



# On Balance

A publication of Dane County's Department of Human Services  
and the Dane County Juvenile Court Program

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## Sex Offending Youth in the Community Collaboration Between DCDHS and MMSD

By **Dennis Whitish**, Madison  
Metropolitan School District

In July of 2007 staff from both Dane County Dept. of Human Services and Madison Metro. School District began discussions on the sharing of "relevant" information involving sex offending youth in the community.

There is a fine line between what information DCHS social workers share with school district employees while balancing the safety and treatment needs of the offender and also ensuring the privacy of both the offender and victim.

Speaking with department social workers on this topic, it becomes clear that offenders have differing profiles, requiring different treatment options. Assessing the

treatment and safety needs of these youth is a responsibility of county social workers, many of whom have had specialized training in this area. The additional assistance of FSAT (Family Sexual Assault Treatment) helps the county social worker coordinate services for the offender and victim and may involve therapist, family, guardian ad litem, and other service providers such as school staff if necessary.

Madison is fortunate to have a number of agencies devoted to

providing services to sex offending youth in the community.

SOPORT, Juvenile Assessment & Treatment Center, Community Care Resources all provide both individual and group work for offending youth. Victims can receive treatment services from a number of agencies such as Oasis, Rainbow and the Hancock Center. Many individual private therapists also work with this population and their families.

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### What's Happening With the Dane County Youth Board

By **Diane Bezucha**, Youth Board  
Facilitator

The weather has been getting colder, but things are just heating up with the Dane County Youth Board. The group held their first annual Open House at the Neighborhood House on October 26<sup>th</sup>.

More than 100 youth, adults and community groups from across Dane County came to the event, where the Youth Board premiered their positive youth involvement movie, *The Movement*, followed

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On the web @ [www.co.dane.wi.us/juvenilecourt/](http://www.co.dane.wi.us/juvenilecourt/)  
[www.co.dane.wi.us/humanservices](http://www.co.dane.wi.us/humanservices)

# Competency Development—We hear it often, but are we all on the same page?

By **Connie Bettin**, Chair of the Competency Development Committee, Juvenile Delinquency and Supervision Coordination Team

We often hear the term—Competency Development. Along with Community Protection and Accountability, it is recognized as one part of the Balanced and Restorative Justice Model that informs our work with youth in the juvenile justice system. Juvenile court and county social workers, together with community providers, attempt to reduce recidivism and avoid costly and disruptive out of home placements for youth on a daily basis. There are certainly elements of competency development in all of these efforts.

But do those who work with youth in the juvenile justice system have a shared understanding about competency development? Is there a common language and approach ensuring that youth moving through the system have a consistent and progressive experience in developing competencies? Is there a communication process to insure the accurate and timely flow of information between providers to track a youth's progress? Bottom line, are

youth leaving the Dane County juvenile justice system better equipped with the skills needed to succeed in life than when they entered? The answer to all of these questions is—Sort of, but we can do better.

To this end, the Juvenile Delinquency Supervision and Coordination Team convened a committee of representatives from all parts of the juvenile justice system and gave them the task of creating a more integrated system that helps youth develop the skills and competencies needed to succeed in life. Committee members include DHS social workers, service providers and representatives from Court services, Neighborhood Intervention Program, group homes, foster care and Children Come First. The committee agreed that individual agencies

do a lot of good work with youth in the way of competency development, but there are gaps in both the assessment of competencies and the service network. All concurred that a system of working with youth in a progressive-integrated manner to develop competencies is lacking and creating such a system is doable and an exciting prospect.

