

# Juvenile offenders program gets boost

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A unique case management program for juvenile offenders in Sullivan County was recently awarded highly competitive grant funding through the federal Second Chance Act.

The \$186,440 grant is designed to help court-involved youth and their families build better futures by providing family support and counseling, mentors through Big Brothers Big Sisters and referrals to other services they need.

The Sullivan County program was one of only eight

selected out of more than 200 applications nationwide to receive grant funding through the U.S. Department of Justice Second Chance Juvenile Mentoring Initiative, according to county officials.

In addition to helping juvenile offenders and their families, the program is designed to cut costs for the county, which spends millions of dollars each year sending juvenile offenders to residential treatment programs outside the community.

Sullivan County Manager Greg Chanis praised the program's dual purpose and the ability of local agencies to work together.

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"This innovative approach gets our local judiciary, the juvenile justice system and community providers working together to build solid solutions for our community," he said.

Started about two years ago as a pilot program, the project now represents a partnership between Sullivan County, which acts as fiscal agent, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Western New Hampshire, Child and Family Services, Community Alliance of Human Services and the Communities United for Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition.

The community coalition prepared the grant application, which focused on "strategic, comprehensive community collaborations essential to building and attaining resources and creating long-term positive change within a community," said program director Kevin Warwick.

In 2008, the program

received a three-year grant from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Warwick, a consultant who helped the county's juvenile justice committee formulate its initial proposal, said in the next phase of the project, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Western New Hampshire will recruit and train people interested in mentoring at-risk youth.

Families of juvenile offenders can take classes through Community Alliance of Human Services. Each client will have a case manager, as well as a probation officer.

Newport District Court Judge Bruce Cardello, chairman of the Sullivan County Juvenile Justice Coordinating Committee, said the collaborative approach enables at-risk youth and their families to receive intensive services and have a better chance for success within the community.

"We are excited by the

prospect of really helping these families work their way out of future court involvement," Cardello said. "The project also gives other interested members of our community the chance to be part of the solution by coming forward to mentor these young people," he said.

In addition to addressing some of the root problems associated with juvenile crime in Sullivan County — namely domestic violence and substance abuse on the part of the parents — the program could save taxpayers significantly when it comes to costly residential placements outside the home for at-risk youth.

Claremont-based probation officer Casey Laurie, who handles the juvenile cases accepted into the program, has said that two families in the Newport area, one with three children and one with two children, cost Sullivan County more than \$1 million for residential placements last year.