

NEWS/Noticias

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SOUTHWEST KEY PROGRAMS RECOGNIZED WITH BEST PRACTICES AWARD

Juvenile Justice Program Proven to Help Families and Keep Kids out of Jail

AUSTIN, TX - (January 14, 2010) - One of Southwest Key Programs (SWK) Juvenile Justice (JJ) Programs in Orange County, NY, has recently been recognized with a “Best Practices Award” by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Austin based SWK, one of the nations leading providers of Juvenile Justice programs, received the award as the reviewers found their Family Keys, Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) Diversion program, met the deinstitutionalization of status offenders (DSO) best practices criteria: namely, it is based on a well-articulated conceptual framework, establishes a causal association between the treatment and outcome, and the evaluation findings show empirical evidence of some impact on DSO trends.

The program provides home-based intervention services to youth and families in crisis. The main goal of the Family Keys PINS Diversion Program, which has been operating since 2003, is to decrease the number of juvenile justice cases that go to court and result in the removal of the child from the family to some form of incarceration. Between March 2003 and March 2008, SWK received 2,375 referrals.

This is done by offering youth and their families’ support services including immediate, short-term crisis intervention and referrals to community-based programs. These services are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

“This has been a goal we have been working towards for at least a year now and thanks to the great work at the program level, our friends at Vera Institute for Justice, and all the staff who worked so hard, we are now considered a Best Practice model” said Dr. Juan Sánchez, El Presidente and CEO of SWK. He continued “the implications for this designation will go far I believe in allowing SWK to provide more options that help strengthen families by keeping them together, which helps the kids and their families, while also benefitting the community at large.”

Derek Miller, probation director for Orange County, praised Family Keys as a significant change from the previous system, which was less helpful to kids and families. “We now invest in them and have an entire continuum of services that only begins with Family Keys,” he said. Dave Jolly, commissioner of the county’s Department of Social Services, agreed. “The immediate



PRESS RELEASE

crisis intervention is best equipped to mitigate family conflicts.” He continued “it’s user-friendly, client-friendly, and leads to better outcomes for youth and families.”

About Southwest Key Programs:

Southwest Key Programs is a national nonprofit organization headquartered in Austin, Texas. It has a creative and diverse staff of over 1,000 employees with a mission to improve the quality of life for children through culturally competent education, community development, and youth and family services. In 2008, Southwest Key was formally accredited by the Council on Accreditation, one of the world’s leading human service accrediting agencies. Southwest Key’s East Austin Community Development Center now serves as a launching pad for increasing the educational attainment and employability of East Austin residents, leading to higher paid employees, increased tax revenues and increased civic and economic engagement of residents.

For more information, visit www.swkey.org.

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