



Goldfields Youth Justice Services

Working with the community to address the causes of youth offending

Youth and Family Support Service fact sheet



The Department of Corrective Services has introduced a number of new justice services in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, targeting young people at risk of entering the justice system, as well as those already in the system.

The Goldfields Youth Justice Services include a range of mostly outreach programs to support these young people and their families and help them break the offending cycle.

The following services are now available in Kalgoorlie-Boulder under the new Goldfields Youth Justice Services. Where applicable, they will be rolled-out to other centres in the region:

- **The Youth and Family Support Service** – an after-hours outreach service for young people who are at risk of coming to the attention of police, providing practical support to them and their families to help tackle problems before they become serious;
- **The Youth Bail Service** – an after-hours seven-day-a-week bail service to help police identify responsible adults to provide bail for young people. The Youth Bail Service also provides limited short-term bail accommodation as a last resort for young people who are granted bail but do not have anywhere suitable to stay before their court appearance.
- **An expanded Juvenile Justice Team** – a dedicated team, including juvenile justice officers and a police officer, to target young people in the early stages of offending and steer them away from the formal justice system.
- **The Intensive Supervision Program (ISP)** – an internationally-renowned program which is producing outstanding results with some of the State's most difficult young offenders and their families.

This fact sheet explains how the new **Youth and Family Support Service** helps young people in Kalgoorlie-Boulder who are coming to the attention of police via anti-social behaviour or minor offending.

What does the new service offer?

Sometimes parents or caregivers don't know where to turn for help when their children are behaving inappropriately in the community or committing minor offences.

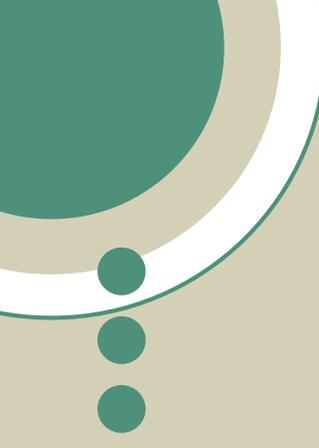
Unfortunately, there is no instruction book for people who face this difficult situation, but it can help to talk to a professional with experience in dealing with young people in trouble.

The Youth and Family Support Service is an extended-hours outreach service designed to help young people get back on track and help their families tackle problems before they become serious.

How does it work?

Police have the option of issuing cautions to young people caught committing minor offences instead of formally charging them. Under the new service, Youth and Family Support Service justice officers receive a copy of each police caution issued to young people in Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

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Benefits of early intervention and diversion programs

- Research strongly indicates early intervention programs that steer young people away from a cycle of offending and detention offer greater long-term benefits to the community.
- There are significant flow-on benefits for families of young offenders in involving parents, and sometimes brothers and sisters, in early intervention and diversion programs, which are proven to help break the offending cycle.
- There is growing evidence that early intervention is a far more cost-effective strategy than conventional approaches to reducing youth offending.

How does it work? *(Continued from front page)*

The justice officer makes contact with the young person's family to see if they need help managing their child's behaviour, and offers assistance. If the family asks for help, the justice officer visits them at home at a time that is convenient for the family. This might be after work hours or on the weekend.

Parents can also contact the service direct if they are worried about the behaviour of their child. Family involvement with the service is voluntary, free and confidential.

What sort of help is offered?

The justice officers can help the family deal with issues like school-based problems, drug and alcohol misuse and anger management. They can also mediate conflicts between the young person and their parents or carers.

The justice officer helps the family establish a case plan and set goals and tasks to address the issues they have identified. Usually, the justice officer visits the family regularly over about 6-8 weeks, though if further support was required, this is extended.

The justice officer can also advise parents or carers about programs to help manage their child's behaviour and provide links and referrals to other local services for longer-term support.

The Youth and Family Support Service is based on the Killara Family Support Service which has operated successfully in the Perth metropolitan area since 1990.