So far the committee has:

- Updated a charter document that provides common language and guiding principles to competency development to serve as a template for our work. ***According to the BARJ literature, competency is the ability to do something that is valued by others in the community. Competencies are the skills needed***

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## Competency

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*to be successful in life.*

- Identified core competencies known to increase the probability of success in adulthood based on the Balanced Approach research and Search Institutes 40-Developmental Assets <http://www.search-institute.org/assets> model. ***The core competencies include Life skills, Social/Interpersonal skills; Employment/Work skills; Commitment to learning/Academic Skills; Constructive use of time; Support and connection to family or other adult relationships; and Connection to community through service or volunteering.***

- Developed tools to better assess youth competencies recognizing that one size doesn't fit all youth and that the strengths and needs will be different for all youth.

- Begun to inventory the

provider system to map who, what and how competencies are being developed for youth through the service network.

- Next steps include piloting competency assessment tools, and developing and refining the communication process for tracking how youth are doing as they move through the system.

Ultimately, the goal is that a snap shot of competencies be taken for all youth entering the system and that a plan be developed, tracked and built upon as a young person moves through the system to help them become more competent. Ultimately they will leave the juvenile justice system with enhanced skills or competencies—hopefully not to return.

***Why is competency development important?*** Helping youth develop competencies is a win-win. Youth who leave the juvenile

system with more skills and competencies are more likely to become contributing members in the community, less likely to re-offend and return to the juvenile or adult criminal justice system, and most importantly, will have a better chance to finish their education, get and retain employment and succeed in life.

The committee will wrap up its work in March 2008. The initiative will be rolled out at a one-day conference on Competency Development on April 1st featuring expert in the field, Scott Larson. The conference will be followed by a series of separate training events for members of the juvenile justice system to review the technical aspects of the process and to begin a new era of competency development for youth in Dane County.

## ***Conference on Competency Development to be held April 1<sup>st</sup>.***

***What:*** An all day conference on ***Building Competency in Youth***

***Where:*** American Family Corporate Headquarters – 6000 American Parkway

***Featured speaker:*** ***Scott Larson*** of Straight Ahead Ministries. Author of 10 books on working with troubled youth, he has been a speaker and trainer since 1983.

***Additional workshops:*** working with girls, reaching under-motivated boys, and supporting educational competency.

**For more information or to get on the mailing list, e-mail [milch@co.dane.wi.us](mailto:milch@co.dane.wi.us)**

# 2008 Juvenile Court Recognition Awards to be Presented

The 2008 Juvenile Court Recognition Awards will be presented at the Tenth Annual recognition dinner to be held on Wednesday, February 6 at the Lussier Heritage Center. Award categories and recipients are:

- **The Peter Rubin Award** in recognition of someone who has made significant contributions to youth (in and out of the juvenile justice system), particularly recognizing many years of service and dedication “above and beyond” the job. 2008 recipient is **John Borquist**.
- **The Ervin Bruner Award** in recognition of an individual who has made significant contributions

over many years to the lives of families/youth through their professional work in the juvenile justice system. 2008 recipient is **Gary Spaeni**.

- **The George Northrup Award** in recognition of an individual who has overcome adversity and/or demonstrates a commitment to persevere in improving the lives of youth and families despite difficult circumstances. 2008 recipient is **Barb Franks**.
- **Outstanding Service Awards** are given to individuals or groups for significant contributions to the lives of youth and families as a result of special projects or activities. 2008 recipients are **Tony Keshena**,

**Shannon Tracy/Kristi Wood and Don Garber.**

- **Outstanding Achievement Awards** to youth who demonstrate strengths and abilities to overcome obstacles and give back to the community through their achievements. 2008 recipients are **Antwan Braxton and Travis Weisensel**.

For more information about the awards and the recognition event, check the Juvenile Court Program web-site at:  
[www.countyofdane.com/juvenilecourt/index.html](http://www.countyofdane.com/juvenilecourt/index.html)

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According to Stephen Blue, Delinquency Manager for DCHS, there will be an agreed-upon set of principles between DCHS and MMSD that will outline how both

agencies will handle high risk youth and the sharing of sensitive information that will produce better outcomes for all involved. While in draft form at this time, Stephen

anticipates that such an agreement will be available to both agencies later in this school year.

