

KANSAS JUVENILE JUSTICE AUTHORITY

Program succeeding in cutting repeat offenders

By DAVID CLOUSTON
Salina Journal

Since the Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority was created in 1997, officials in Saline and Ottawa counties have worked to reduce the number of youths jailed locally and the number going to state juvenile corrections facilities. Officials representing the court and the community corrections program for the counties talked Tuesday about the juvenile Community Intervention Program during a luncheon at St.

John's Lutheran Church. The luncheon was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Salina.

The purpose of community intervention is to get kids waiting for disposition of their court cases into supervision programs early. The idea, Salina defense attorney Dexter Eggers told the audience, is so "You can prove you're a person that deserves a break."

In the program's five years, more than 500 youths have been served, said Annie Grevas, director of community corrections.

"One thing I learned a long time ago as a probation officer was that juveniles need immediate consequences, and the longer you drag something out, the less effective any consequence at all is going to be," said prosecutor Mary Thrower, assistant Saline County attorney for the juvenile court.

"That's where placing them on (community intervention) comes in. Often times we'll place them on CIP so they're out of the detention center but they're under supervision, so again, I can feel safe that our community is safe. but at the same time see if there's not some services in our community that could benefit the children or their families."

Only the more serious juvenile offenders are detained in the county's juvenile detention center. Thrower said she files charges in about 100 juvenile cases each month.

Grevas said the community intervention program has been able to cut by as much as 60 percent the rate of repeat crimes committed by youths waiting for their cases to be disposed of by the court.

"Our crime rate was huge those kids were just committing crime after crime before they were being disposed," she said. "So, it is a significant program. It was a need in this community, and it's made a real difference."

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