

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 8

July 1, 2010-September 30, 2010

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 September 30, 2010 the Reentry Services Project had 172 closed reentry case files and one closed pre-placement file. An additional 21 cases are currently active, 7 of which are pre-placement files. During the most recent quarter (July 1, 2010-September 30, 2010) a total of 28 youth were served by the program and 7 cases were closed.

The average age of the clients this quarter was 15.75 years. Twenty four of these clients (86%) were male; four (14%) were female. Sixteen were White (57%), six (21%) were Black, two (7%) were Native American, and four (14%) 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 3 of RSP clients were adjudicated a probation violator. No clients were adjudicated for a new offense. 3 experienced short term placements in shelter care or detention, and one went to a 45 day inpatient chemical dependency treatment program.
- Of the 7 pre-placement youth that none committed a new offense, and 2 were adjudicated probation violator's. One was ordered to complete a 105 day correctional placement. The second violator was ordered to be placed in secure detention for 4 days.

- 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 7 youth who were discharged this quarter, 6 had these 2 assessments completed. 3 youth were closed as unsuccessful. There was a 11.5 % increase in the risk/needs score on the YLS and a 4% decrease 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 7 youth discharged from the program this quarter, 4 successfully complied with their case plans, 2 were closed as uncooperative and one client absconded from supervision.

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

- A strength based family assessment was completed with two families this quarter. 13 families refused this service and 8 were previously involved. 3 clients were 18 or older and a family assessment was not appropriate.
- 16 families participated in other family strengthening services in the community.
- 12 families participated with their child and transitional coordinator in outings together in the community.
- 19 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 Advisory Board met on August 5, 2010 and is scheduled to meet again on November 4, 2010. The Advisory Board consists of 30-35 community partners. Approximately 15 members actively participate. 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.

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 past school year our female TC's co-facilitated a girl's group with the school social worker at the alternative school. This group will begin again this school year. In addition, our male staff member will co-facilitate a boy's group with our School Resource Officer located at the alternative school. 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 are participating in the Reentry Services work group that meets bi-monthly to review program objectives and share information on youth opportunities and programs in the area. The workgroup consists of numerous community partners who are involved in youth issues, thereby increasing collaboration across systems. 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 28 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

- 19 clients were enrolled in school and 17 regularly attended. 6 clients had their GED or had graduated from high school.
- Employment was appropriate for 18 clients, and 6 were employed sometime during the quarter. 15 clients searched for a job this quarter.

2) Maintaining a stable residence

- 22 clients lived at home with their parents. 4 clients were homeless at one time during the past quarter and one was able to obtain housing.

3) Successfully addressing substance abuse issues

- 10 clients admitted to using alcohol or non-prescribed mood altering substances. Of the 9 clients needing CD services, 8 received these services.

4) Successfully addressing mental health issues

- 5 clients received a MAYSI mental health screen this quarter.
- 16 clients had a mental health diagnosis. 12 of these clients participated in mental health services.

5) Establishing a meaningful and supportive role in the community

- 14 clients were involved in gender specific activities; 7 in culturally specific activities; 22 clients received cognitive/behavioral interventions; 19 were involved in learning independent living skills; 21 were involved in pro-social activities; 4 participated in volunteer work in the community; 18 clients identified as having some pro-social peers and 17 stated they had a positive role model in their lives. 3 youth this quarter admitted to gang affiliation.

4. Feedback:

Attachment 1: This letter was received from a young woman served by the program.

5. Illustration: (submitted by Sally Lauritsen, Transitional Coordinator)

During this quarter I received a referral for my youngest client to date, a 10 year old Caucasian/Hispanic male. I also have his 13 year old sister on my caseload. Both clients' have assault charges and struggle with anger/abandonment issues from past trauma. Their mom is a past and possibly current Meth/drug abuser who lost custody of them when they were very young. However, the children have been allowed visitation. Recently though, visitation to their Mom's place was discouraged due to lack of supervision. She allowed the children to attend a street dance, unsupervised, until three in the morning. Their mom continues to visit them sporadically at their home. The mom lets the children down a lot by not showing

up or bringing things over when she says she will. Their dad is in recovery from alcohol, is a single dad and works full time. He has complied with most everything he is asked to do.

