



Centinela Youth Services, Inc.

Serving youth and families since 1975

ANNUAL REPORT 2010

“Restoring Youth to Achieve the Promise of A Brighter Future”

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Messages from the Chief Executive Officer

I am fortunate to have been at the helm of CYS for nearly thirty years and to have seen the tremendous sustainability of the agency through changing economic and social dynamics that affect the tenuous lives of the youth that we serve. From increases in gang activity in our communities to outbreaks of violence on school campuses, CYS has responded to these challenges through a network of more than 100 caring and committed volunteers who bring their listening hearts to assist youth in turning their lives around. 2010 has been one of our most rewarding years because we have seen increased support for Restorative Justice within the school discipline and juvenile justice systems. Each time a youth is diverted from these systems into the effective programs of CYS and our community partners the youth is ensured a chance to develop the positive attitudes and behaviors needed to stay and excel in school and succeed in life.

I would like to thank our Board of Directors for their dedicated work in providing visionary policy oversight and valuable resources to help sustain the programs of CYS. I applaud our school and community partners with whom we share a commitment to improve the quality of life for children; leverage education and community resources and recognize the progress and achievements of our youth. I am proud of our staff, each of whom gives their best everyday because they see the *'promise of a brighter future'* in each youth that we serve.

Jan Vogel, Chief Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

Centinela Youth Services, Inc. (CYS) is a 501c3 non-profit community-based organization established in 1975 by the Cities of Hawthorne, Lawndale, Inglewood, Gardena, and the County of Los Angeles. Since 1992 CYS has become a leading agency in providing a variety of mediation and conflict resolution services to some of LA County's most vulnerable youth. CYS utilizes an effective system of services and supports to teach youth to resolve conflicts without aggression at home, school and in their community in order to reduce the number of youth attached to the juvenile justice system. CYS has trained over 8,000 student and 1,000 adult volunteer mediators; completed more than 2,000 mediations between youth offenders and their victims; and restored communication and respect between nearly 3,000 youth and their parents. *The impact on vulnerable youth can be measured in lives changed and lives saved.*

CYS receives referrals from long-standing community partners that include Los Angeles County Probation, four local law enforcement agencies, and 35 K-12 schools in five school districts. Program referrals also come from community partners such as churches, social service agencies and numerous self-referrals. CYS' caring and professional staffs have grown from three employees to fourteen trained and ethnically diverse employees and over 100 volunteer mediators and interns.

MISSION

To strengthen families and communities by empowering youth (7-21) to resolve conflicts and overcome obstacles in order to become successful students and contributing adults.

CYS SERVICE AREA

The primary service area for CYS includes Inglewood, Hawthorne, Lawndale, Gardena, Carson and adjacent LA County communities in Florence-Firestone, West Athens, Lennox and south central Los Angeles. CYS provides Families Able to Resolve Situations (FARS), Victim Offender Restitution Services (VORS) and Students Able to Resolve Situations (STARS) Club in five school districts. Because of its success in serving juvenile offenders, the VORS service area was increased to countywide at the request of the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court in 1996. VORS operates countywide from Palmdale at the north to Long Beach at the south.

AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CYS youth mediation programs have received acknowledgement from the California Legislature, City Councils of our five participating cities. Nearly sixteen years ago the LA County Probation Department Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Courts selected CYS to operate a countywide Restorative Justice program in connection with the Collaboration Oversight Team. State Attorney General Bill Lockyer named the CYS Director to a Taskforce to help develop the State Safe School Plan. CYS gained national recognition in 2000 when CYS was asked to participate in the U.S. Safe Cities Network. The Judicial Council of California recognized the CYS VORS program as a model victim/offender mediation program that is proven to reduce recidivism by 50%. LA County Board of Supervisors awarded CYS "most outstanding staff" three years in a row; "most outstanding volunteer mediator" twelve different years; and "most outstanding peer mediator" five consecutive years. CYS was selected to partner with the UCLA/RAND Center for Adolescent Health in a major National Institute of Health Community Research grant. CYS was also recognized as meeting the minimum

requirements for inclusion in the National Registry of Evidenced-based Practices and Policies of the Department of Health and Human Services (final inclusion selection still in process).