What are the long-term benefits of this service for the community?

The long-term benefits of this early intervention service include:

- improved family relationships and functioning
- fewer young people entering the formal justice system
- safer communities.

How is this service staffed?

Staff are recruited by the Department of Corrective Services. Most staff are locals and there are a number of Aboriginal staff.

Staff are trained in preventative and intervention case management strategies that assist young people and their families to deal with conflicts and difficulties. All staff are trained to deal with people in a culturally appropriate way.



CASE EXAMPLE – Peter (15 years old)

(Names and locations have been changed to ensure protection of identity).

1 September 2008

The Youth and Family Support Service receives a copy of a caution notice from Kalgoorlie–Boulder police, issued to an Aboriginal boy called Peter for assaulting a fellow high school student.

The Youth and Family Support Service sends a letter to Peter's family explaining its service and offering assistance. Peter's mother Vicky contacts Youth and Family Support Service after receiving the letter. Vicky speaks to a Youth and Family Support Service justice officer on the telephone and asks for help to address some of Peter's issues.

The justice officer asks Vicki some questions over the telephone. Vicki identifies the following problems for Peter:

- school-based issues – problems with authority and fighting with other students
- damage to property at school
- challenging parental authority
- fighting with younger sibling.

The justice officer checks if Peter is currently under an order with Community Justice Services or an open case with the Department for Child Protection. Peter is not subject to an order, but if he was, the justice officer would liaise with the other agencies to ensure the family gets the help it needs.

The justice officer suggests a Youth and Family Support Service Aboriginal caseworker could meet with the family at home and an appointment is scheduled for the following Sunday at 6pm.

Recent research backs local approach

A 2007 report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare states there is a clear link between age and future contact with the justice system. This shows that the younger someone enters the criminal justice system, the more likely they are to end up back in it.

The report found over 40% of young people who began their first ever criminal justice supervision when they were aged 12 had completed at least four supervision periods by the time they were 18, compared with less than 10% for those whose initial supervision didn't begin until they were 15.

CASE EXAMPLE – Peter (15 years old)

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The Youth and Family Support Service Aboriginal justice officer meets with Vicky, Rodney (father) and Peter at their home. During the appointment the justice officer gathers the following information:

- family relations and significant others
- family circumstances
- issues identified by family and significant others
- recreational interests and current activities
- other agency involvement – past and/or present
- previous contacts with Police
- additional information.

The justice officer then establishes a case plan with the family that includes:

- addressing school issues
- mediating family conflict and providing strategies to help parents deal with future conflict
- providing information to the family regarding positive recreational activities e.g. local BMX and swimming clubs.

The following six weeks

To help the family achieve its goals, the justice officer:

- contacts the Department of Education and Training (DET) to liaise with the Aboriginal support officer attached to Peter's school
- researches BMX and swimming clubs in the local area
- meets with the family again to discuss conflict resolution strategies and refer them to appropriate counselling/parenting services if required.

During case involvement with the family, the Youth and Family Support Service justice officer arranges and attends a meeting at Peter's school with Peter, his mum Vicky, the school principal and an Aboriginal support officer from DET. During the meeting, agreement is reached on a school-based contract that will address Peter's needs and provide strategies for teachers to monitor Peter's behaviour and performance.

The Youth and Family Support Service justice officer also provides information to the family about local sporting clubs, including membership costs, meeting days and contact details.

The Youth and Family Support Service justice officer monitors the family's progress and the sibling conflict through telephone calls and follow-up home visits. The justice officer encourages the family to follow through with strategies put in place and to contact relevant sports clubs.

Towards the end of November, the family reports that Peter's attitude to school has improved and he is attending more regularly. They also report a reduction in conflict at home. Peter has also joined the local swimming club.

Three months later

The case is closed by Youth and Family Support Service. The family is advised they can contact Youth and Family Support Service again in the future if they feel they need additional support.