



OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES

**RESPONSE TO ACT 213,
PART III, SECTION 58
SESSION LAWS OF HAWAII 2007**

January 2008

I INTRODUCTION

In September 2005, the Office of Youth Services (OYS) contracted with The Salvation Army–Family Intervention Services (SA-FIS) in Hilo to establish and operate the Safe House program in Honoka'a for girls referred by the Department of Human Services, the Family Court, and the Office of Youth Services. The purpose of the Safe House is to provide a highly structured residential setting with an array of "best practice" services and programs to: 1) reduce risk factors that contribute to poor social adjustment; 2) respond to youth needs based on individual assessments; 3) increase personal assets; and, 4) reduce recidivism. Services to the youth are provided in a very comprehensive, consistent, individualized, and holistic manner.

The purpose of this report is to respond to Section 58, Act 213, Session Laws of Hawaii, requesting descriptive, fiscal, and program information concerning the performance of the Safe House during the second year of program operation (FY 07) This report covers the contract period September 15, 2006 through September 14, 2007 and is organized in accordance with the Section 58 request.

II RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS RAISED IN PART III SECTION 58, Act 213/SLH 2007

A. Number of Youth Residing in Safehouse

The facility initially opened with a six-bed capacity; however, it was recently approved to increase its bed capacity from six to eight by the County of Hawaii. The population continues to fluctuate with the ebb and flow of admissions and releases, but has maintained a steady referral system in the past two years.

Ke Kama Pono (the name for the Safehouse), during the first year of operation from September 2005 to September 2006, admitted 14 girls. During its second year of operation, September 2006 and September 2007, Ke Kama Pono admitted nine girls into the program. By the end of the reporting period, three girls were still in the program. Referrals were from the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF), Department of Human Services (DHS), Family Court (FC) and Drug Court of the Third Circuit Court (Hawaii). Chronic runaways, truancy, and delinquent acts continue to be the most pressing reasons that led to placement at Ke Kama Pono.

During this period, two girls were transferred from the program to other residential treatment programs, such as Bobby Benson, which were more suitable for their needs. Four youth were released from the program. Of the four girls released, one went to a foster home; one to an independent living program; one to the custodial care of her parents or guardian; and, the last girl aged out of the system and is now an adult residing with her sister. Ke Kama Pono, by license, cannot house girls who reach their 18th birthday unless the youth is

actively involved in achieving their high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma. However, one girl asked to remain in the program beyond her 18th birthday to complete her education. She successfully graduated and returned to the community.

B. THE COST PER YOUTH AT THE SAFEHOUSE

The FY07 budget covers the contract period ending September 14, 2007. The \$500,000 budget divided by eight beds equals \$62,500 per bed for the 365 day contract period or about (\$62,500/365) \$171 per bed day. This rate is roughly \$113 less per girl per day than the comparable cost for a ward at HYCF (Department of Education/Department of Health combined costs average \$50/day, added to HYCF cost of approximately \$234/day for a total of \$284 daily cost per ward). Moreover, the Safe House reduces long-term recidivism and produces much higher quality results as will be discussed in the next section of this report.

The OYS continues to educate Family Court judges to the advantages of adding language in court orders that will allow for Title IV-E reimbursements; these reimbursements will reduce the cost per day by 43% to approximately \$97 per day, significantly lower than the cost of housing girls at HYCF which is not eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement.

The primary focus of this cost analysis, however, should be on the ratio of costs to benefits and the quality of outcomes. The girls that have come to the Ke Kama Pono Safe House were all on the path to HYCF, from which the majority of youth become recidivists in relatively short order. To date only one girl has been rearrested (for running from the program), and all indications are that they will fare significantly better than their counterparts who had the misfortune of becoming short-term commitments at HYCF. The many well documented merits of the Safe House experience and positive improvements these girls have experienced are detailed below.

C. MEASUREABLE OUTCOMES OF HELPING THESE YOUTH RE-ENTER SOCIETY

The OYS requires performance targets and milestones for each contracted program, a method used to measure performance-based standards. Performance targets are broad goals, while milestones represent the activities taking place that contributed to the achievement of the performance targets. There are two performance targets for the Ke Kama Pono programs: 1) in the first year, "of the youth served in the program, 50% will not commit additional criminal or status offenses for at least six months after discharge from the program;" and 2) 70% of the youth serviced by the program will increase their attendance and improve their grades in educational, vocational, or work program

and maintain that increase for at least six months after discharge from the program." At the end of the reporting period, both goals were exceeded.

All youth have made progress towards their educational goals. This is despite some difficulties the program has faced in ensuring the girls' educational requirements were met. A Department of Education (DOE) certified teacher provided educational programming on-site for the first half of 2006, until she was diagnosed with a serious illness and not able to continue. A new teacher was recently hired to provide on-site education programming. With the cooperation of DOE, individual education needs are being met on a case-by-case basis. Most girls have been identified as special education/behavior disorder students, with special needs. DOE has provided school-based therapists and tutors to assist in meeting educational requirements. Two girls graduated while in the program.

