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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PROGRESS REPORT, QUARTER 9

JANUARY 1, 2011-MARCH 31, 2011

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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 March 31, 2011 the Reentry Services Project had 183 closed reentry case files and 5 closed pre-placement files. An additional 20 cases are currently active, 8 of which are pre-placement files. During the most recent quarter (January 1, 2011-March 31, 2011) a total of 24 youth were served by the program and 4 cases were closed. The average time in the program for these closed cases was 8 months.

The average age of the clients this quarter was 17 years. Seventeen (71%) of these clients were male; seven (29%) were female. Fifteen (63%) were White, one (4%) were Black, four (17%) were Native American, and four (17%) 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 1 RSP client was adjudicated a probation violator and 1 was convicted of a new Felony. 2 experienced placements of 29 days or more.
- Of the 7 pre-placement youth served this quarter none were adjudicated for a new offense. One was adjudicated a probation violator and placed in a 29 day evaluation non-secure evaluation program.

- 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 4 youth who were discharged this quarter, all 4 had these 2 assessments completed. There was a 17% reduction in the risk/needs score on the YLS and a 15 % 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 4 youth discharged from the program this quarter, 3 successfully complied with their case plans and one was closed due to absconding.

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

- A strength based family assessment was completed with 2 families this quarter. 5 families refused this service and 11 were previously assessed or involved in family based services. 4 clients were 18 or older and a family assessment was not appropriate and 2 clients were still in placement and family services were not initiated.

- 16 families participated in other family strengthening services in the community.

- 7 families participated with their child and transitional coordinator in outings together in the community.

- 13 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 February 10, 2011 and is scheduled to meet again 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.

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 24 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**

   - 16 clients were enrolled in school and 14 regularly attended. 2 clients had their GED or had graduated from high school and one client absconded.
   - Employment was appropriate for 18 clients, and 4 were employed sometime during the quarter. 8 clients searched for a job this quarter.

2) **Maintaining a stable residence**

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

3) **Successfully addressing substance abuse issues**

   - 9 clients admitted to using alcohol or non-prescribed mood altering substances. Of the 10 clients needing CD services, 6 received these services.

4) **Successfully addressing mental health issues**

   - 4 clients received a MAYSI mental health screen this quarter.
   - 13 clients had a mental health diagnosis. 11 of these clients participated in mental health services, and 2 refused.

5) **Establishing a meaningful and supportive role in the community**

   - 7 clients were involved in gender specific activities; 10 in culturally specific activities; 18 clients received cognitive/behavioral interventions; 17 were involved in learning independent living skills; 18 were involved in pro-social activities; 10participated in volunteer work in the community; 16 clients identified as having some pro-social peers and 12 stated they had a positive role model in their lives. No 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:

"Mike (TC) was there to help".

“Getting to do things, like getting my goals done”.

“Going to the Y”.

Comments from **Youth** about what they liked least about the program:

“None, that I left”.

“When Mike made me do my homework while he read a book”.

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

“Someone there for __ to ask for help"

“Gave us another voice, was available@ 11:30 pm when I needed help”.

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

5. Illustration: (submitted Sally Lauritsen, Transitional Coordinator) “Collaboration”

Since Reentry Services Project (RSP) began in 2003 the office has been located upstairs of the alternative school, Red River Area Learning Center (RRALC). This location has been ideal for both RSP and the school due to many RSP clients attend RRALC. With our office so close it allows RSP transitional coordinators easier access to clients if situations arise and/or for extra support. Another advantage is the collaboration that takes place between RSP and RRLAC.

Currently RSP staff and RRALC social worker facilitate a girl’s group. The group covers many subjects including self-esteem, healthy relationships, tolerance, bullying, respecting one's self, along with other topics. A curriculum is also used called, “Unmasking Sexual Con-Games.” The group was so successful last year that the same girls wanted to continue. We now have two girl groups i.e., new girls who started this year and last year’s girls who continue to learn and grow.

Another partnership within the school district is with the Indian Education Program. RSP encourages many clients to participate in the outfit making classes, Pow Wows, and more recent beading class. Last year’s RSP client was chosen to be the head male dancer at our local Pow Wow. What an honor and a moment of great pride for him and his family. The outfit he wore was created by him last year while attending the Indian Education class. RSP transitional coordinator transported him every week and supported him in every way. Currently RSP brings three clients to the bead class two times a week.

A more recent addition to RSP is presenting educational material to students at the West Central Regional Juvenile Center’s school classroom. After meeting with the director, he agreed the material presented by RSP would be beneficial to the residents. Topics presented will be similar i.e., bullying, tolerance of others, respect, trauma, along with other subjects. RSP is fortunate to have many excellent educational materials to share. In past years, RSP also presented educational material to classrooms at other schools. Some past subject matters include substance abuse, domestic violence and life in prison.

RSP encourages all clients to get involved in their community and culture. Participation in programs develops confidence and good self-esteem, which helps clients reach their goals. Collaborating with

other agencies and programs allow all of us to share knowledge and ideas. Other past partners and projects include Traditional Mexican dancing, weed pulling, sandbagging, serving food at local homeless shelter and performing in Multi-Cultural events. After almost eight years, RSP continues to expand the program and reach out to client's who are at risk to reoffend.

6. Barriers: (submitted by Michael McMullen, Transitional Coordinator) "Family Culture"

Over the past few months, some of my clients have talked about their backgrounds. The cultures they have grown in are vastly different than mine and shed great light on some of the decisions they have made.

Each client has talked about family members' usage and at times distribution of drugs. While the clients are required by probation to remain clean, their families continue to use. We are able to meet with clients for a few hours a week, but they live with their families. When the mothers and fathers use with reckless abandon our words fall on deaf ears. Many times, our clients talk about their peers continuing negative behaviors.

We have tried to talk about finding a different set of peers. Many times, our clients lack the social skills to make friends. Each person knows the value of friendship, however; when you lack the social skills opening up to others and trying to find a different set of peers becomes problematic. We try to talk about approaching others and trying to find different activities. We can teach all the social skills, but many times the client continues to meet others and goes back to the peer group which has accepted them in the past.

If we are able to get our clients involved with an activity we are able to see the pride start growing. However, then they go home to a parent who is too engrossed with their own world to focus on their real responsibilities. Now, that same client who was so happy just 20 minutes ago is back in the reality where the only time they get attention from the parent is when they are in trouble.

We try to get the families on board and help them see the positive activities or person they have living with them. Without changing the culture of the family, it is very difficult for client to sustain positive changes.

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:

Budget revisions were submitted and approved this quarter.