The girl has been sexually abused and has no boundaries. She is at risk for being re-victimized. I transport her weekly to meet with a Rape-n-Abuse counselor. She also has community services hours to complete. I transport her weekly to the worksite where she has done a great job. The client works with animals and loves them, plus the manager has told me numerous times how well she is doing. The client would like to continue volunteering in the future which I encourage because the work she does builds up her confidence and self-esteem. The other issues we work on are her lying and manipulating behaviors. She is confronted when necessary and she does make things right, i.e., apologizes or writes a letter. The family participates weekly with an in-home counselor and does well in this area. More open communication between family members is encouraged. The client is currently doing great in school and staying out of the "drama" that tends to get her in trouble.

The boy struggles in school with making friends and getting into trouble, mostly due to his anger outbursts. He has worked with different agencies throughout the years including SEEK counselors and a Social Services social worker. He attends mental health groups and in the past has received individual counseling. While in Reentry Services we will continue to support him with positive activities and conversation. The client likes to talk and discuss situations that bother him. He is interested in bowling so I have discussed this with his dad. The junior league is Saturdays and his dad agreed to help transport if I am not available. The client needs to get involved with outside positive activities because he sits home a lot playing video games. The client is excited about bowling in the league which will help him develop better social skills, self-esteem and confidence.

Both clients have mental health diagnosis and are being treated with counseling and medication. Reentry Services will continue to support both clients and their family along with all the agencies involved. Recently a Wrap-Around meeting was scheduled which will help everyone involved with the family to be on the same page.

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

A transitional coordinator is referred one client who is between the ages of 11 and 18. Our clients are living at home and need to have family support to be successful with their goals. I will talk about one of the barrier transitional coordinator encounter. The family itself can pose a barrier to success when parents are apathetic towards their child, a parent says they will hold the child accountable but they do not or when they lie for their children. I will also show some of the idea's we offer parents to help them overcome these barriers.

Many times when the families appear apathetic towards their children they are worn out or frustrated due to the many negative incidents that have happened in the past. At the first meeting the transitional coordinator starts the healing process by opening communication lines and getting each side to voice issues they are concerned with and trying to overcome them. We also try to get family participation for some of the outings to let them have clean sober fun.

Many times the parents will say they are trying to maintain rules and hold the client accountable. However, once the client is away from the parent, they state they aren't really held accountable and can do what they want. The coordinator will work with the family to help them get their "voices" back. Along with their "voices," the parents get more confidence and are able to stand up for themselves. At times, the parents make the comment that this is all they have known and didn't really understand what it takes to really be a parent. We have also partnered with the Village Family Service Center and Lutheran Social Services to provide in-home counselors to continue to get the family voicing concerns and trying to work through family issues.

When we work with families, many times they will lie for each other thinking they are helping. However, these families cause more damage because their children struggle to learn the value of honesty and see the value in living a negative life style because that is all they have known. Many times the only tangible change these parents see is how their negative choices will affect them. If we break down how much money a client is going to cost the family with lawyer expenses, and out of home placement expenses, etc. if things do not change, parents start putting forth more effort to help raise their children.

At times, the parents don't make any changes. At that point the transitional coordinator needs to invest more time in the client to ensure they know there is someone in their corner who will be there. With those clients the coordinator will get calls at all hours and years after they are closed because we have truly made a difference in their lives.

7. Evaluation:

As of July 1, 2010, we will no longer be 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 are needed to reflect current budgeted amounts after grant extension was implemented. This will be completed in November 2010.

I was introduced to the re-entry services program by my probation officer when I was about 15 years old. At that point in my life I was in treatment, & didn't have the motivation or want to change my life style. When I first met Sally, me and my mom met her at Applebee's. I wasn't sure what to expect, what I found was an extremely nice woman! Throughout the last few years of highschool I would hangout with Sally about every other week. We would go do fun activities sober, like bowling, going to plays & musicals, etc. I always looked forward to going out with her! Not just because we did fun stuff but because I could talk to her & not be judged, & she gives tons of great advise. I successfully made it through treatment, and a large part of that is owed to Sally. I didn't want to dissapoint her by doing drugs & drinking. One of the other things she did for me was helping me out with my modeling. I wanted to do it so bad, Sally told me the date to go & encouraged me to pursue my dream. She took pictures of me to bring, & really boosted my confidence & believed in me! But by far, the best part of the program is how my family got to be involved in my recovery, too. I grew a lot closer with my mother, and the rest of my family. It was nice to have my mom along for plays & dinner, and she loves it too! Sally has become a really woman I really respect in my life. She is strong, and taught me how to be a strong woman myself. The re-entry program is a huge part of my life,

and without it, I'm not exactly sure how well my recovery would have turned out. Sally helped me in many areas of my life. I am so grateful that I met her! My family and I will always appreciate how Sally & the re-entry program helped me succeed in my life.