

Juvenile Reform Plan Wins State Funding

\$5.5 million grant to overhaul S.F. system

By Teresa Moore
Chronicle Staff Writer

The team in charge of redesigning San Francisco's outmoded juvenile justice system marked its first concrete achievement Thursday when the California Board of Corrections approved the comprehensive plan and gave the city nearly \$5.5 million to help implement the proposal.

The San Francisco Juvenile Justice Action Plan, which was developed by a team of consultants from the Delancey Street Foundation, received the largest grant of the 48 counties that applied for state money, said foundation President Mimi Silbert. San Francisco, which in the past has had one of the worst reputations among juvenile justice experts, was the only county to receive all of the money it requested.

When she announced the plan in March, Silbert estimated that over the next three years the proposal would require \$5 million to \$10 million more than the city has currently budgeted for juvenile justice services. The state grant will be spread out over a three-year period.

"I'm just thrilled — it means we can leap into action," said Silbert, whom Mayor Willie Brown has charged with leading the redesign and implementing the plan. "This allows us to go full force into the programs in our circle of care."

Central to the plan is the integration of city services and community resources to meet the needs of troubled children and

their families. For instance, a child's schoolteacher, parent, probation officer and community recreation center director would all work together to act as a guideline to help the child overcome problems and develop strengths.

"Instead of having people working at cross-purposes, we want to bring together all of the key players in a child's life to get that kid on the right track," said Kimiko Burton, director of the Mayor's Criminal Justice Council. Her office is working with Silbert to implement the plan.

Candidates for the vacant job of chief probation officer in charge of juvenile hall were asked to review the plan, Silbert said.

On Wednesday the Juvenile Probation Commission, which oversees the juvenile probation department, forwarded their recommendation for a new juvenile hall chief to Mayor Willie Brown. The commission voted not to disclose the name of its candidate and Commission President Charles Breyer said that the ultimate appointment rests with the Mayor.

"I have met at great length with every potential new chief," Silbert said. "They all have read the plan and are excited about implementing it. The mayor wanted to make sure that every potential chief knew about it. This is not going to be business as usual."