

Reentry Services Project

Annual Report: June 1, 2007 Through June 30, 2008



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The Reentry Services Project (RSP) began in July of 2003 with funding from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety and the Clay County Collaborative. An evaluation of the program by the North Dakota State University evaluation team began in September of 2003. The initial funding was renewed in 2005 when the program was extended for an additional two years. In 2007-2008 the program was funded by the Clay County Collaborative. The following report details progress and results during this funding cycle. Specifically, it details client service, outcome, and evaluation activities for the period of June 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008.

Program Description

From 2007-2008, the Reentry Services Project in Clay County was funded by the Clay County Collaborative. The program employs two full-time Transitional Coordinators (TCs) who work with Clay County juvenile offenders, their Probation Officers (POs), and other agency personnel as youth are returning to their home communities from an out-of-home placement.

The overall goal of the project is to improve public safety by preparing juvenile offenders for successful reentry to communities. The program aims to achieve this goal by assisting youthful offenders in becoming productive, responsible, and law abiding citizens through strategic and comprehensive reentry plans. These plans address the following Reentry components:

1. Obtaining and retaining long term employment, if appropriate;
2. Maintaining a stable residence by providing intensive services to high risk juvenile offenders leaving out-of-home placements, with an emphasis on seamless and comprehensive treatment, intensive case management, and the involvement of local communities;
3. Successfully addressing substance abuse issues;
4. Successfully addressing physical and mental health issues; and
5. Establishing a meaningful and supportive role in the community.

Evaluation Activities

Since its inception in 2003, the evaluation included data from four primary sources. First, agency data has been utilized to examine each client's prior offense, out-of-home placement, and probation history; RSP program-related activities; and outcomes including new technical violations, new charges, and new out-of-home placements. A total of 115 RSP and 92 comparison client cases have been coded and included in the evaluation. Second, youth and their parents have been asked to complete surveys upon entry to the program and upon program completion. These surveys focus on a number of social factors that may be related to recidivism (e.g., family dynamics, school experiences) as well as youth and parent perceptions of their experiences with the program. Third, TCs complete status reports for each client at four points in time: a) upon entry to the program; b) upon program completion; c) six months following program completion; and d) 12 months following program completion. These status reports

track client progress on a number of social and behavioral factors (e.g., employment, education, substance use, family functioning). Finally, agency partners (e.g., school representatives, social services, mental health professionals) have been surveyed on three separate occasions to gauge their experiences working with RSP staff and clients.

Information from these sources has been compiled as the evaluators have produced and distributed interim and annual reports. In addition, two comprehensive reports have been distributed. The first (in November 2005) compared data obtained from agency partner surveys and agency records for the first 52 youth served by the RSP program and a group of 52 youth returning from out-of-home placement without reentry services in a neighboring county (Becker County, MN). Results indicated that the reentry program: a) was implemented as intended; b) served its target population; c) achieved several intermediate goals set by program designers (e.g., improvement in YLS/CMI scores and transitional case planning), and; d) was successful in cultivating partnerships with community-based service providers. Relative to the comparison group, youth served by the reentry program were less likely to experience a new official or criminal contact and experienced fewer new official contacts, criminal contacts, and days in placement during the follow-up period. RSP youth experienced lower recidivism than Becker County youth on several measures. However, most outcome differences were not statistically significant which may have been, in part, a reflection of small sample sizes.

In July of 2007 the evaluators prepared a second comprehensive report which detailed program activities and outcomes for the first four years of the program (2003-2007). Youth served by the RSP in Clay County (N=92) were compared to a group of youth returning to a neighboring county (Becker County, MN) without reentry services (N=92). Results of the process evaluation indicated that the RSP staff was successful in implementing the program as designed. Specifically, the program: a) serviced a target population for which it was designed; b) increased contacts with youth, parents, and agency partners through collaboration between TCs and POs; c) provided youth with individualized transitional case plans matched to case needs, and; d) referred youth to appropriate services. In addition, existing agency staff successfully created and maintained an advisory committee which met quarterly to review program process. The program staff cultivated a strong working relationship with the POs and the community-based service providers. An examination of intermediate outcomes indicated that the program had virtually met transitional case plan completion goals (achieving a 74% completion rate vs. a goal of 75%) and produced meaningful changes in YLS/CMI risk/need and strengths scores. Program youth experienced better long-term recidivism outcomes, relative to Becker County youth. Specifically, RSP youth experienced fewer new official contacts (i.e., law enforcement encounters resulting in court petition) and fewer new criminal contacts (a subset of official contacts excluding status and traffic offenses) per week at risk, controlling for a number of demographic and offense history factors. Finally, a cost-benefit analysis revealed that program costs (estimated at \$4,415 per youth) were partially recovered within the first year after release and were fully recovered within two years of release. Within three years of release from placement, the net benefit of the program was \$7,600 in reduced juvenile justice processing costs per youth, primarily due to reduced use of restrictive placement (an average of 129 days of restrictive placement were avoided within the first 3 years of release).

