



# County of Santa Cruz 0067

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## PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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**JOHN P. RHOADS**  
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September 12, 2001

Agenda: September 25, 2001

Board of Supervisors  
County of Santa Cruz  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, California

### **REPORT ON NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARDS AND INTENSIVE GANG SERVICES FOR ADULT OFFENDERS**

Dear Members of the Board:

On June 19, 2001, during Probation Department budget hearings, your Board requested information on Neighborhood Accountability Boards (NABs), including information about the number of minors that have been seen by NABs, and the overall outcomes for program participants; and a report on intensive gang services for adult offenders,

#### **NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARDS**

The following summarizes some of the background information given in our report of September 26, 2000, as well as overall outcome data. Statistics on program participants, recidivism data, and information on NAB volunteers are included in this letter.

#### **BACKGROUND**

August 12, 2001 marked the second anniversary of the very first Neighborhood Accountability Board conference in Santa Cruz County. Since that inaugural board, held in the San Lorenzo Valley, NABs have been expanded to all five supervisorial districts. To date, a total of 59 conferences have been held, diverting youth from the formal justice system to one of community accountability. The Live Oak/Soquel NAB was the last to be organized, holding their first conference in February 2001.

Perhaps no other practice in the Probation Department illustrates the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice as well as the Neighborhood Accountability Board conferences. The youthful offender, family, victim and community all have input in the disposition of cases that would ordinarily be handled by the probation department. Participation by all parties is voluntary. If a victim does not wish to be present for the conference, their desires are expressed through a victim representative. The conference process is lead by a trained volunteer community facilitator who has previously met with the youth and family. The initial stage of the conference is an assessment of the harm done in

the offense, from each participant's point of view. This step is followed by inviting everyone to make suggestions for ways that the youth can make things right. From those suggestions, some are chosen by consensus to be the NAB agreement. The terms of the agreement must be measurable, reasonable and attainable. When a youth carries out the terms, often with the assistance of one of the community volunteers, his or her matter is dismissed.

The enthusiasm for this form of inclusion has been underlined in a number of ways. The victim in the first San Lorenzo Valley NAB conference now participates in the conferences as a community member. **An** offender's family requested Neighborhood Accountability Board handling when they became the victims of a burglary committed by young teens. **An** 18-year-old former ward of the juvenile court will soon be trained in the NAB process and become a community volunteer in Watsonville. Community volunteers gather and share information about youth issues such as alcohol and drug use, free walls for street art, skateboard parks and other opportunities for positive recreational pursuits which hold appeal for youth.

### **PROGRAM STATISTICS**

The agreements reached in the conferences continue to be creative and to stem from the youth's strengths and the victim's wishes. This approach is critical in restorative justice because it emphasizes for all present, the ability that the youth has to repair the harm that he or she has caused. Of the 59 youth (average age 14.5) who have participated in a NAB conference, **47** have completed their agreements with 5 pending completion. Four youth failed the agreement by committing a new law violation, one by failing to complete all terms, and two for reasons beyond their control. This constitutes a successful completion rate of 92%.

### **RECIDIVISM DATA**

Subsequent citations for law violations have been tracked for youth who have participated in a Neighborhood Accountability Board. To date, 13 of the 59 (or 22%) youth have been cited, four of them before the completion of their NAB agreement. The remaining nine were cited between two and eighteen months after the completion of their NAB agreement. Youth participating in NAB's are referred primarily for vandalism and property offenses, while their subsequent citations were primarily for alcohol or drug violations. Only three individuals were cited for offenses similar to the incident which prompted the referral to NAB.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

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, and tend to have a college education and closely represent the ethnic composition of the county. They are a dedicated group of citizens committed to the restorative goals of the Neighborhood Accountability Board conferencing process. This is

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evidenced by the fact that nearly all of the boards have retained their original membership and have recruited new volunteers. Efforts are presently underway to strengthen the volunteer base in Watsonville. Probation staff and NAB volunteers recently attended *National Night Out* where interest in the program was high.

From the standpoint of the victim, the community, and youth, the Neighborhood Accountability Board process in Santa Cruz County has proven to be a successful diversion alternative which illustrates the value of community involvement and ownership. This level of involvement promotes direct accountability to the victim and the community rather than accountability to the justice system. At the same time the process fosters creative agreements that build upon the strengths of youth and encourage good citizenship for the future.

### **INTENSIVE GANG SERVICES FOR ADULT OFFENDERS**

On June 19, 2001, Your Board requested that the Probation Department report back on issues having to do with adult gang supervision and intervention. The Department currently does not have adult caseloads that specifically target gang affiliated offenders.

The Adult Probation Division has three intensive caseloads, focusing specifically on mentally ill offenders, sex offenders and domestic violence offenders, funded by outside agencies. These caseloads generally have very few gang members. The division also has two Deputy Probation Officers who intensively supervise caseloads of approximately 35 felons each, targeting the cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville. These Probation Officers are located at the Police Departments. These two caseloads have a much higher number of gang-affiliated offenders. In the Watsonville Police Department intensive caseload, 81 percent of the offenders have been identified as being affiliated with a gang. In Santa Cruz, 42 percent of the offenders on the intensive caseload are gang-affiliated.

Of the remainder of offenders on adult probation in Santa Cruz and Watsonville, and throughout the rest of the county, approximately 210 of the 2400 defendants (or 9%) assigned to general and specialized probation caseloads are identified as gang members. These 210 gang-affiliated offenders receive supervision in the same manner as those placed on probation for offenses such as theft, for example. Non-intensive caseloads generally have between 110 and 290 offenders, and Probation Officers covering these caseloads are therefore not able to give gang members the attention that may be needed to prevent gang-related activities.

Intensive supervision provides more surveillance and contact than is available to defendants on the general caseloads. Probation Officers with intensive caseloads have frequent face-to-face contact with offenders. This is done to ensure that the offenders are fulfilling all of the terms of their

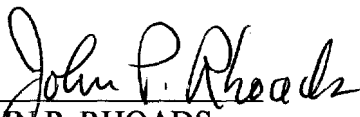
probation and are not re-offending. Offenders are subject to searches, which can be as frequent as is needed, and testing for the use of drugs and/or alcohol.

In order to segregate the remaining gang-affiliated adults currently on general caseloads, it would be necessary to hire additional staff. All 210 gang members would not, however, necessarily need intensive supervision. They would all need to undergo evaluation to determine which offenders would best respond to intensive supervision, and/or who most needed this supervision to prevent gang activity. Those who were the most dangerous to the community would be the first to be put on a specialized gang caseload. There are currently, however, no identified outside funds available to support the smaller caseloads that would be necessary to appropriately supervise this population. These additional positions would need to be funded through the County's general fund. Annual cost for a Deputy Probation Officer II are estimated at **\$52,388**, including benefits.

It should be noted that the limited services (banked) caseload was not surveyed for gang membership due to the large number of defendants on that caseload, and the fact that these offenders have already been evaluated and do not require a high level of supervision.

**IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED** that your Board accept and file this report on Neighborhood Accountability Boards and on intensive gang services for adult offenders.

Sincerely,

  
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JOHN P. RHOADS  
Chief Probation Officer

RECOMMENDED:

  
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SUSAN A. MAURIELLO  
County Administrative Officer

cc: County Administrative Office  
Probation  
courts