## Subculture Corner

The Executive Committee of the Dane County Youth Gang Prevention Task Force recently met to determine next steps for our community's response to youth gang prevention.

The consensus from that meeting was:

- The Task Force's mission and purpose should continue and be supported.
- Workgroup activity currently underway includes the work of the conference planning committee. Rapid Response concept is nearing operation status, and Community Trends continues to meet monthly.
- Structure of the Youth Gang Prevention Task Force was discussed –It was suggested that options be explored to formalize the structure and operation, to include officers, bylaws and committee chairs.

Anyone interested in becoming involved in the Dane County Youth Gang Prevention Task Force should contact Chair Stephen Blue at 261-5090

## Gang Squad update

As Dane County has experienced an increase in gang activity and gang related incidents this school year, Neighborhood Intervention Program Gang Squad has focused its efforts on a multi-faceted approach that includes individual case-management, early intervention groups, community outreach and education, and a presence at elementary, middle and high schools throughout the county.

Through partnerships with schools, law enforcement, human service providers, non-profit agencies, the faith community and many others, the Gang Squad has been working to increase awareness of the rising gang problem in

our community. Their goal is to develop an approach that will help prevent youth from engaging in gang activity and also redirect those already involved.

Currently, Gang Squad Right Track groups are being held at Lowell and Lincoln Elementary Schools as well as Sennett, Sherman, Prairie View, and Badger Ridge Middle Schools. Primary goals are to offer youth alternatives to becoming gang involved and to learn positive conflict resolution and decision making skills. Gang Squad workers have devoted considerable time and energy to educating youth, parents, teachers, and other service providers about gangs in our

community. Gang Squad presentations have been conducted at numerous schools, community agencies, and for Dane County Delinquency staff. Other Gang Squad activities include participation with Community Trends, GAIT, South Metropolitan Planning Council Youth Advisory Group, South Transfer Point Safety Workgroup, and Joining Forces for Families teams.

For questions regarding the Gang Squad or for additional information or resources, please contact the Neighborhood Intervention Program office at 288-2438.

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

*ON BALANCE catches up with ....*

*Randi Celusta*

**Please give us a brief history of your Dane County career.**

Back in September 1968, I came to Madison to teach high school, but instead took a job with the Dane County Department of Social Services. The first day on the job I was given 30 cases, a map of the city, and met my future husband. My plan was to work for the department for six months and move on. Little did I know that this job would be my life's career.

At that time, the entire department was housed at 1202 Northport Drive Madison. For the next 24 years I worked at that location. Initially, I worked with single mothers providing early intervention strategies to reduce conditions leading to the maltreatment of children.

Later, as an intake worker and senior social worker, my caseload was primarily child protection/neglect cases. Over the years I was a disposition worker, the first foster home recruiter, a foster home licensing worker, the first juvenile court intake coordinator, and a dependency worker.

While employed for Dane County Human Services I was an

acting supervisor for one disposition unit at the Northport office, a combined intake/disposition unit in Black Earth, and in the foster home unit.

It was very important to me to keep up with the latest best practices so I was always volunteering for committees. Training social work students was what I liked best to do. It was rewarding to help them realize their dreams. I am still a Senior Preceptor for the University of Wisconsin School of Social Work.

I left Dane County Department of Human Services in December 1991, to join the Juvenile Court staff as the supervisor of the Home Detention Program and the Juvenile Reception Center. Quite a change from working in the community, moving to an office with locked doors.

**What changes did you observe during your 37 years of work with youth and families?**

Over the years, the role of the social worker changed. When I began my career we were hands-on social workers. No computers. No subcontracting. More time in the field and less time completing forms. Budgets began to dictate

how and why we did our job. Gone were the carefree days of the 60s and 70s.

