ID # (assigned by CSG): 12-E-02-CT

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Connecticut

Assign Program Category (applicant): Corrections (Use list at end of application)

Program Name: Child and Youth Unit (CYU) – Special Management Process
Administering Agency: Manson Youth Institution (MYI)
Contact (Name and Title): John M. Alves, Warden
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1. How long has this program operated (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old as of April 5, 2012 to be eligible for this year’s award.

   The Child & Youth Unit of the Manson Youth Institution (MYI) and its Special Management Designation Plan was initiated in June of 2011.

   It is a program in which male offenders identified as a Child and Youth (under 18 years of age) are managed separately from the male adult (18 years and older) population. It also includes the transfer of the adult inmates who pose safety and security concerns out of MYI to other adult correctional facilities based on their specific needs and designations.

2. Describe the program:
   
   Why was it created?

   MYI confines both juvenile and adult offenders within one correctional facility. MYI understands there is a difference in maturity levels between its juvenile. Each age group requires specific, targeted interventions and must be managed differently.

   MYI recognizes that it house an adolescent population. Inmates typically experience issues with maturity level, education barriers, adolescent development, family relations, suitable role models/mentors, addiction and mental health.
MYI recognizes that a significant reason for the incarceration of its juvenile population is the lack of necessary life skills to deal with everyday issues.

MYI also recognizes that in order to address the incarceration of juveniles and associated concerns, it has to create a positive peer environment for its juvenile population to flourish and begin to live up to their potential. MYI therefore initiated a special management plan in which adult inmates who do not conform to facility rules or otherwise are poor role models for the juvenile population are transferred out of MYI to an adult correctional facility.

The Child & Youth Unit (CYU) was established to address the special needs of its child and youth population, both as a group and on an individual basis in a nurturing and positive environment. In collaboration with MYI’s Educational Department, other key facility staff and community based partnering agencies; the CYU seeks to provide a structured lifestyle to its juvenile population. The ultimate purpose is for involved staff to work as a team in providing and equipping the younger offender with the educational, social and other life skills needed to reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

- **Why is it a new and creative approach or method?**

Prior to the creation of the CYU, there was little specific focus placed on the key reason for the incarceration of the juvenile offender: the lack of structure in their lives. Subsequently, the facility did not concentrate on addressing the ‘adolescent temperament’ of its juvenile offenders.

The facility essentially saw its inmate population consisting of 14 to 21 year old inmates and managing them as one group. To a large extent, the juvenile offenders were subjected to essentially the same correctional practices as the adult offenders.

This new and creative approach focuses on the individual juvenile, the crime committed leading to the incarceration and, most importantly, what may have led them to commit the crime in the first place.

This new approach includes changing the facility culture by transferring adult inmates that are affiliated with gangs and engage in assaults, fights and other disruptive behavior out of MYI. Such transfers will assist the facility in creating an environment where the juvenile population is not negatively influenced or by the adult offenders and will allow the juvenile to engage in positive ventures.

MYI have a direct stake in addressing the needs of its juvenile offenders, projecting self worth, dignity, pride and the belief they can be productive and law abiding citizens upon reintegration into their community.

**What are the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order?**

- Upon admission to MYI, the juvenile offender undergoes facility orientation and is placed in the Child & Youth Offender Unit (CYU).

- A self-administered MAYSI-2 evidence-based screening tool specific to youth under the age of 18 will be given to the juvenile offender upon entry. MAYSI-2 consists of 52 questions covering 5 domains: Suicide Ideation & Angry-Irritable, Depressed-Anxious, Somatic Complaints, Thought Disturbance and Traumatic Experience. The scores of the self administered MAYSI-2 test and
results are given to the medical intake staff for appropriate action in regard to the management of the juvenile offender.

- Upon completion of orientation and classification actions, the CYU staff meets with each juvenile offender and begins the Discharge Planning Worksheet (DPW). MYI believes in the department’s initiative that “discharge planning commences on entry of inmates to the department”. The DPW is a checklist that contains various needs, such as education, housing, addiction issues, family unification, and mentoring with which the juvenile may need assistance.

- Juvenile offenders are asked to state what among the needs noted on the worksheet they would need assistance. They are also asked to state in their own words what their discharge plans are. The purpose of the checklist is to have discharge planning be a joint effort between the CYU staff and the juvenile, thus enabling the offender to have a personal stake in his discharge planning.

