



Mission

The Bear Creek Academy seeks to make positive changes in how youth committed to the short term academy by the Juvenile Court think and behave in order to prepare them to return to their families, their community and live a delinquent free life.

Goal

Minors committed to the Bear Creek Academy Short Term Program have been given the opportunity by the Juvenile Court to enter a coordinated system of care with the goal of breaking old patterns that have resulted in negative and destructive behavior. We hope to return an individual to the community who will appreciate the values of hard work and the joy of accomplishment.

These results will be accomplished through a system of educational and experimental program elements. The program is designed to teach new patterns for dealing with stimulus which previously resulted in anti-social and delinquent behavior. The Bear Creek Academy Short Term Program will teach positive social skills, corrective thinking, ethical values, and strategies for successful community interaction. Youth will be held accountable for their behavior and actions through a system of rewards and earned privileges.

In addition to the necessary program elements required to administer a correctional complex, which includes health, hygiene, nutrition, physical activity and personal time, there will be a system to support the stated goals of this academy. Youth will adhere to strict discipline and routine. They will participate in an enhanced school program to include vocational education and will be afforded mental health and substance abuse counseling, both individually and in a group setting. A major behavioral element of the school program will be "Character Counts" which will be reinforced by institutions staff and other academy components. Other elements may include but are not limited to corrective thinking, gang intervention, life skills, domestic violence and a twelve step program. A critical component for success is the youth's transition to their home and the community. This process will be planned and the re-entry process carefully designed by a Deputy Probation Officer assigned to each youth in this academy.

The academy is overseen by a Program Manager and administered on a daily basis by a Supervising Juvenile Institutions Officer who oversees the Institutions Officers on duty. Staff will interact with youth to promote the stated goals and assist them in their development at Bear Creek academy

ELIGIBILITY

All minors considered for entry into the Bear Creek Academy program must be Merced County residents or resident of a county that contracted with Merced County for services. All must be wards of the court and have at least one year confinement time, at the time they are ordered into the program by the Juvenile Court. All minors, prior to being admitted, must have a home in the community to return to, it must be the home of the minor's parents, relative or responsible adult previously approved by the court and/or probation officer. Minors must have at least one adult member in his or her household willing to participate in academy activities and requirements.

Criteria

1. Must be no younger than 9 years of age and less than 19 years of age.
2. Must not have an existing medical condition which would preclude the minor from participation by virtue of the physical requirements.
3. Must not have a clinically diagnosed mental illness.
4. May only enter the program through a Juvenile Court Disposition; through the Merced County Juvenile Court or a Juvenile Court from a county contracted with the department for program space.

The following crime categories will be presumed excluded unless mitigating circumstances can be articulated for consideration to be included in the academy;

- a. Sex Crimes;
- b. Crimes in which resulted in death;
- c. Crimes in which an escape was attempted or occurred and involved the threat of violence or violence;
- d. Parolees;

Exceptions to any eligibility requirements can only be made by the Probation Screening Committee, consisting of but not limited to the Program Manager of Juvenile Services, Supervising Probation Officer and Program Manager of the Commitment Program. If no consensus can be reached for admission of minor, the matter will be referred to the Division Director of Iris Garrett Juvenile Justice Correctional Complex.

Program Term Options

Level One

Term one is a short term program where participants must earn 500 points. The short term program is designed to introduce the participant to the program and afford them the option of turning around their life by exposure to the different elements of the program. Participants will have access to counseling in the form of mental health, corrective thinking, character counts, ethical values, substance abuse and gang intervention. They will be actively involved in a structured program developed to encourage positive change in the lives of minors in the program. A central goal of this term is to expose the participants to different resources in the community to help them thrive once they are placed back in their homes.

Level Two

Term two participants must earn 1500 points during which time minors are expected to participate in all program elements and strive to develop better ways to control their behavior. It is expected that minors will begin to develop leadership skills and assist others in the program. In addition to the elements in term one, they will be exposed to the negative effects crimes have on the community through victim awareness. They will be expected to participate in a work project designed to give back to the community. Through team work they will learn to work as a unit towards a common goal. This term is designed to help participants start to create a sense of self worth.

Level Three

Term three participants must earn 3000 points during which time minors are expected to participate in all program elements and have a longer period of time to develop good behavior. Minors are expected to work towards developing leadership skills. Participants will be exposed more fully to their effects, both positive and negative, in their communities through citizenship training and power of positive choices. This term is designed to develop a sense of self worth and empowerment in the participant's life.

The participants can earn up to 50 points in a day on the amount of effort displayed and the participant's behavior in the program. All terms may be extended based on behavior points and meeting program expectations.

Daily Reporting Center Consideration

Levels two and three minors who demonstrate good behavior throughout their time in B.C.A. Short term program without a serious incident will be eligible to complete the remainder of their program at the Daily Reporting Center.

Minors requesting to complete the remainder of their time at D.R.C. must complete and submit an application form a week prior to reaching the required amount of points for eligibility. Points are as followed: Level two 1125 points and Level three 2250 points.

Applications will be reviewed by the Review Board on the Thursday of each week. Notices of acceptance or denial will be provided to the applicant the following day.

Minors who are approved to complete the remainder of their time at DRC will be eligible to earn up to 75 points a day.

Minors will be scheduled to meet with their parents and assigned Supervising Juvenile Institutions Officer or Juvenile Institutions Officer III prior to their exit date. Rules, expectations and report forms will be explained to the minor and parent.

Minors violating program rules or probation conditions at DRC will be reinstated by submission of a return to custody form by the Deputy Probation Officer assigned to DRC to the review board. The review board will convene with a special hearing within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. The review board will determine at the hearing what appropriate sanctions are to be imposed.

Philosophy

The Bear Creek Academy has been developed to assist minors to change how they think and approach real life situations. The strategy will allow minors of Bear Creek Academy to re-enter the community with new tools to assist them in successfully dealing with their environment..

Corrective Measures

Negative behavior will result in the imposition of sanctions for minors. Sanctions will hold the minor accountable for actions and act as a tool to correct their behavior. Sanctions are incentives to change and assist in the development of moral sense of right and wrong and to build character. They are teaching tools, not punishment, that seek to alter the error in thinking that led to the behavior. Sanctions are predictable and consistent. They strengthen rules and provide an opportunity for minors to make positive change. Additional time in the academy may be necessary to allow the minor a change and to progress at an individualized pace.

Sanctions are imposed progressively and based on the level of negative behavior or repeated behaviors. Repeated behaviors will result in higher imposition of sanctions or combination of sanctions.

Discipline

The program is a highly structured correctional program within the confines of a locked facility. All minors are expected to conduct themselves consistent with facility and program rules. The overall program reflects the principle of Character Counts consisting of the following pillars: Trustworthiness, Caring, Responsibility, Respect, Fairness, and Citizenship. This philosophy is maintained throughout the facility and taught in the school program.

Failure to abide by established conduct will result in prescribed measures or sanctions clearly outlined in this manual. Minors are responsible for their behavior and are in control of their progress in the program. Corrective measures will be fair, firm, consistent and immediate. These measures are meant to teach and redirect negative behavior by identifying errors in thinking and thereby change thinking to evoke positive results.



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Short Term Program

A Program of Merced County Probation Department

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