

Reentry Services Project:
Report to the
Minnesota Department of Public Safety
and the
**Joint Advisory Committee for the Restorative Justice Program &
Reentry Services Project**



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PROBLEM SOLVING PARTNERSHIPS

PROGRESS REPORT, QUARTER 9

April 1, 2011-June 30, 2011

GRANT NUMBER 2009-PSP-00029

1. Project Implementation:

The Reentry Services Project (RSP) in Clay County, MN began in July 2003 and continues today with funding from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs and the Clay County Joint Powers Collaborative. The program aims to improve public safety by assisting youthful offenders in successful community reentry following out-of-home placement. Two Transitional Coordinators (TCs) work with juvenile Probation Officers (POs) and community-based service providers to identify client specific needs and employ comprehensive case management services. The program seeks to improve public safety by preparing incarcerated juvenile offenders for successful reentry from criminal justice placements to communities.

The RSP is designed to begin at upon entry to the placement facility and to continue for approximately six months following release to the community. In 2010, the program added an additional component (pre-placement) to enable staff to work with high risk youth in an effort to prevent an initial out of home placement. As of June 30, 2011 the Reentry Services Project had 186 closed reentry case files and 7 closed pre-placement files. An additional 22 cases are currently active, 10 of which are pre-placement files. During the most recent quarter (April 1, 2011-June 30, 2011) a total of 27 youth were served by the program and 5 cases were closed. The average time in the program for these closed cases was nine months.

The average age of the clients this quarter was 16.7 years. Nineteen (70%) of these clients were male; eight (20%) were female. Eighteen (67%) were White, three (11%) were Native American, and six (22%) were Hispanic.

Specific program objectives include:

A) Reducing recidivism by improving strengths and reducing risk/needs of juvenile offenders transitioning to their home communities by incorporating a three phase design to ensure continuity in services from placement to the community.

- During the past quarter, out of 15 aftercare youth, 3 were adjudicated a probation violator and 1 was convicted of a new Gross Misdemeanor. 2 clients were in out of home placements this quarter and one was placed in foster care. One voluntarily entered inpatient CD treatment and 3 were ordered to serve short term stays in the detention center. 8 clients had no violations of their probation.

- Of the 12 pre-placement youth served this quarter two were adjudicated for a new misdemeanor level offense. One was adjudicated a probation violator and placed in secure detention for 30 days and one voluntarily entered inpatient CD treatment. 8 had no violations of their probation.
- RSP clients are assessed within 30 days of intake and upon closure of RSP services using the YLS/CMI diagnostic instrument. This instrument measures risk/needs and strengths. Of the 5 youth who were discharged this quarter, all 5 had these 2 assessments completed. There was a 11% reduction in the risk/needs score on the YLS and a 21 % increase in strengths indicated.
- Transitional case plans were created for each of these clients. These plans included goals and tasks in three general categories (competency development, restorative accountability, and community safety). Of the 5 youth discharged from the program this quarter, 3 successfully complied with their case plans and two were closed due to the client's refusal to participate.

B) Strengthening families of youthful offenders to facilitate youth adjustment and transition to the community.

- A strength based family assessment was completed with 5 families this quarter. 4 families refused this service and 10 were previously assessed or involved in family based services. 5 clients were 18 or older and a family assessment was not appropriate and 3 clients were still in placement and family services were not initiated.
- 16 families participated in other family strengthening services in the community.
- 9 families participated with their child and transitional coordinator in outings together in the community.
- 14 families received an individualized packet of information about services available in the community.

C) Improving collaboration, coordination, and access to community resources for high risk youth and their families.

