

## **Office of Youth Services:**

### **The Problems**

With funding from the Office of Youth Services, the Kalihi YMCA is working with youth, ages 12 to 18, on O'ahu—from downtown Honolulu to Ewa Beach. The focus of this effort is on at-risk youth who are having trouble at home, in school or in the community. Problems such as substance abuse, run-away behavior and criminal or gang activity are the target of this Kalihi Y project.

### **The Strategies**

"Community-based" is the important phrase in the Kalihi Y's strategy for helping O'ahu teens. This project employs community outreach workers who are comfortable relating to teens and their families outside an office environment. Although working out of the Kalihi and Leeward YMCA facilities, these workers meet their young clients where they are the most comfortable—in their schools, in parks and playgrounds, in their homes and on the streets. The outreach workers specialize in knowing and matching youth to existing community resources, rather than duplicating those services. The community workers are not therapists, their role is one of advocacy, education and skill-building. They use their time with youth as an opportunity to teach social and problem-solving skills, both individually and in small groups. The workers also make use of a "life-skills" curriculum developed by the Kalihi Y over years of community outreach experience.

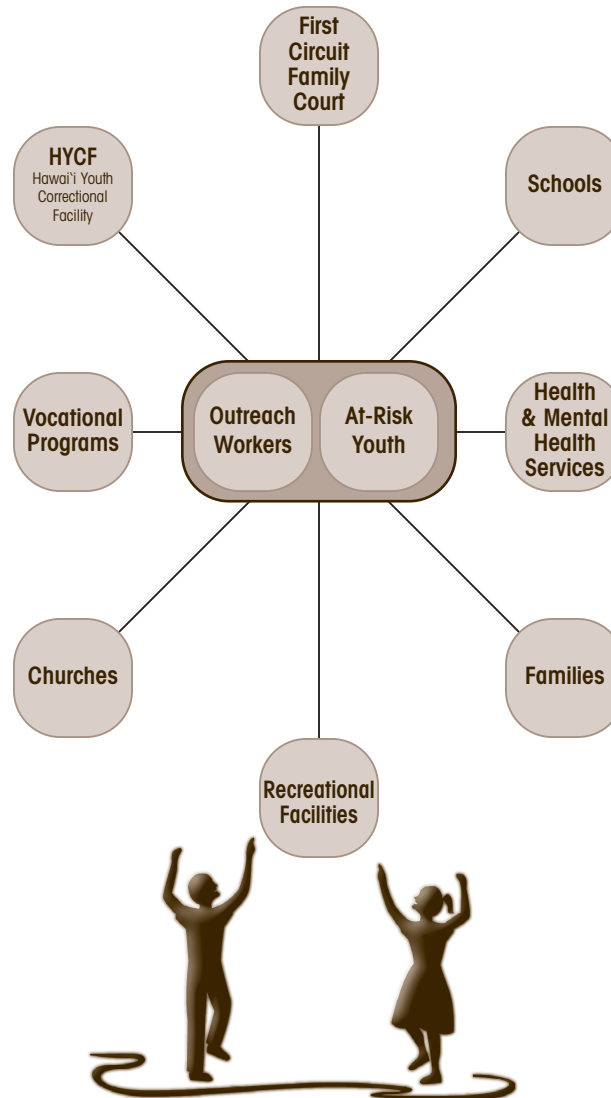
### **The Problem**

In years past, when youth were sentenced by the court to the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility in Windward O'ahu, the teens received the punishment of incarceration, but got little help to change the substance abuse behavior that often led to their law violations. The lack of substance abuse treatment merely increased the likelihood of re-offence and return to adult or juvenile prisons.

### **The Strategy**

To meet the treatment needs of adjudicated youth, the Office of Youth Services has contracted with the Kalihi YMCA to provide substance abuse assessment and treatment to all youth sentenced to the correctional facility for 60 days or longer. To

**IN THE OUTREACH MODEL THE WORKER HELPS AT-RISK YOUTH TO CONNECT TO ALL OF THESE RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY.**



date, these assessments have found that a majority of the youth in the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility have significant substance abuse histories and, thus, about 50 incarcerated youth are receiving substance abuse treatment from full-time substance abuse counselors provided by the Kalihi Y. In addition to the assessments, the counselors provide a treatment plan, individual and group counseling and post-release planning.

## **Family Court Substance Abuse Treatment:**

### **The Problems**

Just as in the adult criminal justice system, a high proportion of youth who come before the Family Court of the First Circuit Court on O'ahu have substance abuse at the root of their problem behaviors. The juvenile justice system recognizes the need for an intervention into this aspect of their clients' histories. In addition to substance abuse problems, teens who come to the attention of the court frequently have lost the "normal" structure of teen life. The routines of school, family and peer support have eroded and been replaced by increasing isolation or by affiliation with destructive peer groups, like some of the street gangs active on O'ahu.

### **The Strategies**

For those youth under the jurisdiction of the Family Court, the recognition of this need for chemical dependency treatment has led to an agreement with the Kalihi YMCA to offer substance abuse assessment and counseling services to youth referred by the court. Using classic outreach techniques, YMCA staff attempt to address the all-too-frequent loss of structure in the lives of these teens and to re-connect them to educational, vocational and recreational resources. Staff also try to work with the denial and rationalization that is a part of the pattern seen in many teens' substance abuse history.



**We build strong kids, strong families,  
strong communities.**