"Get tough on Crime" in the 90s brought about many legislative changes with the creation of Chapter 938, a major shift in the philosophy of dealing with the delinquent youth. More youth came into the system with mental health diagnoses, compounding treatment issues.

**Looking back over your career are there any accomplishments that stand out? What are you most proud of?**

I am most proud of my role in starting the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program in Dane County. In 1992, then Chief Juvenile Judge Nichol enlisted my help to start the program. Funding was approved in March of 1995, Children Service Society was awarded the contract, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Over the years there have been many changes for CASA, but the mission has remained the same and CASA continues to be a significant resource for children and families.

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## Celusta

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Some little known facts: I was always developing child welfare programs and implementing many. As the foster home recruiter, I was instrumental in forming the Dane County Foster Parent Association. In the late 70s, seeing an increase in the number of incest cases, I made a proposal for a specialized team of social workers and law enforcement to coordinate their efforts to minimize the trauma for the child and family. Thus, the Intra-Familial Sexual Abuse team was formed.

I've accomplished many of the things that I'd hope to do. I did love my job.

### **Is there anything you miss from your working life?**

I miss the connection with others at work.

### **What do you NOT miss from your working life?**

After several years of not working you can forget what you didn't like about the job. I don't miss the stress of working in a human service environment, the late night calls, or the beltline traffic.

### **Now that you're retired, how do you spend your time?**

Doing what ever I please! Retirement is a wonderful time to refocus. Certainly ready to retire but preferring to ease into it, I was fortunate to work part time for the Department of Corrections for 6 months with the Going Home Project. My husband retired in the summer of 2006 and we are busier now than when we worked. You may find us sailing the Apostle Islands, visiting Germany, San Francisco or Milwaukee. I wanted to learn to play golf so I've spent many hours this summer on the golf course. Home projects have now taken over. I learned how to build a deck, experienced how painful

landscaping can be, and soon will become intimate with the joys of kitchen remodeling.

I am currently a board member of the Wisconsin Juvenile Court Intake Association which I have been a part of off and on since 1980. I spend my summers working with the UW Criminal Justice Certificate Program as a Field Instructor, which enables me to keep connections with students and friends in the juvenile justice system.

Not knowing what the future holds, I keep my social worker license updated as there may still be opportunities to contribute to the field. Tomorrow, like every day, I will sleep late, read the paper, have some coffee, and plan my day. There is truly a sense of contentment in the Celusta home. Retirement suits me well.

## Youth Board

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by performances from DJ Vilas Park Sniper, LaFollette High School's ViBE2 drill team, the UW Breakers, Youth Speaks and First Wave poets and Omulu Capoeira Guanabara-Madison. Qdoba generously donated food for the Open House, which served as one of the crowning events for Positive Youth Involvement Week. Footage from the event and clips from the Youth Board movie were recently featured on the 9<sup>th</sup> season premiere of Club TNT!

In October, four Youth Board members attended the *Youth As Partners in Civic Leadership Conference* in Green Lake, WI. We participated in several interesting workshops on topics such as the juvenile justice system, media and adolescent brain development, and we also got a chance to network with youth organizations from across the state. The experience has certainly informed the work we do, particularly in planning the workshop we will present at the Martin Luther King Youth Service

Day in January. We also have an exciting schedule of service projects and trainings for the upcoming year, including trainings on *How to Facilitate* and *Grassroots Organizing*.

Created in 1984, the Youth Board is the all-youth subcommittee of the Dane County Youth Commission. The Youth Board serves as a representative voice for youth in Dane County, working to increase youth leadership,

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# Future Leaders Club

## Who are we???

By **Andrea Jones**, Dane County Department of Human Services, NIP

Future Leaders Club is one of many early invention opportunities offered to youth through the Dane County Neighborhood Intervention Program. The purpose of the program is to train young people to become effective leaders in their communities by increasing pro-social opportunities and cultural enrichment for youth ages 12-17. The Club is back in operation after a four year absence.

