

## SAVE PROGRAM NARRATIVE

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although there are several nonprofit organizations in greater Charlotte that provide crime prevention or intervention services for young people, these programs, with some exceptions such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, are significantly understaffed and underfunded. In some instances, a few organizations that serve children have attempted to modify their program or to include disadvantaged 4-year-olds who have been casualties of the recent state budget cuts and disallowed from enrolling in More at Four, which was created in 2001 to provide high-quality education to at-risk 4-year-olds to prepare them for kindergarten. Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools serve about 3000 disadvantaged 4-year-olds through its pre-K program, but the recent state budget cut seats for 212 children who would have enrolled in CMS pre-K programs. Furthermore, the current 70% graduation rate for CMS students is unacceptable, and more needs to be done to get kids the help they need before they get into trouble.

Modifications to existing programs or the inclusion of 4-year-olds in programs simply does not work. Research shows that the State of N.C. has more than 65,000 four-year-olds who could be deemed at risk. (but fewer than half of them are currently served) Additionally, teenagers usually receive more attention in mixed-age programs which could exacerbate four-year-olds' feelings of inferiority. Modifying existing programs does not address the range of needs among at risk 4-year-olds, and often, the programs are delivered by personnel who have not experienced the criminal lifestyle and have little incentive or understanding to revise their approaches when working with at risk children.

Indeed, adapted programs seem to run counter to fulfilling the most basic of at risk children's needs: to be understood, to be encouraged, and to be given positive direction in a nation which, for many of them, is all too often confusing, threatening, and uncaring. Especially when the national data suggest that annually over 600,000 youth quit school, 250,000 enter the criminal justice system, and 32 die daily from gun violence.

SAVE (Safeguard Atone Validate Educate), a movement founded by Incarcerated Author/Activist Cedric Dean, seeks to convene several community leaders of programs for youth with the intention of breaking the mold - laying aside all current programming and, together, gathering and analyzing, local, state, and national data on the issue of juvenile offenders, and - armed with solutions - developing a systemic approach to addressing the range of causes and problems experienced by children in greater Charlotte, N.C.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The goal of the city-wide planning initiative of SAVE is to develop a systemic approach to preventing, intervening in, and treating the problems of juvenile offenders and juveniles at risk for becoming offenders.

SAVE will convene team members, facilitate meetings of the team, ensure information exchange among team members, develop and maintain communications among and between team members, and conduct local, state, and national workshops on the problems of juvenile offenders. SAVE will work closely with the CMPD to share evidence-based practices regarding juveniles in the SAVE program and other juveniles at risk in the city.

#### PROGRAM TARGET/OUTCOME

The goal of the program is to facilitate problem-solving partnerships between the CMPD and city neighborhoods, institute innovative intervention to crime-related problems, and address chronic problem areas related to social disorder and physical decay. Program targets developed in support of the goal for the first year of Cedric's release.

a. All of Charlotte's high-crime areas will be served through multiple SAVE problem-solving cycles and will work with all neighborhood associations in their geographic areas.

b. Leaders of all the neighborhood organizations that participate in the program will self-report enhanced partnerships with the CMPD.

c. SAVE will include qualitative evaluation data such as community satisfaction, quality of life improvement, community participation in addition to quantitative data (e.g., program participants, success numbers) in all project reports.

The SAVE program will epitomize the objectives of neighborhood safety by working between local law enforcement personnel and neighborhoods to prevent or reduce crime and violence, and it uses neighborhood organizing and problem-solving activities to empower residents, build peaceful relationships among neighbors, and support other crime prevention efforts.

#### BENCHMARKS

Within each geographic designation area, SAVE will work with law enforcement and neighborhood organizations to establish program targets and benchmarks. The benchmarks listed for each target are the steps in a nonlinear problem-solving process. Numbers needed to demonstrate success do not decrease during the process.

Program target a: Implement SAVE problem-solving cycles in each geographic designation:

1. Identify priority problems in neighborhood
2. Gather other data to consider
3. Convene problem-solving team
4. Implement proposed solutions
5. Evaluate implementation

Program target b: Neighborhood leaders will report improved relationships with police

1. Identify priority problems in neighborhood

2. Convene problem-solving team
3. Implement proposed solutions

Program target c: Inclusion of qualitative data in SAVE evaluations

1. Identify priority problems in neighborhood
2. Gather other data to consider
3. Convene problem-solving team
4. Implement proposed solutions
5. Evaluate implementation

## COLLABORATION

SAVE will require close collaboration and partnership with law enforcement, neighborhood organizations and neighborhood leaders in each of the high-crime sectors. There will be mutual sharing of information between SAVE and Community residents with the law enforcement community; and SAVE will encourage residents and/or those affected by crimes or nuisances in the neighborhood to sit on problem-solving teams with SAVE and police officers.

Once the problem-solving team identifies solutions they wish to implement, SAVE with the help of law enforcement can provide the solution.