



New Police Program Aids Troubled Teens

Folsom teens arrested for misdemeanors may avoid Juvenile Court by participating in the Police Department's Juvenile Diversion Program. Detective Chad Friedrich tailors a program for each juvenile eligible and willing to participate.

Detective Friedrich reviews local juvenile arrest reports and also receives referrals from patrol officers about families needing help with out-of-control teens. (Juveniles who are already on probation do not qualify for the program.)

"I meet with the teens and parents for an intake interview to get a feel for the situation and to assess what the root causes are," he says. "I explain the program, and if they want to participate, I ask them to sign a contract that basically says they will not be a runaway and will not violate laws or parental rules."

If the teen follows the terms of the contract, Detective Friedrich does not forward the arrest citation to Sacramento County Probation and the teen does not have to go to Juvenile Court.

"As part of the program, they must do community service, write an essay and an apology letter to their parents," says Detective Friedrich. "If the kids are shoplifters, they must complete an online program through the National Association of Shoplifting Prevention."

If the juvenile was cited for an alcohol or drug offense, he or she is required to write an essay for MADD, listen to a victim impact panel, and spend time at the UC Davis hospital emergency room and the coroner's office.

The program is free, other than small fees for the shoplifting course and MADD program. Since the program began in July, Detective Friedrich has signed contracts with 19 teens. He works in cooperation with the Police Department's School Resource Officers and school staff.

"This program, which is based on an Elk Grove Police Department model, allows us to take care of our local kids, and that's a benefit to all," says Detective Friedrich.

Sergeant Eric Heichlinger notes, "Chad's extensive experience as a School Resource Officer within the Los Angeles City Schools system prior to coming to Folsom has been invaluable to our program. Not only does he have an outstanding demeanor with parents and kids, his juvenile justice knowledge base and awareness of available resources are keys to the program's success."