

On Native Delinquents—

MYC Needs Help

Alaska's only co-educational program for juvenile delinquents is looking for help with Native youths who go through the program and need a place to return "home" to.

McLaughlin Youth Center averages about 60% Native clientele in its treatment program, with about 40% of those youths from rural parts of the state.

But after getting in trouble with the law, and being assigned to MYC, it is particularly difficult to send the readjusted child back into an environment which may have contributed to the problem in the first place, according to Dawn Deyo, a Cherokee Indian working as a youth counselor for the center.

"We need people to become involved in these young people on a village or regional basis," Deyo said. "They need to pro-

vide a mechanism for helping these kids to their villages."

Deyo explained that MYC is "more than willing to set up ways to help the kids form relations with other people," but there aren't enough people interested in youths that have gotten into trouble.

Most young people end up at MYC after being adjudicated by the courts for criminal action. The program is oriented to counsel offenders in individual, group and family settings.

"When they get out, we naturally try to place these kids in the best possible setting," Deyo added. "Foster homes are always in short supply, there are not enough group homes, and we try to put them back into their own family if the environment is satisfactory. That usual-

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ly means family counseling, which is difficult in rural situations."

Deyo explained that the MYC program operates on two levels — short-term detention and the unit program. The detention program is to hold offenders up to 30 days before either transferring them into the longer-range or putting them into a home.

The unit program may take a

youth from four months to a year to work through, according to how seriously the youth takes their responsibilities as agreed upon at the start through a contract with a counselor. Each client begins at a maximum security orientation phase which lasts 30 days and proceeds through three steps to freedom.

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"We're particularly concerned that these kids who come from rural areas are faced with a situation where they don't know anybody in a strange place," Deyo added. "Then, after they've worked through their problems, they get scared at the idea of going back home because they don't know what people in their communities will say and they don't know how they'll handle the old situation."

Deyo expressed hope that local or regional persons concerned about the youths who end up going to MYC might initiate programs for helping them.

On Dec. 1, the program will be enlarged to include a cottage program, which will be a minimum security family-type of arrangement expected to help the youths form more permanent relationships within a smaller group of persons.

Persons interested in helping with this problem may contact McLaughlin Youth Center by writing to Dawn Deyp, 2600 Providence Road, Anchorage, Alaska, 99503, or by calling 277-7751.