

Fresh Lifelines for Youth (FLY)

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"In a system that has far too few opportunities for too many kids, FLY provides an invaluable tool to assist kids in understanding their behavior and its consequences . . . and makes them less likely to repeat it."

-- Kurt E. Kumli, *Supervising Deputy District Attorney of the Juvenile Division, Santa Clara County*

"I got locked up for a very serious charge and then went into the FLY program and ended up staying out of jail [after that], unlike the others who went to jail with me. I learned the law at FLY and how to handle situations. I recommend the program to people. More kids would think twice about what they do, because you learn right from wrong."

-Sammy, age 19

Mission: To reduce juvenile crime and incarceration through legal education, mentoring and peer leadership. FLY achieves its mission by educating disadvantaged and at-risk youth to help them become more responsible, accountable and capable of making healthier lifestyle choices.

Overview: Six FLY programs operating at eight sites provide youth with information about the juvenile justice system. FLY conducts both school-based and after-school programs.

- **Law Program:** A semester-long violence-prevention course in life skills and the consequences of crime, provided to youth on probation and youth attending alternative high schools for at-risk teens.
- **Mentor Program:** A year-long program in which youth who wind up in juvenile court as a result of drug or alcohol addictions are matched with adult volunteers who help them attain sobriety.
- **Peer Leadership Program:** A year-long program in which graduates of FLY's law and mentor programs design and develop community-service activities. Peer Leaders also receive case-management services to help them set and achieve academic and vocational goals.
- **Middle School Program:** A week-long program that provides 7th and 8th graders with information on the consequences of crime. After completing the course, students can elect to participate in a law club that meets bi-weekly.
- **Project Citizen:** A semester-long course in political activism in which incarcerated youth analyze the causes of inappropriate detention of juveniles and make policy recommendations to Santa Clara County's Juvenile Justice Commission.
- **Parent Program:** Seminars on the consequences of crime and the juvenile justice system are provided to parents of teenagers.

Results:

- Ninety-eight percent of the kids say that FLY provided them with positive adult role models.
- Ninety-four percent of kids report that, after FLY, they have the basic life skills to say no to crime.
- Ninety-six percent of FLY's first graduating class did not re-offend one year after the Program.
- Eighty-one percent of youth with mentors show increased school attendance and performance.

- One hundred percent of kids with mentors report a reduction in drug and alcohol use after only six months of working with their mentors.
- Ninety-three percent of Peer Leaders graduate from high school.
- Peer Leaders provide over 1,200 hours of community service annually.

Key Elements of Success:

- One-to-one mentorship and low staff-to-student ratio to ensure individual attention
- Holistic life-skills trainings offered through Law Program
- A continuum of care that allows FLY graduates to stay involved through peer leadership
- Wrap-around services involving parents and guest speakers from the juvenile justice system: including judges, police officers and probation officers
- Low cost per student served (about \$4,000 per year)

Target Population: Seven hundred youth, ages 12 to 18, participate in FLY programs each year. Most are probation referrals: youth who have been through the juvenile justice system and may be court-ordered to enter the program.

Evaluations: BEST RISK Risk Assessment and Resiliency Avoidance, self-reporting, pre-test (ongoing); BEST Survey, self-reporting, post-test (ongoing); Internal evaluation tool, post-test

Awards:

- Exemplary and Innovative Program Grant Award (to FLY Peer Leadership Program), National Law-Related Education Consortium, August 2002
- Honorable Mention, California Outstanding County Programs, 2002
- Human Rights Award, City of San Jose Human Rights Commission, 2001

“We teach the kids the law. We teach them a new way to deal with peer pressure and how to use their knowledge. But they also need empathy and an understanding of the meaning of the justice system, and so we build in life-skills trainings.”

– *Alia Malik, FLY Program Director*