- Based on the information gathered via Classification, MAYSI-2 and the DPW checklist, the CYU staff begins to work with the juvenile offender on his discharge planning. The CYU staff facilitates and refers, as applicable, the offender to various facilities and outside agency staff to address needs, such as education, vocational training, programming, mentoring, family reintegration, community referrals, addiction services and mental health services.

- The juvenile offender attends school all day and participates in facility programs during the evening hours, Monday through Friday. This assists them in leading a structured lifestyle, which many lack, and may have contributed, to their current incarceration.

- The juvenile offender receives a copy of the signed DPW checklist, which serves as a ‘contract’ and a reminder of the discharge actions that the offender has agreed to work on collaboratively with the CYU Unit staff.

- A Discharge Planning File is created for each juvenile offender and kept in the CYU. The completed original DPW signed by the inmate and staff member is placed in the Discharge Planning File. The ultimate goal of the Discharge Planning File is to ensure the discharge plan has been completed and the juvenile is prepared to leave the institution.

- MYI also instituted a committee consisting of custody, treatment, medical and mental health staff who takes into consideration the youthful nature, maturity level, educational and mental health constraints that may impact the child and youth offenders, while applying and enforcing facility rules and regulation.

- The committee reviews investigations and circumstances prior to a juvenile offender being designated as a gang member or other special management status. These reviews take into account the juvenile’s maturity level, mental health status, educational needs, their adolescent development and the current circumstances of the juvenile in arriving at a decision of whether to recommend a specific special management designation or a preemptive behavioral management plan. The committee determines whether a designation serves a penological purpose or if increased programming will benefit the juvenile offender and discourage him from damaging behaviors.

- This new approach is opposed to what was performed in the past where the facility based its decision purely on the disruptive actions of the juvenile. The consequence was such designations effectively encouraged the juvenile offender to become more cynical and entrenched in the gang
life style. The new process educates and encourages the juvenile offender that there are better alternatives and choices in life and that staff and society will extend a helping hand, if they do their part and strive to take advantage of the educational and programmatic opportunities provided by MYI, which ultimately leads to living a productive lifestyle devoid of crime.

- **Is it effective? Provide tangible results and examples.**

The concept of housing the child and youth offenders in one unit, addressing their basic needs as one holistic entity and transferring out the adult inmates that negatively influence their behavior has had tangible results.

1. The rate of Disciplinary Reports and incidents has been dramatically reduced in the juvenile housing unit.

2. In the period June 2010 to March 2011, a total of 103 Class A Disciplinary Reports were received by inmates in the unit.

3. Since the inception of the program, June 2011 to March 2012, a total of 56 Class A Disciplinary Reports were received by inmates in the unit.

4. In essence, disciplinary reports were cut in half. Clearly this is a result of staff focusing on the needs of the juvenile offenders, and the special management process of transferring applicable non-conforming adults out of the facility.

5. Another major tangible result of the program is the fact that juvenile offenders learn to live together within one unit and resolve their issues amicably, without the negative encouragement of the adult offender which normally lead to fights and assaults.

6. The normal correctional practice for inmates that engage in fights is to separate them and move them to different housing units or even different correctional institutions. The result is that inmates do not learn how to resolve issues and start to believe that once there is a dispute between them and some other person, it cannot be resolved.

7. In view of the fact that we house all the juvenile offenders in one unit, we devised Meditation Strategies in which we have trained unit staff to conduct mediation sessions with applicable inmates and continue to manage them within the unit.

3. **Did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number, and e-mail address.**

Yes.

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4. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

No

5. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter when attempting to adopt this program?

- Staff buy-in. Initial work has to be done in selling the idea to staff of seeing inmates not just for their crime, but also of other issues that impact their thought process. This includes family background, level of education, mental health issues, lack of good role models, poor neighborhood, and poor nutrition.

- Correctional staff tends to be regimented. In order for a program to be effective, staff needs to think outside the box and develop new behaviors on addressing juvenile offender issues.

- Change in procedures. Administrators have to be prepared to change long held beliefs and policies. If there are no concerted efforts by administrators at challenging the status quo, then the program will be unsuccessful, as the initial reaction by staff is always to keep the status-quo.

- You need to be prepared to transfer non-conforming offenders and those ill suited to other facilities. It is critical that a positive atmosphere be created and kept up at all times for the juvenile offender to thrive.

- As with any new initiatives cost and staffing need to be considered.

- Staff will require training in different innovative correctional practices such as Mediation Techniques.

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