The joint Restorative Justice/Reentry Services Project Joint Advisory Committee met on May 5, 2011. The Advisory Committee consists of 30 community partners who are involved in youth issues, thereby increasing collaboration across systems. These partners represent the county commission, law enforcement, schools, Mental Health agencies, Social Services, MN CEP, corrections, County Attorney's office, parents, youth agencies and the Clay County Collaborative. The committee meets quarterly in an effort to increase the community's awareness of youth issues and increase the community's role in affecting positive change for youth and their families. In 2009, a PATH foster parent and a staff member of a local faith-based organization joined this group and have provided valuable parental and faith-based input. A result of the formation of these strong partnerships has been solid community support for the

RSP, a construction of open, routine communication among agencies and the willingness of the Clay County Collaborative to continue to provide financial support for the RSP in the upcoming fiscal year.

In 2010 the decision was made to combine the reentry services project collaborative work group with the RSP/RJ Advisory Committee. The collaborative work group was formed to provide guidance in regard to program development and the ongoing implementation of the program. The program has been in existence since 2003 and this level of involvement is not needed at this point in time. Many of the members of the collaborative work group were also members of the RJ/RSP Advisory Committee. In an effort to be respectful of community member's limited availability and time a decision was made to combine these groups.

The two staff employed by the program work on a daily basis with community agencies to increase community awareness of the issues facing youth who are returning to the community from out of home placement. Examples include being a part of wraparound teams, working with a homeless youth steering committee to address the needs of homeless youth in the community, working with cultural groups to increase opportunities for youth in the community, working with community members to increase job opportunities for youth, presenting and having group discussions on youth issues at the local alternative school, etc.

Through the program youth are provided the opportunity to restore the harm they have caused to the community and victims of their crimes by completing community work service, writing letters of apology, etc. under the direction of the Reentry staff and/or a local law enforcement officer. Youth are also given the opportunity to participate in a Restorative Justice process, coordinated by the Clay County Restorative Justice coordinator.

2. Staffing:

No new staff was hired during this quarter and there are no current vacancies.

3. Project Outcomes:

During this quarter we continue to increase collaboration between systems in Clay County by implementing a family strengthening component to the Reentry Services Project. We are collaborating with Clay County Social Services and local mental health agencies to complete a strength-based family assessment on the youth of families referred to the program, if appropriate. Implementing a family strengthening component to the program has generated positive changes in both clients and their families, both as individuals and a family unit.

During the 2010-2011 school years, our female Transitional Coordinator co-facilitated a girl's group with the school social worker at the alternative school and detention center. The group was so successful with the young women involved that they have requested that they be allowed to join the group this year. Therefore, two groups were formed this year, one involving girls that were previously involved and a new girls group. The girls previously involved will also be asked to be mentors for the new group. In addition, our male Transitional Coordinator will co-facilitate a boy's group with our School Resource

Officer located at the alternative school this semester. Both groups focus on gender specific issues, teaching cognitive/behavioral skills and making informed, positive decisions.

In June of 2011, our staff was approached about the possibility of collaborating to provide art opportunities for high risk youth in the community. (see #5 illustration)

Family participation in RSP activities in the community continues to be emphasized and supported by providing mentoring, transportation and financial support for these activities.

Two family therapists that are assigned to the Reentry Services Project were invited and will be participating in the RJ/RSP Joint Advisory Committee that meets quarterly to review program objectives and share information on youth opportunities and programs in the area. The family therapists also meet monthly with the juvenile probation agents, the Reentry staff and the program administrator to review cases and provide updates.

The staff focused on the following 5 reentry components during the past quarter with the 25 clients who participated to increase the likelihood of positive change in the youth and families they work with:

1) Obtaining and retaining employment or education

- 22 clients were enrolled in school and 19 regularly attended. 2 clients had their GED or were studying for their GED one client was truant.
- Employment was appropriate for 20 clients, and 11 were employed sometime during the quarter. 17 clients searched for a job this quarter.

2) Maintaining a stable residence

- 20 clients lived at home with their parents, 3 clients were homeless at one time during the past quarter, 1 absconded and 3 were in placement.

3) Successfully addressing substance abuse issues

- 17 clients admitted to using alcohol or non-prescribed mood altering substances. Of the 14 clients needing CD services, 13 received these services.