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

CYS operates innovative programs that are proven to increase student performance, reduce school dropout rates, help preserve families, reduce gang involvement, youth violence and crime.

VICTIM OFFENDER RESTITUTION SERVICE (VORS) gives young people the opportunities to 'make right' their wrong and become accountable for their actions.

Using the voice and experience of the victim of crime, youth can break with criminal thinking and develop empathic understanding of the injury caused. Reaching a child before he/she becomes entrenched in repeated negative behaviors and resultant incarnation, VORS works in partnership with the Justice System to help youth understand the impact of their behavior in order to make constructive choices toward a healthy lifestyle. The VORS program facilitates a face to face mediation between young offenders and their victims of crime, which can include a wide range of private citizens, such as homeowners, businesses, teachers, local governments, and other youth. In VORS mediations carried out by volunteer mediators (who have received over 40 hours of training), an agreement is reached in 98% of cases, and nearly 70% of the offenders fulfill their restitution agreements. *A published study conducted by the California Judicial Courts concluded that 85% of youth offenders who participate in VORS related programs had not been re-arrested within one year. This was a 50% reduction compared to a control of youth.*

Since inception of the program in the early 90s, VORS has facilitated restitution payments from youth of over \$150,000 for personal property damage or loss; recorded 20,000 hours of community service and over 2,000 letters of apology and priceless psychological relief from youth offenders to their victims. When parents pay the restitution, an agreement is made between the youth and the parent so that the responsibility to make things right remains with the youth.

⇒ In 2010 517 youth were diverted from the juvenile justice system to complete VORS mediation and make restitution to their victims.

FAMILIES ABLE TO RESOLVE SITUATIONS (FARS) opens the lines of communication and understanding between youth and parents in severe conflict.

A common scenario in FARS is a youth and parent in severe conflict because the youth has major behavior problems at school (chronic truancy or poor school attendance) and the parents are ready to "kick them out" because they are frustrated and don't know what to do. Through a series of mediations to resolve family conflicts, youth and parents are able to express their feelings, learn empathy and reach agreements that substantially alter the family dynamics. Deceptively simple, FARS reports that 95% of participating families, who are in severe turmoil, return after the first mediation with an agreement. Surveyed 3 to 6 months later, over 70% reported reduced family conflict and increased communication skills. Over 80% reported no further conflict with authorities. These encouraging results demonstrate that parent/child mediation (FARS), can reduce roadblocks and begin to help the child to progress toward

prosocial behaviors. The goal of FARS is to assist adolescent children resolve their conflict by using effective communication and decision-making skills.

CYS places high value on evaluation and establishing evidence for program effectiveness. In collaboration with UCLA a recent research proposal was submitted to the National Institute of Health to use randomized control groups to confirm FARS effectiveness in improving school attendance by youth participants and reducing negative behavior such as delinquency and substance abuse.

Both VORS and FARS rely on volunteers to carry out the work. Together the two programs use over 100 culturally diverse, specially trained volunteer mediators. Partnerships with Cal State University Dominguez Hills and Loyola Law School Center for Restorative Justice have greatly enhanced our training capacity in recent years.

⇒ In 2010 the lines of communication were opened between 417 youth and their parents through FARS mediations.

STUDENTS ABLE TO RESOLVE SITUATIONS (STARS) Club supports peaceful school campuses by teaching students to resolve conflicts.



Principal of Bud Carson receives award of appreciation for his support of peer mediation program.



Peer Mediators cheering for each other at year end Awards Ceremony.

CYS STARS program teaches students to deal with conflicts on campus through peer mediation instead of aggression. Volunteerism is an integral component in STARS with students trained and assigned as peer mediators to conduct mediations 2 – 3 days per week between peers or teachers and students in conflict. Peer mediators can earn service learning credit as a way to support their school and learn the value of “giving back” to their community.

⇒ In 2010 CYS trained over 200 new Peer Mediators who conducted over 350 mediations, affecting over 700 youth in 34 schools in 5 districts. Research indicates that conflict resolution education improves academic performance.

