



*Neighborhood
Accountability Board*

WHAT IS...? THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD



*A program of the
Sacramento County Probation
Department*

The Neighborhood Accountability Board. . . What is it?

The Neighborhood Accountability Board (NAB) is a *diversion program for first-time, juvenile misdemeanor offenders*. This community-based program operates under the leadership of the Sacramento County Probation Department, in partnership with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department, the Sacramento City Police Department, Folsom Police Department, the Galt Police Department, and the citizens of the city and county of Sacramento. Citizen volunteers function as the backbone of the program. Currently, more than 200 dedicated community members serve on their local Neighborhood Accountability Boards.

The NAB program consists of individual Boards based in communities throughout Sacramento County. Boards are organized by zip code, and each Board serves two to five zip codes. The program began with three pilot Boards and these began hearing cases in October of 1996. The program has grown to include fourteen **boards**, serving **35 zip codes**. Current Neighborhood Accountability Boards include: (1) North Sacramento; (2) Rancho Cordova; (3) Rosemont; (4) Arden Arcade; (5) North Highlands/Antelope; (6) Elk Grove; (7) Galt/Herald; (8) South County; (9) Stockton Boulevard; (10) Rio Linda/Elverta; and (11) Carmichael, (12) Fair Oaks/Orangevale, (13) Citrus Heights and (14) Folsom.

How does NAB work?

The Juvenile Probation Intake Unit screens all misdemeanor citations for NAB eligibility. Only first-time, non-violent, misdemeanor offenders are eligible for the NAB program. If a case meets these requirements and if there is a Board operating in that juvenile's zip code of residence, the case is forwarded from Juvenile Intake to the NAB program.

Participation in the NAB program is voluntary; it is offered as an alternative to the formal justice system. In order to be considered for the program, a juvenile first must admit responsibility for his or her offense. In addition, the juvenile's parent or guardian must be willing to support the juvenile throughout the course of the program. Once these factors are established, one NAB volunteer meets with the family to explain the program and conduct an initial interview.

The next step in the NAB process is the hearing panel. Three to four NAB volunteers sit on a hearing panel, questioning the juvenile and his or her parents. NAB volunteers are given full access to all crime reports. Through the questioning process, the panel attempts to determine the following factors: motivation for the crime; school grade, attendance, and behavior records; involvement in social and extracurricular activities; problems at home; and any other pertinent issues. The twofold purpose of the hearing panel is to determine what motivated the juvenile to commit the crime and how the situation might be adjusted in order to prevent future criminal activity.

After questioning the juvenile and parents, the panels discuss what they have learned and

formulate a contract. The contract is a restitution plan for the juvenile-- a plan for him or her to pay back the community. Through the contracts, juveniles are required to complete a number of community service hours, to write letters of apology, to pay restitution to the victim, to obey their parents, to observe a curfew, and/or to enroll in educational, recreational, or counseling programs.

After the Board members have decided on the terms of the contract, they present the contract to the juvenile and parents. Both must agree to the terms of the contract and both must sign it. The NAB contract is a legally-binding contract and the juvenile remains under its jurisdiction for six months.

Every juvenile who participates in the program is encouraged to comply with the terms of the contract. The benefits are clear. **If a juvenile completes all terms of the contract successfully, his or her citation is dismissed.** If a juvenile breaks any part of the contract, the case may be returned to the Board for reevaluation and, ultimately, to Juvenile Intake to be processed by a hearing officer. If a juvenile commits a new offense or decides to quit the program, their case is automatically returned to Juvenile Intake.

Impact on the Probation Department:

The Neighborhood Accountability Board has decreased the number of potential court referrals and reduced the workloads of intake hearing officers. Due to the large number of cases referred to the juvenile justice system each year, most misdemeanor cases received only cursory reviews. Limited time and resources forced court officers to dismiss many cases involving first-time offenders. This is a large part of the reason NAB was implemented in Sacramento County. The NAB program removes some of the burden from the courts and the probation department and places it on the communities. Communities are responsible for deciding on consequences for first-time offenders.

Further, utilizing a large pool of community volunteers allows for more intensive supervision. The volunteers monitor two or three cases during the six-month program, while informal probation officers may carry caseloads of one hundred or more. In fact, first-time offenders in the NAB program might receive closer supervision and more attention than they would on an informal probation caseload. The Juvenile Probation Intake Unit has diverted almost four thousand cases to the Neighborhood Accountability Board since its implementation in October 1996.

Benefits to the offenders, their families, and their communities

The Neighborhood Accountability Board program decentralizes the formal justice system, bringing it back into the community. The program provides *an opportunity for community volunteers to decide how first-time offenders from their neighborhood will be held accountable for their crimes.* This connection between law enforcement and the community is one of the most important facets of the Neighborhood Accountability Boards. Juvenile offenders come to realize that community members will not stand for crime in their neighborhoods. They realize that there are consequences for their actions and that they will be held accountable-- even for minor crimes. Programs like NAB are implemented in the hopes that early consequences will deter first-time offenders from re-offending.

