnicity).

Envision Your Future for Boys – Participant Characteristics (continued)

- Nearly, three-quarters (72%) of the participants lives with their mother and father; 7% lives with their mother and stepfather; 7% lives with their stepmother and father, 7% lives with their mother, stepfather, and another adult relative, and 7% lives with their mother only.
- The number of brothers and sisters participants have ranges from 0 – 3 with the average being 1.

Envision Your Future for Boys – Risk Factors

The three most serious risk factors that Envision Your Future for Boys participants are faced with include:

- lack of family supervision;
- alcohol and other drugs use exposure;
- and
- and other risky behaviors.

Envision Your Future for Boys – Outcomes

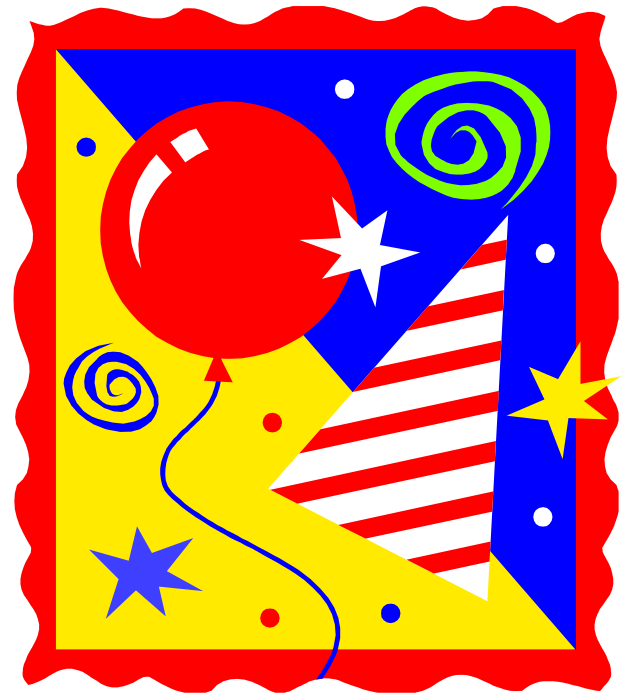
- Participants attitudes towards alcohol and other drugs changed between the pre-test and post-test.
- Participants demonstrated an increase in protective factors against alcohol and other drugs after participating in the program.

Envision Your Future for Boys – Limitation

- A major limitation of the evaluation study was that the survey administrator was not able to have the second cohort of participants fill out the evaluation instrument completely due to the participants young ages. This led to missing data which could have impacted the results of the evaluation.
- Family Strengths Network staff are working to target the program to the appropriate age group to ensure the fidelity of the program and the evaluation.

Thank You!

We would like to express our appreciation to Cheryl Pongratz and Susan Mack and the staff of Family Council and the Family Strengths Network for their commitment to serving Los Alamos youth and families and for their ongoing participation in the evaluation process.



Prepared By Davis Innovations, Inc.



Marcie Davis, M.S.
Jessica Jensen, M.A.
Franz Freibert, Ph.D.
Katie Bridgewater, B.S.