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School districts participating in the STARS Club:

- Hawthorne School District
- Inglewood Unified School District
- Centinela Valley High School District
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Lawndale School District

COUNSELING AND REFERRAL SERVICES (CARS) - For 37 years CY5 has contracted with licensed counseling agencies and therapists to help teens and pre-teens redirect the course of their young lives. Counseling referrals come from parents, school counselors and law enforcement personnel. Our intake staff assesses the youth and refers him/her to an appropriate licensed counselor for up to ten individual or group sessions. CY5 recently conducted a procurement to contract with three conveniently located professional providers that counsel on substance abuse, anger management, and other behavior problems resultant from a variety of risk factors (e.g. involvement with drugs, alcohol or tobacco, antisocial beliefs and attitudes, poor behavioral control, low parental involvement, low emotional attachment to parents or caregivers; poor family functioning; poor monitoring and supervision of children).



STUDENT-POLICE DIALOGUE PROGRAM *builds bridges between teen students and law enforcement officers.*

Student-Police Dialog was conceived in 2002, and initially implemented in Inglewood schools to address escalating youth crime in schools and the surrounding community. The program has also been very effective in addressing disproportionate minority contact between local law enforcement officers and African American and Latino boys. This program sets up meetings between high school students and police officers to speak openly about misunderstanding, myths and misconception on each side. Each year, results have shown that mutual understanding and respect yields less tension, increased cooperation and fewer conflicts between law enforcement officers and students.

⇒ In 2010 1,595 youth participated in Student/Police Dialogues or completed Conflict Resolution training.

YOUTH SERVED BY CYS IN 2010

Programs	Total Youth Served
<i>VORS Victim/Offender Mediations</i>	517
<i>STARS Peer Mediation</i>	270
<i>FARS Parent/Child Mediation</i>	417
<i>CARS Referrals for Counseling</i>	24
<i>CARS Counseling Sessions</i>	85
<i>Volunteer Mediator Training</i>	252
<i>Students Participated in Students/Police Dialogues and trained in Conflict Resolution</i>	1595

PARTNERSHIPS

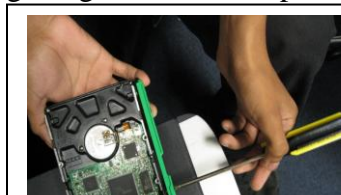
Partnerships and collaboration are essential to reducing duplication of services and leveraging resources to serve more youth. Since 1999, CYS has played a major role in the development of *Project Peace* an Inglewood Unified School District program that provides Peer Mediation at 18 schools and Conflict Resolution training to truant and suspended students through Saturday School.

Since 2003 CYS has been a partner in the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB) *Bridge to Work* program, a gang intervention and prevention collaborative funded through California Gang Reduction and Intervention (Cal GRIP) funding, that incorporates VORS and FARS services with job training and life skills development programs. Bridge to Work has been successful in maintaining a 76% placement in employment rate and a 72% six-month retention rate because of the integrated services of partner agencies.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS STORY

Out of the *Bridge to Work* Partnership comes the touching story of 17-year-old Pablo (fictitious name used to maintain confidentiality). Pablo is the second youngest of five siblings who live with their mother in a small Lawndale community plagued by poverty and gang crime. Dad is in a Tijuana jail and Mom has arthritis and cannot work and depends on Pablo and his 19-year-old brother for money to pay the bills and put food on the table for them and two other siblings. Since the age of 13 he and his older brother have had to work with very little emphasis on school. By the time Pablo turned 16, chronic truancy, possession of tobacco, giving a false identity *and* resisting arrest brought him to LA County Juvenile Court and placement on probation.

Pablo was released from probation after six months for good school attendance and good grades on his report card. That same year his brother introduced him to the *Bridge to*



Pablo repairing a computer drive.

Work Program where he was assisted by CYS and other partner agencies in being placed in a subsidized job to learn computer repair. Pablo returned to school working toward a GED while continuing to work to earn much-needed money for his family, all the while maintaining good performance evaluations at work where he showed an aptitude for working with his hands.

He now works with his uncle in construction where he has developed a strong work ethic and learned how to manage money.

