



County of Santa Cruz 0125

PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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JOHN P. RHOADS
CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER

September 19, 2000

Agenda: September 26, 2000

Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

REPORT ON NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARDS

Dear Members of the Board:

On June 20, 2000, during Probation Department Budget hearings, your Board requested information on Neighborhood Accountability Boards (NABs). This report includes background information on the development of NABs, the NAB process, and outcome data for the past year.

BACKGROUND

In 1997 the Probation Department revised its mission statement and began to formalize a commitment toward restorative justice. In balanced and restorative justice, emphasis is not solely on the offender. Instead, effort is made to give equal weight to the needs of the victim, the community and the offender. Offenses are seen as acts which weaken the community fabric. The corresponding justice response is one which attempts to reestablish bonds. The Neighborhood Accountability Board is just one of the ways that the Probation Department has put the balanced and restorative justice philosophy into practice.

The purpose of the Neighborhood Accountability Board is to involve the community and victims in creating their own responses to juvenile offenses. It is a diversion process, which avoids Court and traditional probation handling. Eligible youth have committed minor offenses. They have admitted responsibility and are willing to participate in this process. They understand that upon completion of an agreement drawn up at a Neighborhood Accountability Board Conference, their matter will be dismissed.

In the developmental phase, the department leaned heavily on the experiences of other jurisdictions which had versions of Neighborhood Accountability Boards. Visits were made to Sacramento, Santa Clara and San Bernardino Counties. Written material supplied by Merced County was reviewed as well. While the number of cases which were diverted through Neighborhood Accountability Boards and the level of involvement of community volunteers in those areas was impressive, the model for the Santa Cruz Neighborhood Accountability Board

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was adopted from a training which staff received at the National Institute of Corrections in Longmont, Colorado. Their process is called a Community Conference and involves the victim as well as the offender and his/her family and community volunteers. The idea was taken to local community groups, including the Valley Resource Center, Watsonville Neighborhood Services, Beach Flats Community Center, Sycamore Street Commons, and many civic organizations. Discussions were held with representatives of the Public Defender and District Attorney's offices. All supported the idea and were invited to participate in the initial two-day training, given in May of 1999. Approximately 100 community members from throughout the county attended that training. Among those potential volunteers were members of local law enforcement agencies, who recognized how well the program goals matched those of Community Policing. Volunteers submitted applications and were screened by the Community Developer probation officer. All volunteers signed an oath of confidentiality and were also approved by the County's Volunteer Initiative Program.

The pool of volunteers consists of a cross section of the larger community. They have varied careers, range in age from 18 to senior citizen, tend to have a college education and closely represent the ethnic composition of the county. The volunteers all share a common interest in improving the community and helping youth. They all possess the necessary communication and interviewing skills required for a successful NAB conference. Attached to this report is summary data on the current volunteer pool.

Following the May 1999 training, implementation of Neighborhood Accountability Board conferences began:

- The County's first NAB conference was held in the San Lorenzo Valley/Scotts Valley District in August 1999.
- Santa Cruz held its first conference in September of 1999.
- Three nights of training were held for Watsonville volunteers December 1999.
- The first Watsonville conference was held in February 2000.
- A combined Aptos/Watsonville training was held in March of 2000.
- The Aptos/Capitola Neighborhood Accountability Board held its first conference in June 2000.
- Until a Live Oak/Soquel board can be established, youth living in those areas are being served through the Santa Cruz or Aptos Neighborhood Accountability Boards, using local sites and volunteers. Five Live Oak youth and one youth from Soquel have been served in this manner.

THE NAB PROCESS

Possible cases come to the attention of the Neighborhood Accountability Board through the probation intake officers. Using the discretion allowed, they refer a case for NAB screening. On

occasion, the Assistant District Attorney will agree to the NAB handling of a case which probation is mandated to refer to the District Attorney for review for court filing. Once a youth comes to the attention of the Neighborhood Accountability Board, a volunteer interviewer is assigned. A screening and informational interview are held which will lead to the eventual conference. Victims are contacted and invited to attend. If unable to participate, their input is gathered for presentation at the conference. The process allows for "surrogate" victims to attend.

On the date of a conference, the community members assemble and are apprised of what the interviewer learned, including the strengths of the youth and the family. Once the remaining participants arrive, the conference occurs in two steps. The first is to assess the harm caused by the offense, and all are invited in turn to express their opinions. The second portion of the conference addresses how things can be made right. Participants make suggestions, a consensus is reached and an agreement is drawn up and signed.

Each agreement reached is unique and takes into account the needs and strengths of all involved. Accountability requirements typically require service performed in the community where the offense occurred and youth are often supervised in that work by a NAB volunteer. Restitution, as well as other highly individualized conditions are included. For example, two youth who admitted responsibility for graffiti, toured the Santa Cruz City Public Works yard and met the workers who must repair such vandalism. One young person agreed to apologize to the youth group of a church he vandalized. One young man is working on a brochure addressing BB gun safety, which he hopes to distribute at sheriffs' substations. The presence of a probation officer at each conference assures that the agreement is appropriate. NAB volunteers help to monitor progress during the length of the agreement, which may be as long as six months.

