



Youth Interventionist Program Description

The program staff is three trained social workers, called Youth Interventionists, based at Oak Park Township and administered by Township Youth Services of Oak Park and River Forest.

When youth – typically 11-15 years of ages – have serious interactions with the police, or are reported by a community partner agency, family or friends as in need of special help, the Interventionists will, with family cooperation, register the youth and work directly with them and their family toward making better life decisions – more pro-social and less self-destructive.

The Interventionists also move throughout our communities, conferring with and assisting staff in all taxing units, including the two police forces, to address serious issues of youth behavior and to provide immediate assistance to units in times of need.

This contact with youth and close working relationships with partner unit staff and social services providers give the Youth Interventionists a broad knowledge of youth behavior and associated family issues across the two communities. This knowledge serves not only as background for helping youth, but as a kind of community intelligence regarding current and emerging youth problems, and the communications patterns and other influences that contribute to poor choices; for example, in the case of alcohol and drug use, demand, availability and use.

The most common reasons for youth referral are trauma, mental health issues, substance abuse and/or violence, most often extending to other family members and relationships. The registered client base is typically 50 youth and families. Many unregistered youth are also assisted in group settings and during informal contact.

Each taxing unit's participation in the funding of the program sends important messages – to staff that they can communicate with Interventionists as fellow team members, accountable to management and ultimately the board of their unit, and to both communities that they can be assured of a truly efficient, collaborative effort.

Throughout the contract term, each administration and Board can expect accountability similar to that expected of their own staff. A good indicator of program success with the 11 taxing units is the program's 10, two-year contract renewal record.

Renewal is based on staff reporting that the Youth Interventionists are helpful and effective, especially in times of special need, that youth clients and their families are assisted through in a wide range of needs, and that most youth are responsive to the interventionists in dealing with the expectations of school and community life.