Evaluation activities during the most recent year (2007-2008) were directed at program monitoring and ongoing analysis of RSP case files. During this period a total of 27 RSP case files have been closed, including five youth who have been served multiple times by the program. In addition to the comprehensive report (July 2007), three interim reports were produced and distributed to the Advisory Committee in October 2007, February 2008, and April, 2008.

Client Profile

During the fifth year of the program (June 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008), the Reentry Services Project served a total of 47 clients. Eight of those clients had been served by the RSP program in the past and are not included in this report. Twenty-two client files have since been closed and the files have been coded by the evaluators. An additional 17 files remain open as the clients have yet to complete the program. This report focuses on the 22 clients who were served during this period whose case files are closed and coded.

Demographics

The average age of clients served during this period was 16.5 years upon return to the community following their most recent out-of-home placement. Sixty-four percent of the clients were male. Sixty-eight percent of the clients were White, 23 percent Hispanic, and 9 percent Native American.

Prior Offenses and Out-of-Home Placement History

These 22 clients experienced an average of 3.9 prior official contacts, including 4.4 charges prior to their most recent out-of-home placement. Eighteen percent had a prior felony charge and 41 percent had a prior 'persons-crime' (i.e., violent offense) charge. On average these clients had 1.4 status level charges, 2.6 misdemeanor charges, and 0.4 felony charges (average 0.6 "persons" charges per client) upon entry into the Reentry Services Project.

The average number of out-of-home placements these clients experienced prior to service in the program was 3.0. These clients spent an average of 183 days in out-of-home placement, including 126 days in restrictive out-of-home placement.

Typically, the clients averaged 12.9 months on probation prior to return to the community. Ninety-five percent of the clients were on indefinite probation. Forty-one percent were on maximum or intensive supervision upon return to the community and the remainder (59%) were on medium supervision.

Most Recent Offense and Out-of-Home Placement

Eighteen percent of these clients' most recent charge was a for a felony offense, 68 percent were charged with a misdemeanor, and 14 percent were charged with a status level offense. Twenty-three percent of the clients' most recent charge was for a 'persons-related' offense (e.g. assault), 32 percent were charged with a property offense, 32 percent were charged

with a public order offense (e.g. disorderly conduct), and 13 percent were charged with alcohol or tobacco related offenses (e.g. minor consuming).

The clients' most recent placement averaged 88 days (including 75 days restrictive out-of-home placement). Common placements included detention (64%), residential treatment (32%) and foster care (4%).

Additional Background Information

Fifty-five percent of these clients had a history of violence (e.g., violent charge, threats, fighting), 73 percent had a history of substance abuse, 77 percent had a history of mental health problems, and all of them (100%) had a history of school problems (e.g., truancy, poor academic progress, behavior issues). Ninety-one percent of the clients had experienced two or more of these problems, and 27 percent experienced all four of these behavioral problems. Thirteen youth (59%) had a history of both substance abuse and mental health challenges.

Process and Outcomes

Program Activities

These 22 clients spent an average of 11.4 months in the Reentry Services Project, and an average of 65 total hours with Transitional Coordinators. During this time they were assigned an average of 64.7 tasks as part of their transitional case plans, and were referred to an average of 7 services provided by agencies in the community (69% of which were complete or ongoing upon exiting the Reentry Services Project). During the period of program participation, Transitional Coordinators averaged 56 total contacts with clients, 27 contacts with parents, and 22 contacts with agency partners. Probation Officers averaged 14 client, 9 parent, and 23 agency partner contacts while clients were participating in the Reentry Services Project.

Intermediate Outcome Measures

Identified intermediate outcome measures for the Reentry Services Project include:

- a) a 75 percent compliance rate with transitional case plan tasks;
- b) a 20 percent reduction in YLS/CMI risk/needs scores;
- c) and a 20 percent increase in YLS/CMI strengths scores.

These 22 clients completed an average of 66 percent of their case plan tasks (43 of 65 tasks). Average YLS/CMI risk/needs scores declined for these clients from 21.55 at program intake to 17.95 at program completion (a decrease of 16.7%). Average YLS/CMI strengths scores increased 111 percent during this same period (from 2.37 at program intake to 5.00 at program completion).

In-Program Recidivism

Thirty-six percent of these clients experienced no technical violations while participating in the RSP. The total number of technical violations among the 14 youth with one or more violations was 22.

