



PbS E-Newsletter

New Opportunities in Northwest Alaska



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The Alaska Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has been a participant of the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators' (CJCA) Performance-based Standards (PbS) program since October 2004. The Nome Youth Facility (NYF) has been one of DJJ's first correctional facilities incorporating the PbS continuing improvement plan. NYF is a 14-bed juvenile detention center located on Alaska's Bering Sea coast. Due to the remote location of the facility, creating meaningful programming for the youths has been a challenge. PbS has been an instrumental tool to the leadership of the facility to help emphasize community involvement and reintegrate eligible youths into positive community activities. NYF used PbS to show that increasing youths' time in the community does not increase the number of escapes.

NYF provides community-based opportunities for education, recreation, social interaction and community service projects multiple times on any given day. Youths are exposed to a myriad of new experiences not possible in a locked facility. The

youths from NYF regularly participate in Community Work Service activities such as shoveling snow for elders, setting up chairs for community meetings, or clearing brush at subsistence camp sites. These youths are given the opportunity to become positive, active members of the community and the community members see them as such. Being in the community however increases opportunity for walk-aways or escapes from the activity. When the program first began there were three successful escapes from the community.

The facility superintendent and the staff at NYF have worked with PbS to reduce incidences of escape and review policies and strategies with regard to safety and security. It became apparent that all three incidents of escape were due in part to issues of staff training. A Facility Improvement Plan (FIP) was developed with action steps that addressed key issues related to staff awareness and training. Some of the steps taken to address this concern were to revise, review and implement a new employee orientation and training

program; provide proper escort training to all employees of NYF and conduct security checks on every shift. The supervisors reviewed all existing procedures and the training was developed for new and current staff. Youths are now interviewed prior to leaving the facility and all expectations are outlined for the specific community event. All locations and events are scrutinized before off-unit activity is permitted. Protocol is in place in the event an incident should occur off-unit. From all accounts, these policy changes been effective and no escapes or major incidents have occurred on off-unit outings since the FIP was established two a half years ago. The partnership between the NYF and PbS has proven beneficial to this small detention unit's daily program, each resident that has come and gone through its doors and the entire region of western Alaska that it serves.



Coaches Corner - Tom Turos

The Nome Youth Detention Facility (NYF) is a relatively small site with a capacity of 14. Escape attempts and escapes have occurred in the past during community outings. Taking youths to the local community center and having youths perform community service has been a successful in dealing with overcrowding as it reduces the numbers of youths in the facility during the day. It also demonstrates to the citizens that the youths of the facility can contribute and give back to the community in a meaningful way. In the October 2008 data collection the facility was overcrowded 24 of 31 days. The FIP to plan for potential escapes from community activities was timely and effective.

The PbS website has a newly designed resources section! Our new, easy to navigate resources page contains a wealth of information that can be browsed by topic or searched for keywords. New resources are added regularly.