SUMMARY DATA ON NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARDS

1. Out of the 36 cases referred for NAB handling, 34 were accepted, and to date, 32 conferences have been held.
2. Of the 34 youth accepted for NAB handling:
 - Average age was 14 years.
 - 6 females, 28 males.
 - Ethnicity: 20 Caucasians, 12 Latinos, 1 African-American, and 1 Filipino.
 - Offenses included 15 petty thefts, 7 vandalisms, 3 arsons (same incident, 3 youth), 3 attempted burglaries (same incident, 3 youth), 2 batteries, 1 defrauding an innkeeper ("dine and dash"), 1 furnishing alcohol to a minor, 1 credit card access theft, and 1 possession of marijuana (case chosen due to heightened risk factors).
3. The lengths of agreements have ranged between 1 and 6 months.

4. To date, all but one youth have completed their agreements (13 have not yet reached the end of their agreement period).
5. There has been one re-offense (the original case was a property crime and the new offense was alcohol related).

EXAMPLES OF NAB CONFERENCES

An example of how a district-wide board can still function as a “neighborhood” involved a UCSC freshman who committed a petty theft while still a minor. A conference attended by two UCSC Community Studies Interns and a UCSC employee, all trained in Neighborhood Accountability Boards, was held on the UCSC campus. Another trained member who works as a Pacific Garden Mall host represented the victim. The agreement reached took into account the student’s demanding schedule, but required that she research the victim’s favorite charities and volunteer for one of them. The interns offered themselves as support people. The youth exceeded the requirements of the agreement, once she became acquainted with the charity. The victim was pleased with the degree of follow-through shown by the student, who is now welcomed as a customer, rather than banned from the store.

Six of the conferences have been conducted in Spanish, with a volunteer or probation officer providing translation for the few attending who did not speak Spanish. One of those involved a petty theft which occurred in Watsonville. The young teen, a big fan of American football, agreed to research his favorite player and how he came to reach his goal of playing professional football. He was assisted by a probation officer in this assignment. A board member helped the youth find a volunteer position and monitored his participation. His mother requested that in addition to an apology letter to the victim, that her son write one to her as well.

The most recent offenses brought to the Santa Cruz board were juveniles who were interrupted in an attempted burglary. The victim, a local skateboard company, allowed its promotions director to attend the conference. He brought to the process an understanding of the youth’s passion for skating, as well as a profound sense of betrayal. His very direct expression of his disappointment was coupled with an acknowledgment of the young man’s potential. The promotions director shared the irony of having been present at the time of arrest and noting that the teen was wearing a sweatshirt bearing his company’s logo. His input was the most valuable of the conference from everyone’s standpoint.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT FOR NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARDS

The Santa Cruz County Neighborhood Accountability Board effort has been a model example of community justice. Probation staff has observed that the youth, who have met with the victim and community volunteers, leave the conference with a genuine understanding of the impact of their behavior and a feeling that they know exactly what they can do to make things right. Staff

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has commented that, while there is low recidivism, the benefits are much greater. This restorative approach has given victims and the community a direct voice in the process and a deeper, if not more compassionate, understanding of the complex issues facing today's youth. This has led to vigorous community inquiry into the needs of our youth and a commitment to provide solutions.

The momentum of this community effort continues to build. In several instances, the requests for NAB conferences have come directly from victims. The District Attorney's Office has expressed some interest in developing a process for certain adult offenses. University of California at Santa Cruz students have been interested in NABs as an example of justice reform. Phone calls have come in from other jurisdictions within and outside the State of California for information about the Santa Cruz approach.

Early development of NABs focused on the recruitment training and implementation of conferences. The benefits have extended beyond the thirty six youth who have received this form of diversion. The community benefits through their direct involvement with the participating youth and the through the first hand experience of seeing community based solutions to juvenile offenses. The probation department is committed to building on the success of this program.


IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED that your Board accept and file this report on Neighborhood Accountability Boards.