The FLC concept inspires and creates opportunities for youth to be mentors, teachers, and role models – leaders – in each neighborhood. Members of FLC have found that through this peer - to - peer model, youth gain an understanding and appreciation for democratic values including equality, social justice, and most importantly, inclusion in today's decision making process. FLC is so unique because it is youth led. The oppor-

tunities youth gain through participation include: Enrichment Workshops, Career Development, Community Gift Projects, College Tours, Leadership Skills, Youth Organizing Seminars and Public Speaking Coaching.

Last June, the youth attended the "Facilitate, Communicate, and Elevate" Youth Guiding Youth, where they learned the tools of how to become a youth facilitator. At the end of the workshop each youth received their youth facilitator certification. The youth are also in the process on starting their very own FLC tribune and had the pleasure of visiting the **Capital Times** news room where they learned the do's and don'ts of starting a newsletter. They are also members of the MLK Youth Leadership Team where they will assist with the planning and organizing of the MLK Day of Service, National & Global Youth Service

Day, and the 100 Hour Volunteer Challenge. FLC members are always looking forward to new opportunities to better themselves and their communities.

### Who Are We?

- **We are the youth leaders in our communities.**
- **We are the youth leaders in our schools.**
- **We are leaders of today.**
- **We are leaders of tomorrow.**
- **We are the future leaders of Madison!**

### Youth Board

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volunteerism and civic engagement, as well as providing input to the Youth Commission on issues that affect youth. Youth Board members come from diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, geographic locations, socioeconomic levels and interest areas. All high

school-aged youth are welcome and encouraged to get involved! Although the Youth Board has grown to a nice size this year, we have an ongoing recruitment process. The Board meets Wednesday nights from 6:30-8:30pm at the Neighborhood House (29 S. Mills St.). We are currently planning

winter service projects and our spring Teen Summit. If you or someone you know would be interested in finding out more about the Youth Board stop in at a meeting or contact the Youth Board facilitator: Diane Bezucha, (608) 242-6426 or by e-mail at: bezucha@co.dane.wi.us

# Right Track - ADDS (Assessment, Deflection, Deferment, and Stabilization)

By **Steve Varsos**, Dane County Department of Human Services

Right Track ADDS was established in May 2005 via a prevention/early intervention grant received by Dane County Human Services. ADDS stands for assessment, deflection, deferment, and stabilization.

Referrals come primarily from Dane County Human Services social workers, schools, and law enforcement. The focus is on middle school age minority males (5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade). Groups have been run at the Neighborhood Intervention Program (NIP), Sherman Middle School, Sennett Middle School, Toki Middle School, Frank Allis Elementary School, Patrick Marsh Middle School (Sun Prairie) and in Cross Plains and Deforest.

The groups follow a curriculum that emphasizes anger management, impulse control, goal setting, and positive peer relationships. 161 youth have participated in Right Track ADDS program-

ming over the past 2 years (June 2005 – May 2007). Statistical data have shown a discernable reduction in suspensions and other school discipline for the youth involved as a result of their participation in this group.

In 2006 for the Right Track ADDS participants with previous law violations, 90% (87 of 97 youth) refrained from unlawful behavior during participation in programming the 2006 calendar year was: **90%** (87 of 97 youth). The percentage of those youth who refrained from unlawful behavior one year following program participation was **78%** (60 out of 77 youth). Looking at some long term statistics from the initial Right Track ADDS groups, which ran from June 2005 – August 2005, the percentage of youth who have not re-offended since the start of the program (2 years) is: **70%** (14 out of 20 youth).

A total of 8 Right Track ADDS groups are currently being run at the following sites: NIP, Sherman Middle School, Sennett

Middle School, Toki Middle School and Patrick Marsh Middle School (Sun Prairie).

Steve Varsos, a Program Leader with NIP, is the group leader assigned to the Right Track – ADDS concept. For information contact Steve at (608) 288-2437.