The Boards convene at local community centers, schools, churches, and police and sheriff service centers-- the program is physically centered in the community. Local community service and cultural support agencies open their doors to NAB participants and their families, offering counseling, educational programs, and community service options.

These families might never have known about many of these services otherwise. Also, all of the required community service projects take place in the offenders' communities. NAB participants help to clean up streets, parks, and schools; they paint over graffiti in problem areas; they assist neighborhood associations with special events; and they work at local churches and service agencies. Through their interaction with community volunteers, probation officers, police and sheriff volunteers, and neighborhood service agencies, NAB participants and their families come to view law enforcement and its representatives in a more positive light.

On a more personal level, NAB provides assistance to families in need. The NAB contract serves as a tool in helping parents to set limits for their children. Parents can use the contract to enforce obedience, curfew, and school attendance. Volunteers serve as resources for the parents, offering support and advice throughout the six-month program. Further, they serve as positive adult role models to juveniles participating in the program-- the juveniles realize that there are adults in their communities who care about what happens to them. Finally, through NAB, juvenile offenders gain an increased sense of accomplishment and self-esteem by completing the program and serving their communities.

Cost Benefits

The Neighborhood Accountability Board serves as a cost-effective alternative to the traditional court system. The Probation Department funds two of the three salaries for the NAB program coordinators. The third is funded by a grant awarded to the Probation Department from the State of California Bureau of Justice Assistance. Start-up funds were provided by the Sacramento County Criminal Justice Cabinet and the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department, to cover the cost of fingerprint background checks for the volunteers and other administrative costs. Sacramento Area Congregations Together (ACT), the United Way, and other community organizations provided additional start-up funds.

Salaries for program coordinators, fingerprint background checks for the volunteers, and mailing and printing costs are virtually the only costs incurred by the Probation Department. Volunteers are responsible for implementing the program and for following the cases from start to finish, and no stipends are provided. All facilities and services are provided in-kind from partnering agencies.

According to departmental figures, the cost to process one juvenile through the NAB program is approximately \$332.00. The cost to process that same juvenile through the formal justice system is approximately \$1,912.00. The \$1,912.00 figure includes the costs for intake and court investigations, informal supervision, and work project supervision. As these figures show, NAB provides a financially reasonable alternative for these first-time offenders.

Success rate of the Neighborhood Accountability Board

The NAB began hearing cases in October 1996, with three pilot Boards. As mentioned earlier, the number of active Boards has grown to fourteen. As of 12/30/98, **379** minors have successfully completed the six-month Neighborhood Accountability Board program. As of November 1998, thirty-one (31) of those 379 have committed a new offense-- **92%** of those who have completed the program have remained arrest-free.

The most important successes of the Neighborhood Accountability Board, however, are intangible. The NAB has had a tremendously positive effect on both the community and the offender. Creating a partnership between community and government gives the community the opportunity to share in the responsibility of resolving the problems of juvenile delinquency. The community enjoys a renewed sense of pride in its youth. Ultimately, participation in the NAB gives volunteers- - and families of offenders-- a sense of community ownership. Our goal for 2006 is to expand the NAB program into every community of Sacramento County.

A Partnership between the:
Citizens of the City and County of Sacramento
The Sacramento County Probation Department
The Sacramento Police Department
The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department

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THE GOAL OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD



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THE BOARDS ROLE IS TO:

- Collaborate with the juvenile, his/her parents and the victim in creating a contract focusing on accountability measures to repair the harm resulting from the juvenile's actions.
- Agree upon a plan for accountability and negotiate conditions with the juvenile to make amends to the crime victim and the community.
- Prevent and decrease delinquent behavior by holding juveniles accountable to the community for their actions.
- Increase the juvenile's awareness of the harm he/she has caused as well as assist him/her in making amends to the victim and community in a positive and constructive way.
- Provide competency development programs that socialize youth by addressing the specific strengths identified in the assessment process.
- Help youth improve on any skill deficiencies through opportunities including mentoring or specialized programs.
- Increase the opportunity for victim involvement in defining and repairing harm.
- Assist youth to reintegrate and live respectfully in the community while decreasing the chance of becoming involved in the formal justice system.

BENEFITS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

Being a member of a Neighborhood Accountability Board provides an opportunity for direct participation by the community in the juvenile justice system to help hold youths accountable for the harms done to them, others, and the community.

BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY:

- Allows the community to become familiar with some of the problems of crime and delinquency in their neighborhood
- Allows the community to participate in resolving some of the problems of juvenile crime within their own community
- Allows the community to share in the responsibility of assisting offending youth in making

right the wrong done to the community

- Helps the offenders establish a sense of community values and a sense of personal responsibility for their actions, while becoming respected and productive members of the community
- Reduces referrals to the Probation Department and the Juvenile Court
- Provides early intervention with youths, while building on their strengths and addressing areas of concern
- Saves taxpayers' dollars!!