Attached is the second contract year Outcomes Plan and Program Report submitted by the SA-FIS concerning milestones achieved under the two performance measures during the first year of the contract. For each milestone, Ke Kama Pono met or, in most cases, exceeded planned numbers.

While the above provides measurable outcomes, much of the program's success is due to more intangible characteristics, especially personal relationships with staff and other program participants. Most of the youth who have left the program remain in contact with the staff and, at times, seek further assistance from them.

One of the program success stories is about a girl who, prior to her entry into the program, was addicted to methamphetamines ("ice"). As part of her individualized service plan, this young girl attended Narcanon Anonymous (NA) and began working on the Twelve Steps program. While in Ke Kama Pono, she remained clean and sober all throughout her stay. Her sister was so impressed with the changes in her behavior from her sobriety, that when discharged and Family Court involvement ended, this girl was welcomed to stay at her sister's home. This young woman continues to live with her sister and is working at a deli on a part-time basis. Moreover, she has served as a mentor for other girls in Ke Kama Pono.

Another success story tells about a girl, who was a chronic drug user since 12 years old. She was successfully discharged from the program after three only months. Following her discharge, she maintained contact with the staff and had reported that she had been clean and sober for 82 days. In addition, she mentioned how excited she was about starting school in a new environment where she would be less tempted to fall back into old habits. While in Ke Kama Pono, this girl was the only client to complete Level 2 of her Drug Court requirements, without incident. She is currently volunteering at a local day care for mentally challenged adults and has aspirations of going to college and making social services her career of choice.

It is important to understand the intensity and breadth of the program. Ke Kama Pono is a staff secure facility, with a lower resident to staff ratio than in other residential programs. This lower resident to staff ratio allows for greater supervision and more individual attention to each resident. Also, the program provides a rich array of services on-site, such as education and family group work, which are not part of most residential programs. For other programs, youth are sent to other funded services to receive the type and range of programming available at the Safe House. What cannot be provided on site is mental health services, so staff must drive the youth to Kona for therapy. Other transportation responsibilities include taking youth to court hearings and for meetings with other agencies who will be available to assist during the transition to the community. The girls at Ke Kama Pono are active members of the Honoka'a community, often providing community service to the elderly, helping at the Humane Society, and serving Thanksgiving meals to the less fortunate.

Although aftercare services are not required by the contract, they are provided because the staff understands the need to connect with the community for successful reintegration. If the youth is to return home upon discharge, staff works closely with the youth and family in order to maintain success after graduation from the program. If it is not possible for the girl to return home, then alternative placement is secured such as a therapeutic foster home or independent living.

The effects of youth programs impact individuals for years to come. As a result of participating in Ke Kama Pono, girls are better equipped for the transition to successful adulthood. By completing their education, girls are more likely to be employed in the future and in a better paying job than youth without a diploma or GED. The longer term effects of effective programming can impact reduction in teen pregnancy, reduction in contact with the juvenile and adult justice systems, and reduction in drug and alcohol abuse. We strongly believe Ke Kama Pono, which is designed upon best practices, will result in these types of reductions.

D. PRESENT OR FUTURE EXPANSION PLANS FOR THE SAFEHOUSE PROGRAM

Future plans include establishing at least three more Safe Houses, one each for Oahu, Maui, and West Hawaii. Neighbor Islands have the fewest residential facilities for youth, and when their youth are sent to Oahu for incarceration it frequently makes it very difficult if not impossible for family members to visit them or be engaged in any way in the youth's rehabilitation and reentry into the community. These Safe Houses will contribute to the diversion of youth from the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF) and provide more economic and successful rehabilitation in the same way as the existing facility. Sites have been identified in all three locations. Request for Proposals are currently being written

and funds can be encumbered for the start-up of these projects before the end of FY 08.

E. MEASUREABLE STATISTICS OF HOW THE SAFEHOUSE PROGRAM IS LOWERING THE POPULATION AT THE HAWAII YOUTH CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Girls referred by the Family Court were either considered or close to being considered for incarceration at HYCF. Family Court in Hilo actively placed girls in Ke Kama Pono to divert from or prevent future incarceration (for some, it was a "last chance"). Those referred by DHS had serious runaway histories and were placed in the program as an alternative to referral to Family Court for disposition. Since the inception of the Ke Kama Pono program (2005), there were a total of twenty-three girls who were admitted. Out of twenty-three girls, nineteen were released, with only two girls running away from the program and being transferred to other residential treatment facilities which were more suitable to their needs; this represents only nine percent (9%) of the total number of participants who ran away. The remaining three girls continue to participate in the program

With the program fully operational and an expanded capacity from six to eight beds, there has been a reduction in the current HYCF population from FY 06 to FY 07 by 26 % as a result of the introduction of the Safe House.