



National Headquarters
6002 Jain Lane • Austin, Texas 78721

www.swkey.org

December 18, 2008

Sunset Advisory Commission
PO Box 13066
Austin, TX 78701

Written Comment to Sunset Advisory Committee

Re: Texas Youth Commission, Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Office of Independent Ombudsman Staff Report

Dear Sunset Commission Members:

Southwest Key Programs has been serving youth in the Texas juvenile justice system for twenty-one years as a leading national provider of community-based alternatives to detention and incarceration. Southwest Key has worked closely with the Texas Youth Commission, the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission and most large urban counties in the state to provide successful youth services through the last two decades of juvenile justice reforms.

We understand that the Sunset Advisory Commission's Staff Report is recommending a community corrections pilot program that encourages counties to keep lower-risk offenders eligible for commitment to TYC in their home communities and out of state confinement. We would like to offer Southwest Key Programs as a resource in this initiative, with our proven track record of success providing alternatives to incarceration in Texas.

If a pilot program is established, Southwest Key recommends that nonprofit service providers also be eligible to receive funds previously appropriated solely for the commitment of youth to TYC to operate alternatives to incarceration.

About Southwest Key Programs

Southwest Key's mission is to improve the quality of life for children by providing culturally competent education, community development and youth and family services. Today, we operate multiple program models for dozens of federal, state and county agencies. Southwest Key currently employs a creative and diverse staff of over 1,000 employees who operate more than 55 community-based programs for youth and their families in major cities throughout Texas, Arizona, California, Georgia, Louisiana, New York, and Wisconsin, positively impacting the lives of more than 5,000 individuals each day. In 2008, Southwest Key's operations and programs were formally accredited by the Council on Accreditation, one of the world's leading human service accrediting agencies.



Serving Youth Closer to Home

Southwest Key's program models are specifically designed to address the community's need for safety, to hold youth accountable for his/her actions, and to increase the youth's competencies to effect long-term and sustainable change. We believe high risk youth can be safely and effectively supervised in the community closer to their homes as they develop the personal tools need to develop into healthy, successful adults. At Southwest Key, youth are monitored, supervised, and provided with multiple supports that enable them to develop personal tools needed to grow into successful young adults. The participation of family members, school personnel, employers, and community resources is vital to the success of our treatment efforts. Accordingly, all of our services strongly emphasize family development and community involvement.

Southwest Key's Continuum of Care

Throughout our history, Southwest Key has provided a continuum of support services designed to keep at-risk youth at home and within their own communities. Our programs include community-based detention alternative programs, alternative education programs for youth expelled from their home schools, and independent living programs for youth transitioning back into the community from out-of-home placement. We also operate residential treatment centers and emergency shelters for youth, youth leadership initiatives, fatherhood programs, and child care management systems. Each of our programs are specifically designed to improve the quality of life of the youth and their families through culturally relevant services.

Please see the enclosed "Program Model Chart" for an overview of a selection of Southwest Key's community-based and residential program models, including:

- Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programs
- Wrap Around Intensive Home-Based Services
- Independent Living Programs
- Residential Treatment Centers
- Group Home - Transitional Living Programs

A Leader In Culturally Competent Services

Southwest Key is a minority-led organization with a commitment to providing culturally competent services. By utilizing the youth and family's cultural perspective and the strengths of their culture, services are more likely to be relevant and meaningful. As such, we have placed a significant emphasis on the importance of our staff reflecting the population we serve; currently people of color account for 93 percent of our entire staff, which reflects the Texas juvenile justice system population. Every effort is made to match a youth with staff of similar background. We also ensure that all communication with non-English speaking families is linguistically and culturally appropriate and that program materials are available in the languages of those being served.



Evaluation of Performance and Quality Assurance

To measure and evaluate the achievement of the program outcomes, Southwest Key monitors specific indicators including positive and negative discharges, court appearances attended without new violations, and population served statistics. Southwest Key's evaluation system includes outcome-focused intake and exit assessments, collecting data for every program in our Efforts-To-Outcomes database, and a contract with a third-party evaluation specialist to analyze the data, evaluate program performance and identify targets for improvement. Southwest Key's Quality Assurance Team has developed quality assurance instruments specific to each program model. We implement a structured Quality Assurance Monitoring process to ensure that each of our programs meet and exceed expectations through a quarterly assessment of all program activities as well as a comprehensive annual program evaluation.

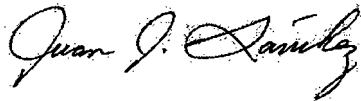
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Southwest Key is committed to strengthening our partnership with the State of Texas to provide a viable alternative to institutionalization that is cost effective, accountable and individualized. We look forward to the opportunity to be a resource to the Sunset Advisory Commission on future collaborations to effectively serve Texas' youth and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Sunset Advisory Commission Report. If you have any questions, please call us at _____ or visit our website at www.swkey.org.