BENEFITS TO THE FAMILIES:

- The NAB provides the juveniles and their families access to community resources which may not have been available to them (counseling, tutoring, intervention, and accountability)
- Provides positive interaction with caring, concerned community members
- Provides the juveniles and their families assistance in maximizing the effectiveness of their home, school, and community experience
- Allows juveniles to be held accountable for their actions in the context of the community
- Allows juveniles to learn to respect themselves, their families, and their communities

BENEFITS TO THE JUVENILES:

- Helps young offenders understand that they are accountable for their behavior
- Builds on the juveniles assets and strengths while helping them form a bond with family, school, and community
- Helps offenders understand that reparation and restitution through community services is a way of making amends for their actions.
- Shows them that the community cares for and respects juveniles, but will not accept their delinquent behavior

WHO CAN SERVE ON A NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

- Anyone who would like to help young people and is able to communicate with them
- Anyone who can be fair and objective and has the ability to empathize with youthful offenders and their parents
- Anyone who cares about the quality of life in his or her community
- Anyone who believes that young people can be put on the right track, and with support

systems, stay on track

- Anyone who has an interest in delinquent youth and the general welfare of the community
- Anyone who has an ability to communicate effectively with victims, young people, and their families within a structured interview setting
- Anyone willing to work within guidelines established by the Probation Department and accept direction and suggestions from the Program Coordinators
- Anyone willing to support the philosophy and mission of the Sacramento County Probation Department
- Anyone willing to help young offenders establish a sense of personal responsibility for their actions and keep them from further involvement in the juvenile justice system
- Anyone who can pass a state and federal criminal background check

TIME COMMITMENTS AND TRAINING FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

Training Commitments

- Fingerprint background check
- Orientation & Training - Each NAB member will receive a training manual
- Role Play
- Observe a Hearing Panel

Time Commitments

- Members must make a commitment to serve for one year
- Neighborhood Accountability Board members usually meet
 - ***Twice per month*** (Board meeting and Hearing Panel)
 - Board meetings are approximately two hours in length
 - Hearing panels are from one to three hours in length
- Follow-up casework on juveniles in the program

HOW IS THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD ORGANIZED?

THE BOARD - All volunteers who have completed application process and received proper training. All Board members attend a business meeting and sit on one panel per month.

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD - those members who have been chosen or who have volunteered to serve as Executive Officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Investigators, Community Service Coordinators).

- The Executive Board is elected by all Board members annually.
- These are all volunteer positions.

PANEL MEMBERS - Meet with the juvenile and the parents on their assigned evening.

- Hearing panel members make appropriate dispositions (contract).
- Hearing panels consist of the Chairperson (the spokes-person), the Recorder (secretary), and one or two additional panel members. These positions should rotate to give all an opportunity to share the responsibility.

THE INVESTIGATOR – (Selected by the Probation Department) Conducts interviews with the juvenile and family, gathers background information, reports findings to the hearing panel.

- The Investigator meets with the family prior to the hearing panel and explains program.
- The Investigator acts as guide for the juvenile and family through the program.
- The Investigator sits with family during the hearing panel but does not participate in questioning.
- The Investigator is not a voting member on the hearing panel and should not influence the panel's decision



NAB FACT SHEET



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NAB is a partnership between the citizens of the City and County of Sacramento, the Sacramento County Probation Department, the Sacramento Sheriff's Department, Sacramento Police Department, Galt Police Department, Elk Grove Police Department and the Citrus Heights Police Department

Community volunteers sit on hearing panels and write up contracts for first-time juvenile offenders, assigning community service, school attendance, curfew, and letters of apology, a shoplifting impact workshop and other assignments

NAB enables the community to participate firsthand in the justice process, resolving some of the problems of juvenile crime within their own community. Through this process, the juvenile comes to realize that the community cares about his or her future, but will not accept delinquent behavior

For juvenile offenders and their families, the NAB program offers **a meaningful alternative to the court process**, and brings the juvenile justice system into the community

There are **fourteen (14)** individual Neighborhood Accountability Boards in Sacramento County, with over **200 community volunteers** donating their time on a monthly basis

NAB participants have completed over **20,000 hours** of community service

More than **800 NAB participants** have attended an educational tour at the California Youth Authority

More than **3000 minors have successfully completed** their six-month contracts with the NAB Board. Approximately **89 percent** of those who have completed the NAB program have not committed a subsequent offense

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Neighborhood Accountability Board Newsletter

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The Neighborhood Accountability Board was established in November of 1996 and there are currently fourteen Boards operating throughout Sacramento County with more than 200 volunteers! Since the program began, more than 5000 juvenile cases have been diverted from the formal juvenile justice system. Most volunteers contribute from three to six hours per month.

If you are concerned with the rising incidence of juvenile crime in your neighborhoods and you are interested in working with juveniles and their families, the Neighborhood Accountability Board is the perfect way for you to become involved.

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