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Register-Pajaronian Tuesday, November 2, 1993 — 3

Program to combat Latino youth substance abuse

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A \$1.2-million-per-year project to combat alcohol and drug abuse among Latino youth kicked off last week in Salinas.

Proyecto Unidad (Unified Project), announced at a press conference, will provide alcohol and drug treatment to Latino adolescents and their families in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties.

The program will offer outpatient, day treatment and residential treatment, said program spokesman Bill Zaragoza of Youth Services in Watsonville.

A group home for adolescents will be established through Sunrise House in Salinas, with another one in Watsonville. Each will also offer day treatment, outpatient

treatment, and an on-site school.

Outpatient drug and alcohol services for adolescents will be offered in Castroville, and outpatient services and an on-site school will be provided in Greenfield.

Up to 348 adolescents can be admitted, Zaragoza said.

Currently there is no residential drug treatment program for adolescents in the project's target area, said Bill Manov, Santa Cruz County alcohol and drug programs administrator.

The target area stretches from Watsonville south through North Monterey County, Salinas and the Salinas Valley.

Half of the funds will come from a federal grant just received from the federal Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, which will provide \$600,000 yearly for three

years.

The other half will come from a combination of state school funding (so-called ADA monies, based on average daily attendance) and county foster care funds through the Aid for Families with Dependent Children program.

Barbara Shipnuck, chairwoman of the county Board of Supervisors, said the program involves "the best of what we talk about when we indicate the need in the '90s of having collaborative projects for the delivery of social services and health care."

Manov said that because an adolescent's drug or alcohol problem is a symptom of larger problems, the project will include a team of health care and social service providers who will address the needs of the adolescent's family in all

areas — not just those involving drug and alcohol abuse.

"If you don't have all the pieces of the puzzle together," he said, "the whole treatment plan will fall apart."

Bruce Campbell, acting Monterey County alcohol and drug programs administrator, said that among Latinos in the target area over age 25, 52.1 percent have less than a ninth-grade education, compared to 11.2 percent statewide.

Nationwide, Manov said, there were more than 1,000 applications for grants from the federal program, of which 106 were from California, and only 50 were awarded.

Proyecto Unidad's grant is the largest in California, and the project was the only one in California to receive the full amount it requested, he said.