Forty-six percent (10) of the clients had no new official contacts (contact with police/probation resulting in new charges) while participating in the Reentry Services Project. For the remaining 54 percent (12) of clients who did experience new official contacts, the total number of new in-program charges was 19. However, only four youth experienced more than one new official contact while participating in the program. Of those with new in-program contacts (12 of 22), the highest level of the charges was a misdemeanor for the majority of clients (67%); 33 percent experienced a new status level charge while participating in the program. None of these clients experienced a new felony level charge or person-related charge while participating in the program.

While participating in the Reentry Services Project, 36 percent of these clients (8) experienced no new out-of-home placements. A total of 31 in-program out-of-home placements were experienced by the remaining 14 clients (64%). Nine clients (41%) experienced at least one new short-term out-of-home placement (less than 30 days) while participating in the program; the average time spent in short-term placement was 19 days (nearly all restrictive). Ten clients (45%) experienced at least one new long-term out-of-home placement while participating in the program; the average time spent in long-term placement was 130 days (88 days restrictive). Sixty-eight percent of new in-program out-of-home placements were the result of technical violations, 16 percent were for unknown reasons, 13 percent were the result of new charges, and 3 percent were for protection of the client.

Additional Client Outcome Indicators

Transitional Coordinators track client progress at the start of the program and program end on a number of indicators of social and behavioral adjustment including housing, employment, education, general support, substance use, mental health, cultural/ethnic support, gender related services, and participation in prosocial activities. In addition to progress-related questions, Transitional Coordinators respond to a series of “satisfaction” questions regarding the client’s progress in each area. The following tables include in-program adjustment indicators where data is available for clients at program intake and program completion.

Table 1 provides several indicators of housing and family status. Nearly one quarter (23%) of RSP clients were homeless at some time during program participation, but only 14 percent (3) were homeless upon program completion. The vast majority of clients (82%) had stable housing while participating in the RSP; half of families received services, and better than one half (59%) of families were regularly involved in prosocial activities during program participation. Finally, staff members’ (TC) perceptions of the family situation of youth (i.e., family/parenting status, housing stability, communication in the youth’s home) improved from program intake to program completion.

Table 1. Housing and Family Indicators

	Program intake N = 21	Program end N=22
Client is a parent	5%	9%
Homeless at some time during program		23%
Currently homeless		14%
Stable residence during program		82%
Family received services during program		50%
Family regularly involved in prosocial activities during program		59%
Satisfied with family/parenting status*	2.10	2.45
Satisfied with housing stability*	3.38	3.86
Satisfied with communication in clients home*	2.14	2.27

*TC rated assessment (satisfaction) is mean score on scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Table 2 provides information about the client chemical use / substance abuse status. Among the subset of youth with a history of substance use (N=16), most (57%) were “clean” upon program completion. While only 7% of youth with a history of substance use regularly participated in AA/NA during program participation, more than half (56%) regularly participated in treatment services. TC satisfaction with youths’ substance abuse status declined from intake to program completion.

Table 2. Substance Use/Abuse Indicators

	Program intake N=21	Program end N=22
Satisfied with substance use status*	2.81	2.45
Among clients with substance use history		N=16
Mean # of UAs during program		2.7
% of UAs positive		58%
Needed treatment during program		88%
Regularly participated in treatment during program		56%
Refused treatment during program		6%
Needed AA/NA during program		73%
Regularly participated in AA/NA during program		7%
Refused AA/NA during program		36%
Is “clean”		57%

*TC rated assessment (satisfaction) is mean score on scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Table 3 presents information related to TC perceptions of youth mental and physical health. Among clients with a history of mental health issues (N=17), most (62%) received mental health services during program participation approximately one-third followed mental health recommendations regarding medication (i.e., took medication regularly) and treatment services (i.e., regularly participated in treatment). TC perceptions of clients’ mental health status declined from intake to program completion.

Table 3. Mental/Physical Health Indicators

	Program intake N=21	Program end N=22
Satisfied with mental/physical health status*	2.71	2.45
Of clients with a history of mental health problems		N=17
Needed assessment / services during program		77%
Received assessment / services during program		62%
Medication recommended during program		38%
Took medication regularly during program		31%
Treatment / services recommended during program		44%
Regularly participated in treatment / services during program		33%
Complied with MH recommendations during program		41%

*TC rated assessment (satisfaction) is mean score on scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Table 4 provides indicators of prosocial support, prosocial activities, and cultural and gender specific service receipt as reported by Transitional Coordinators. TC satisfaction with client peer relationships, involvement in prosocial activities, and their network of support increased during the period of program participation. On the other hand, at program completion TCs reported that few clients had a role model or mentor outside of the home, were involved with prosocial peers, or regularly participated in prosocial activities.