Between construction jobs he fixes used cars to sell and netted more \$30,000 with a friend last

summer. Because of the pressing family need to work to take care of his family, Pablo has had little time to keep up with his school work. When asked about future education Pablo responded, *“If I had the option of not working and just continuing with school, I would. It’s hard and frustrating whenever my classmates or friends tell me to stay in school and get a part time job because I don’t have that option like many of them because of my family situation. You don’t choose to be born into a poor family it’s already set for you”*. To add to his challenges, neighborhood thugs continue to try to pull him into that life. Yet, through all of these challenges Pablo has not re-offended.

Pablo is an example of an intelligent young man with a lot of potential who was born into difficult circumstances yet has chosen to rise above them one day at a time. CYS and other partners in Bridge to Work offer a safety net to help him narrow the gap between life on the wrong path and life as a successful contributing adult. Pablo recently returned back to school to complete his GED while continuing to work full time. We have every hope and belief that he will succeed.

A VORS Success Story

Samantha (fictitious name used to maintain confidentiality) was a confused and unhappy teenager who in a one year period was arrested and placed on probation in both Nevada and California for drug possession. Her mother and father are divorced and for years have been shifting their daughter across the state line to live part of the year with one parent and part with the other.

Probation for Samantha began in Clark County Nevada where she was arrested for drug possession. Soon after the arrest she was sent to live with her father in California where it did not take long before he caught his daughter in possession of drugs and paraphernalia in his home. Alarmed and ill prepared to handle her, her father turned her over to Hawthorne police who took her to LA County Probation. Thanks to a growing commitment to Restorative Justice the Probation Officer diverted her from the system and referred her to CYS for victim offender mediation (the victim being the father, and she the juvenile offender).

This was a case of a broken home with a serious communication breakdown between all family members. What made it especially challenging was the bi-jurisdictional involvement between Nevada and California, the two parents residing in different states and long term drug use. No one was certain if Samantha would be able to fulfill a mediation agreement. But at the completion of the 2-hour mediation, father and daughter were able to reach an agreement with the help of the CYS mediator. Both parent and child rated the mediation process as ‘excellent’ and ‘worthwhile’.

One month after mediation, seventeen year-old Samantha was fulfilling her agreement to her father to stay off drugs and was working toward completing her GED. In the six month follow-up CYS learned that Samantha had ‘stayed clean’ and had nearly completed her GED and was preparing to enroll in college. This is only one of some 200+ similar case scenarios that CYS staff and its dedicated team of volunteers witness every year where youth make amends to their victim (in this case a family member) and are restored back into their homes and community.

2010 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Awarded “most outstanding youth mediator of the year” by LA County Board of Supervisors.
- Expanded collaboration with the California State University Dominguez Hills School of Conflict Resolution, Negotiations and Peace Building to provide basic mediation training linked to VORS and FARS mediation training.
- Successfully piloted a new methodology in the STARS Club program where college interns are trained to train and supervise Peer Mediators on elementary, middle and high school campuses two days per week. This method saved thousands of dollars in staff costs while providing valuable hands-on experience to college interns.
- Completed the 3rd year update of CYS five-year Strategic Plan reflecting an expanded focus on Restorative Justice and plans to open a Restorative Justice Center in collaboration with the Inglewood Court.
- Successfully completed the first year of a 5-year Health Student Safe School program in partnership with LAUSD at 19 elementary and middle schools and in the Washington Prep High School attendance area.
- Launched a collaborative partnership with Loyola Law School Center for Restorative Justice to train 2nd and 3rd year law students to implement VORS in coordination with Inglewood Court and LA County Probation.
- Launched a Parent Efficacy Program to provide parent training workshops to parents in three participating districts: IUSD, CVUHSD and HSD; program funded through a federal earmark grant through Congresswomen Maxine Waters.
- Revised the 80 page – 16 session Conflict Resolution Workshop training manual for use in After-school and Saturday School programs at Hawthorne and Inglewood High Schools (partially funded by Edison’s Community Diversity grant program - \$25,000)
- Selected by UCLA/RAND Center For Adolescent Health to submit a research proposal to the National Institute of Health to establish VORS as an evidenced-based program.
- Achieved private foundation funding to develop and implement in 2011 *CYS-Connect*, a web based data tracking and reporting system for all of CYS programs. *CYS-Connect* features a comprehensive referral system with standardized forms to allow school, law enforcement, juvenile justice and community partner agencies to refer youth for services and receive reports on client and program outcomes.