4) Successfully addressing mental health issues

- 6 clients received a MAYSI mental health screen this quarter.
- 14 clients had a mental health diagnosis. 4 additional clients were deemed to be in need of an assessment. 15 of these clients participated in mental health services, and one refused.
- None of the clients this quarter were in need of a physical health assessment.

5) Establishing a meaningful and supportive role in the community

- 5 clients were involved in gender specific activities; 8 in culturally specific activities; 22 clients received cognitive/behavioral interventions; 15 were involved in learning independent living skills; 19 were involved in pro-social activities; 10 participated in volunteer work in the community; 14 completed court ordered community work services; 14 clients identified as having some pro-social peers and 19 stated they had a positive role model in their lives. Three youth this quarter admitted to gang affiliation.

4. Feedback:

Comments from **Youth** as to what is helpful or what they liked best about the program:

“Listening”

Comments from **Parents** as to what is helpful or what they like best about the program:

“Very helpful, being a single mom took a little pressure with all the help I had from Tara, Tracy and Mike”.

“ He got the point, he thinks differently, very good choices”.

“Someone to listen to him and to make him do his homework”.

5. Illustration: (submitted Michael McMullen, Transitional Coordinator

“Imagine U” and Arts Adventure Program

Reentry Services have partnered with John Marks in an attempt to promote our client’s creative interests. Mr. Marks came to our program asking if we could bring some clients on “art adventure” over the summer. Mr. Marks was the co-founder of the Trollwood performing arts program in the Fargo-Moorhead area and is semi-retired. He has worked with high risk youth in the past and wanted to introduce our clients to various artists around town and try to find different opportunities for our clients and students at the Red River Alternative Learning Center.

Currently we have four clients in the program due to the infancy of the partnership. We plan on establishing the program and trying to make sure we are able to keep the adventures running smoothly before we introduce more of our clients. We planned on meeting for three months, and then getting new clients. We meet twice a week for a few hours at various studio/activities.

This program introduced the clients to Yoga, a promoter, glass blower, newspaper editor, and a florist and allowed them to work and meet the drummer for Sheryl Crow’s Band. Additionally, our clients are making a movie where they are the director, actor and editor.

Each artist has shared their story and related to the kids. The kids are given a chance to ask questions and get involved with some of the artists creations. Each adventure we talk about an issue the kids are dealing with or trying to change. We push the kids to think how they could make changes in their lives and finding different outlets for their passions.

Some of the clients have talked about the yoga sessions being fun and relaxing. The kids talk about being able to slow down and relax rather than getting upset and arguing in different areas of their lives. Getting the kids to buy into the program was difficult because it was "different." However, the clients who have gained the most were the ones who seemed most disinterested at the start of the adventure.

6. Barriers: (submitted by Sally Lauritsen, Transitional Coordinator)

In the best of times it is difficult for clients to find jobs but with the struggling economy it has proven to be extra difficult. Some of these barriers include: work programs for clients have been scaled down or cut completely, many businesses are not hiring, lots of competition in the fast food businesses from college students and older adults, and non-motivated clients. To overcome this barrier Reentry Services will work more closely with local employers, stay connected to active programs that still work with youth, continue to encourage clients and advocate for them. Recently I had a client secure employment that had been looking for a job almost two years. During this time Reentry Services showed him how to apply for different positions; role played interviewing to develop confidence and learn new skills; transported to do job follow-ups; and encouraged him not to give up. When he received his first pay check I brought him to the bank where he opened a savings account. He is proud of job and I am proud of how he persevered, never complained and was rewarded for his effort. Reentry Services will continue to assist clients with employment and hopefully find employers who will give our clients a chance to prove they are honest hard workers.

7. Evaluation:

As of July 1, 2010, we no longer are contracting with North Dakota State University to complete our quarterly evaluation of the grant objectives. Information will continue to be gathered from the Transitional Coordinators, Probation Agents and community partners through quarterly reports, CSTS records and surveys. This data will be compiled quarterly by the grant administrator and Transitional Coordinators.

8. Revisions Necessary:

No budget revisions were necessary this quarter.