Sincerely,



Dr. Juan Sánchez
Presidente/CEO
Southwest Key Programs





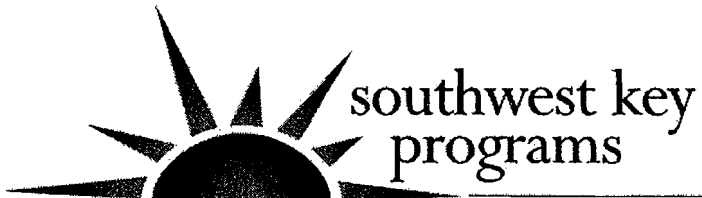
SOUTHWEST KEY'S COMMUNITY-BASED ALTERNATIVES IN TEXAS

| Program Model | Youth Population | Location | Critical Components |
|--|---|---|--|
| Intensive Supervision and Surveillance | Youth are typically low to medium risk and have low treatment needs. They need support in reintegrating into their community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austin • Dallas • San Antonio • Rio Grande Valley • Houston | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking Services • Employment Assistance • Educational Support • Family Support • Crisis Intervention • Community Service Opportunities |
| Wrap Around Intensive Home Based Services | Youth are typically medium risk and have significant treatment needs. Youth may have mental health or substance abuse treatment needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austin • Dallas • San Antonio • Rio Grande Valley • Houston | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of Youth & Family Support Teams • Transition Planning Services • Education Support • Clinical Support Services • Individual & Family Counseling • Case Management • Linkage to Community Resources • Crisis Intervention and Safety Planning • Comprehensive Assessments • Vocational Readiness Support • Discharge Planning |
| Independent Living Programs | This program is for youth over the age of 17.1 ready to transition to the community, but who lack a permanency resource and are in need of housing. Youth are of low to medium risk and may have significant treatment needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houston • Dallas • San Antonio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Based Supervised Living • Clinical Support Services • Transition Planning Services • Comprehensive Assessments • Career and Job Search Exploration • Financial Readiness Training • Homemaker Services • Educational Services • Medical and Health Referrals • Recreational Programming • Case Management • Linkage to Community Resources • 24 Hour Crisis Intervention • Discharge Planning |



SOUTHWEST KEY'S PLACEMENT OPTIONS IN TEXAS

| Program Model | Youth Population | Locations | Critical Components |
|---|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Residential Treatment Center | This program is geared toward youth with high safety and risk concerns, as well as high treatment needs | Dallas, Texas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 Hour Supervision and Support • Staff Secure Living Environment • Educational Programming • Food and Health Services • Individual and Group Counseling • Recreational Programming • Behavior Management • Life Skills Training • Family Involvement Activities • Pre-Vocational Services • Discharge Planning |
| Group Home Transitional Living Program | This program is geared for youth under the age of 17 with low to medium safety and risk concerns and medium treatment needs | Combes, Rio Grande Valley, Texas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 Hour Supervision and Support • Therapeutic and Safe Group Home Living • Educational Programming • Food and Health Services • Individual and Group Counseling • Recreational Programming • Behavior Management • Life Skills Training • Family Involvement Programming • Pre-Vocational Training • Discharge Planning |



National Headquarters
Austin, Texas 78721

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January 5, 2009

Joey Longley
Sunset Advisory Commission
P.O. Box 13066
Austin, TX 78711-3066

Re: Texas Youth Commission, Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Office of Independent Ombudsman Staff Report

Dear Mr. Longley:

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If a pilot program is established, Southwest Key recommends that nonprofit service providers also be eligible to receive funds previously appropriated solely for the commitment of youth to TYC to operate alternatives to incarceration. We recommend that the Sunset Advisory Commission include the proposed language:

- 1. Mandate 50% of funding for pilot program be awarded to private providers through a RFP process in counties with a population of 325,000 or more according to the last federal census.**
- 2. Mandate private providers have the following qualifications:**
 - 1. Demonstrate experience in effective program delivery;**
 - 2. Ability to quantify program's effectiveness;**
 - 3. Provide innovative juvenile justice and family programs or other specialized programs;**
 - 4. Maintain a nonprofit status; and**
- 3. Mandate that preference will be given to private providers that are currently accredited or in the process of obtaining accreditation by a certified entity.**



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Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Sunset Advisory Commission Report. If you have any questions, please call us at 512.462.2181 or visit our website at www.swkey.org.

Sincerely,



Dr. Juan Sánchez
Presidente/CEO
Southwest Key Programs





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