Sincerely,


 John P. Rhoads
 Chief Probation Officer

JPR:SM:TS

RECOMMENDED:


 SUSAN A. MAURIELLO
 County Administrative Officer

cc: County Administrative Office
 Probation Department

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT
NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARDS
VOLUNTEERS**

0130

DISTRICT	GENDER	AGE					ETHNICITY	BILINGUAL	OCCUPATION	EDUCATION
		18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55 +				
3	M				X		Latino	Yes	Comm. Based Org.	Some college
3	F		X				Latino	Yes	Comm. Based Org.	Some college
3	M		X				Latino	Yes	Comm. Based Org.	Some college
4	F			X			Latino	Yes	Comm. Based Org.	Some college
4	F		X				Caucasion	Yes	Homemaker	College Graduate
4	F			X			Caucasion	No	Educator	Some college
4	F	X					Latino	Yes	Clerical	Some college
4	F	X					Latino	Yes	Clerical	Some college
4	M				X		Caucasion	No	Comm. Based Org.	College Graduate
4	M				X		Caucasion	No	Retired	Some college
4	F		X				Latino	Yes	Government	College Graduate
4	M			X			Latino	Yes	Labor	High School
4	F	X					Latino	Yes	Comm. Based Org.	High School
5	M					X	Caucasion	No	Computer	College Graduate
5	F					X	Caucasion	No	Legal Assistant	High School
5	F			X			Afric. Am.	No	Hospital Employee	Some college
5	M					X	Caucasion	No	Educator	College Graduate
5	F	X					Caucasion	No	Comm. Based Org.	College Graduate
5	F			X			Caucasion	No	Homemaker	Some college
5	M					X	Caucasion	No	Retired	Master's Degree
5	F					X	Caucasion	No	Retired	College Graduate
5	F				X		Latino	Yes	Government	Some college
5	M				X		Latino	Yes	Government	College Graduate
5	M				X		Caucasion	No	Educator	College Graduate
5	F	X					Caucasion	No	Educator	College Graduate
5	F				X		Caucasion	No	Homemaker	Some college
5	F					X	Caucasion	No	Retired	College Graduate
5	F				X		Caucasion	No	Self-employed	College Graduate
5	M		X				Caucasion	No	Educator	College Graduate

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT
NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARDS
VOLUNTEERS**

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DISTRICT	GENDER	AGE					ETHNICITY	BILINGUAL	OCCUPATION	EDUCATION
		18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55 +				
2	M					X	Caucasian	No	Retired	Some college
2	F					X	Caucasian	No	Attorney	College Graduate
2	F					X	Caucasian	Yes	Retired	College Graduate
2	F					X	Caucasian	No	Retired	Master's Degree
2	M					X	Caucasian	No	Self-employed	College Graduate
2	M					X	Caucasian	No	Self-employed	Some college
2	M					X	Caucasian	No	Retired	College Graduate
2	F					X	Caucasian	No	Retired	Some college
2	F					X	Caucasian	No	Self-employed	College Graduate
2	M			X			Caucasian	No	Self-employed	College Graduate
2	F			X			Caucasian	No	Homemaker	College Graduate
2	F					X	Caucasian	No	Retired	College Graduate
2	F				X		Caucasian	No	Educator	College Graduate
2	M				X		Caucasian	No	Self-employed	College Graduate
2	F				X		Latino	Yes	Self-employed	Master's Degree
3	F			X			Caucasian	No	Homemaker	Master's Degree in process
3	M			X			Caucasian	No	Law Enforcement	Some college
3	M			X			Latino	Yes	Comm. Based Org.	Some college
3	M			X			Afric. Am.	No	Maintenance	Some college
3	F		X				Caucasian	No	Facilitator	College Graduate
3	F		X				Caucasian	No	Property Manager	Some college
3	F				X		Caucasian	No	MFCC	College Graduate
3	F		X				Caucasian	No	Security	Currently JC student
3	M	X					Caucasian	Yes	Case Worker	College Graduate
3	M				X		Caucasian	No	Educator	College Graduate
3	M		X				Caucasian	No	MFCC	Master's Degree
3	M			X			Caucasian	No	School Staff	College Graduate
3	F			X			Caucasian	No	School Staff	Some college
3	F		X				Latino	Yes	Security	Some college
3	F				X		Latino	Yes	Comm. Based Org.	College Graduate
3	M					X	Caucasian	No	Retired	High School
3	F				X		Latino	Yes	Comm. Based Org.	College Graduate
3	F			X			Latino	Yes	Comm. Based Org.	College Graduate
3	M			X			Caucasian	No	Law Enforcement	College Graduate

SUMMARY OF NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD
VOLUNTEERS

0132

	Count	Percent	
Total NAB Volunteers	63		
By District:			
District 1	0	0%	NAB to be developed
District 2	15	24%	
District 3	22	35%	
District 4	10	16%	
District 5	16	25%	
By Sex:			
Male	26	41%	
Female	37	59%	
By Ethnicity:			
Latin0	17	27%	
Afric American	2	3%	
Caucasian	44	70%	
By Age:			
18-25	6	10%	
26-35	10	16%	
36-45	15	24%	
46-55	14	22%	
55 +	18	29%	
By Education:			
High School	4	6%	
Some College	22	35%	
College Graduate	37	59%	
By Occupation:			
Professional	29	46%	
Non-professional	16	25%	
Self-employed	7	11%	
Retired	11	17%	