

## LOCAL PROGRAM EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSES BIAS AMONG YOUTH

San Diego County was shocked in the summer of 2000 when a group of local high school youth attacked elderly migrant workers. Shortly after, the tragedy of Columbine High School hit home with the Santana High School shooting; the alleged perpetrator having been the target of constant, homophobic harassment due to his small stature.

These high profile incidents of hate crimes committed in the last few years, combined with the alarming fact that youth are committing nearly half of all hate crimes, led the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to implement a program in San Diego to address both the early stages of bias and intervene once youth have committed bias-motivated crimes. The San Diego County ADL received funds from The California Endowment and partnered with the San Diego County Probation Department to implement such a program, called PATHWAYS to Tolerance. Structured as a 12-week psycho-educational program, PATHWAYS to Tolerance synthesizes education with cognitive-behavioral, experiential, and self-psychological interventions to develop changes in attitudes and behavior. SANDAG was selected to evaluate the program.

Positive results of this program for youth, which are described in a recently released SANDAG report, include:

- Almost three-quarters (74%) of the participants successfully completed the program.
- Of those youth who completed the program, only eight percent had a referral for a new offense during the intervention period, which decreased to six percent in the six-month period after exiting the program.
- None of youth had a referral to probation for a bias-motivated incident or hate crime during the intervention or the six-month period after exiting the program.
- Youth had increased knowledge about tolerance, biases, and prejudice after program participation.
- The percent of youth who had taken responsibility for their biases increased after program participation. These youth not only verbalized their biased attitudes, but had shown remorse for their actions.
- The percent of youth committed to addressing biases also increased. These youth had admitted biases and stated during a session that they plan to do something positive to change their biases.

Overall, youth who completed the program demonstrated an increased awareness of their biases and how attitudes affect behavior, possessed a sense of responsibility for their biases, and had more protective factors and fewer risk factors to buffer them from reentering the juvenile justice system. For more information on the project or evaluation, please contact Gina Misch at SANDAG (619) 699-6941 or [gmi@sandag.org](mailto:gmi@sandag.org), or Morris Casuto, ADL Regional Director, at (619) 293-3770.