Table 4. Support and Activities

	Program intake N=21	Program end N=22
Has role model or mentor in home	71%	68%
Has role model or mentor outside the home	74%	46%
Is involved with prosocial peers		27%
Regularly participates in prosocial activities		18%
Satisfied with peer relationships*	1.67	2.00
Satisfied with involvement in prosocial activities*	1.71	2.09
Satisfied with network to go to with problems*	2.71	2.86
Among minority clients		N=7
Participated in culturally specific service		43%
Regularly participated in culturally specific services		29%
Among female clients		N=8
Participated in gender specific service		38%
Regularly participated in gender specific services		38%

*TC rated assessment (satisfaction) is mean score on scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Table 5 presents several indicators of educational adjustment as reported by TCs. The proportion of youth participating in some type of educational program (or having completed their GED or graduated high school) increased during program participation (from 82% at program intake to 86% at program completion), and half of clients (50%) regularly participated in educational activities while participating in the program. Furthermore, TC satisfaction with youths' educational status increased over time.

Table 5. Education Indicators

	Program intake N=21	Program end N=22
Education status		
Not attending (no GED or HS diploma)	18%	14%
Attending school in placement	9%	0%
Participating in GED / Adult Ed	22%	14%
Attending alternative / charter school	41%	50%
Attending traditional school	9%	4%
GED complete	0%	9%
HS graduate	0%	9%
Attending college / technical school	0%	0%
Education progress		
Did not attend		4%
Attended sporadically		46%
Attended regularly		50%
Took GED tests during the program		9%
Satisfied with educational status*	2.43	2.82

*TC rated assessment (satisfaction) is mean score on scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Finally, Table 6 provides indicators of employment status of RSP youth at program intake and program completion. Nearly all clients (96%) searched for a job while participating in the program, nearly three-fourths (73%) were employed at some point, and almost half (46%) had stable employment while participating in the program. While only one client (5%) was employed at program intake, 12 clients (55%) were employed upon program completion. These positive changes are also reflected in TC satisfaction with clients' employment status, which increased from 2.00 at program intake to 2.73 at program completion.

Table 6. Employment Indicators

	Program intake N=21	Program end N=22
Has been employed in past	50%	
Employment is appropriate	100%	
Searched for a job during program		96%
Employed at some time during program		73%
Stable employment during program		46%
Current employment status		
Not employed	95%	45%
Employed part time	5%	32%
Employed 3/4 time	0%	18%
Employed full time	0%	5%
Satisfied with employment status*	2.00	2.73

*TC rated assessment (satisfaction) is mean score on scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Summary of Additional Client Outcome Indicators

The comparisons in Tables 1-6 reveal a number of positive changes on each measure, and particularly encouraging are the results in the areas of housing and family status, education, and employment. These tables also indicate that substance abuse and mental/physical health issues continue to create challenges for youth during their transition from out-of-home placement to their home community. Measures of prosocial support and activities indicated both improved functioning and remaining challenges. While TC ratings of peer relationships, support networks, and client involvement in prosocial activities all increased during the period of program participation, only about one quarter of youth regularly participated in prosocial activities or were involved with prosocial peers at program completion. Program staff make earnest and repeated attempts to ensure client compliance with mental health and substance abuse treatment via referral to services, transportation, and ongoing monitoring. In addition, TCs attempt to involve clients in prosocial activities and encourage them to establish relationships with prosocial peers. Clients might benefit, however, from additional focus on these areas of adjustment. Finally, the proportion of youth with a history of problems in both substance abuse and mental health (59%) and the difficulties experienced in client compliance with treatment in these areas suggest that additional attention to multiple problems and related services might be appropriate.

Summary

During the 2007-2008 funding cycle the RSP served a total of 47 clients. Analyses of the subset of those cases where files have been closed and coded reveal that:

- The program continues to serve its target population (i.e., youths returning from 3 or more weeks of out-of-home placement);

- Youth served by the program spend approximately 5.7 hours per month in direct contact with their TC. The addition of TCs increases the overall contact rate with youth by 4.9 contacts per month with program youth beyond regular probation officer contact; TCs increase contact with parents by 2.4 contacts per month, and they increase contact with agency partners by 1.9 contacts per month. In addition, program youth are assigned a variety of case plan tasks, and are referred to a variety of community-based services by program staff;
- The program is “on track” with respect to transitional case plan task compliance, YLS/CMI risk/need changes, and YLS/CMI strengths score changes;
- In-program recidivism rates remain at around 50 percent. However, none of the clients examined in the 2007-2008 cycle experienced a new felony level or person-related charge, which speaks favorably regarding program impact. Misbehavior leading to technical violations and out-of-home placement remain common challenges;
- Clients evidenced positive changes in a number of social and behavioral factors related to recidivism, including housing and family status, education, employment, and prosocial support/activities. These changes mirror those observed in earlier comprehensive reports, suggesting that other benefits observed in earlier reporting periods (i.e., reduced recidivism and related costs relative to the comparison group) will likely be sustained.