



Mission

The Bear Creek

Academy seeks to make positive changes in how youth committed to the 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 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 that will teach the youth new patterns for dealing with stimulus which previously resulted in anti-social and delinquent behavior. Bear Creek Academy will teach positive social skills, corrective thinking, moral and 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

Must be no younger than 13 years of age and less than 18 years of age;

Must not have graduated from high school, or have a high school equivalency certificate;

Must not have an existing medical condition which would preclude the minor from participation by virtue of the physical requirements.

Must not have a clinically diagnosed mental illness;

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 a firearm or explosive devices were used by the minor;
- d. Crimes in which an escape was attempted or occurred and involved the threat of violence or violence;
- e. Parolees;
- f. Minors who have previously failed the Bear Creek Academy.

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.

The Bear Creek Academy has been developed to work with at risk youth that have great potential to be productive citizens in the community. The Academy is structured into five phases over a period of one year. For the youth to successfully complete the program he/she must earn a required amount of points to pass each phase. Points received are based on an evaluation system, rating the youth's participation in the academy elements with an opportunity to earn 50 points a day.

Orientation Phase: The orientation phase consist of 250 points where participants will be introduced to academy elements and expectations. All youth in this phase will participate in scheduled programming. Movement to phase one will be dependent on good behavior and staff recommendation.

Phase One: Phase One participants must earn 1400 points during which time minors are expected to participate in all academy elements and show good behavior. Youth in this phase will be allowed phone privileges and the ability to earn a later curfew. After successfully earning 1650 points in the academy participants will advance to phase two.

Phase Two: Phase Two participants must earn 1400 points during which time minors are expected to participate in all academy elements and continue to show good behavior. It is expected that minors will begin to show leadership and assist others. Minors will be able to earn additional phone privileges, and earn a later curfew.

Phase Three: Phase Three participants must earn 1400 points during which time minors are expected to participate in all program elements and continue to show good behavior. Minors are expected to provide guidance and show leadership. Minors will earn additional phone privileges, special details, special visits and an extended curfew. After successfully earning 4450 points in the academy, participants will advance to phase four.

RETURN: Phase Four consists of 1550 points during which time the minors will earn home visits and return to the community. Minors must participate in all academy elements and continue to exhibit positive behavior. All academy privileges are available to each participant with continued good behavior.

Week One, Two, Three and Four: EM (Electronic Monitor) release for home visit on Saturday at 7 a.m. to Sunday at 7 p.m.

Week Five: EM conditional release to after care on Friday at 8 a.m. Minors will register with Valley High School upon release. Minors who have graduated will enter Private Industry Training Department, the job market or other suitable programs.

Week Six, Seven, Eight and Nine: Minors will attend Valley High School, DRC and remain on EM. All minors will adhere to their re-entry plan and work closely with the academy assigned probation officer.

Week Ten: Minors will transition to regular school by exiting the DRC Program and will be released from the EM Program. Minors will fully transition to the community and will transfer to a conventional deputy probation officer. Minors will be granted conditional graduation from the Bear Creek Academy.

Week Eleven through Twenty Six: Minors remain in the Return Phase on conditional graduation and may apply for full graduation at the completion of week twenty-six and with recommendation from the probation officer. Applications for graduation will be reviewed and approved by the Review Board.

ADJUST

Any minors violating program rules or probation conditions during the Return Phase will be reinstated by submission of a return to custody form to the review board. The review board will convene with a special hearing within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. The review board will consider the minor's return to custody. The length of stay and the conditions under which the minor will be released.

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.

List of Sanctions

Staff instructions and counseling;

Reports, letters, essays;

Time out;

Failure to earn full points for the day (0-50 possible range);

Room Confinement;

Loss of specific privilege;

Loss of points, extended release date;

Return to previous phase or extended phase;

Academy Failure

Effective Sanctions

Will attempt to provide substance which a minor can understand and learn;

Are made clear in advance;

Take place immediately or as soon as possible after offense;

Are not demeaning or humiliating;

Are enforced not threatened;

Are consistent, certain, and predictable;

Are graduated and progressive;

Are administered in non-emotional manner.

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.



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A Program of Merced County Probation Department

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