

Corrections Connections

Community Safety, Community Restoration and Reducing the Risk of Re-offense

Volume 10, Issue 2

Spring 2016

Grandmothers Circles provides unique community service opportunity for clients

By Michelle Moran

A full-day commitment becomes difficult for many women who need to complete STS or community work service hours, especially if they are the primary caregivers of children. Even school age children are only gone for about 7.5 hours.

Since I have a caseload of all female clients, I have noticed how hard it can be for our clients to be successful at completing those conditions. With community service, I have often had the experience of agencies not wanting to allow our clients complete their service hours at their facility.

Many agencies routinely exclude anyone with a felony, for example, so the community service sites can be hard to find. I found myself referring my clients over and over to food shelves, who have been willing to accept service hours from those with a felony conviction.

Unfortunately, the tasks our clients are routinely assigned are not the satisfying or rewarding ways of serving the community, like helping families shop for goods; rather, their tasks end up being things like cleaning the bathroom. Tasks of this nature do not provide offenders with a sense of service and reconciliation following their offense.

By sharing my thoughts, I met another Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation staff member, Lois Mineau, had started a 501(c)(3) nonprofit called Grandmother Circles.

Mineau had met a woman from Homa Bay, Kenya who was part of a village that was formed when some of the women broke with tradition in their home villages and had banded together to form a new village.

The women soon learned that there were many AIDS orphans who needed the support of a village and they committed to raising these children in their new village.

Mineau learned that the village was in dire need of support, for such basic things as water, to continue their independence. Her idea blossomed into Grandmother Circles, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting the village.

The organization started by building water catchment basins to catch and store rain water. They were able to give them other supplies to ease their way of living and help them support their mission to independently live and raise the orphans.

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Angela Neeb browses the jewelry at the Grandmothers Circle April jewelry sale at the Government Center.

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Today, Grandmother Circles is a thriving source of support for the village. The group primarily raises money by creating and selling arts and crafts.

Last year, the Grandmother Circles raised enough money to send 20 girls to boarding school. Girls are learning to read instead of walking for water every day.

The idea came to me to form a community service circle as a way to offer women a more meaningful way to complete service.

It is a great resource for moms, especially those pregnant or nursing women or those whose disability prevents them from physical labor or standing for long periods of time.

The women disassemble broken jewelry and make new jewelry out of broken and donated items. The items are then donated and sold,

and the money is sent directly to the village in Africa.

The circles meet for just half days, which is a smaller and more convenient block of time for many women.

Grandmother Circles practices DOCCR's commitment to community restoration; the intervention also meets many of the EBP principles, including targeting the intervention based on responsivity, increasing positive reinforcement, and engaging ongoing support in the natural community.

The DOCCR's circle has been operating for two years and held its very first jewelry sale in April. The sale raised \$1,320, which was enough to send two girls to boarding school for a full year.

Those who have completed their condition



Grandmother Circles clients arrange their finished products at the group's jewelry sale earlier this year.

through participation in reconciled their offense with international impact.

Supervision at AFS is essentially an onion with many layers

By Kyle Niehues

The Supervised Release (SR) unit and the Intensive Supervised Release (ISR) unit are unique to Adult Field Services (AFS) because their clients are not on probation. These clients are on parole.

We just don't call it that in Minnesota. That is because most all offenders serve a portion of their prison sentence in the community.

Typically, clients spend two-thirds of their sentence inside a facility and the last one-third is spent transitioning back into the community. The exception is offenders who the state incarcerates for first degree murder. For these offenders, the Department of Corrections (DOC) requires lifetime supervision.

A case manager within the DOC performs two assessments prior to the client's release—a Level of Service-Case Management Inventory (LSCMI) and a Minnesota Screening Tool Assessing Recidivism Risk (MnSTARR) – to

determine the client's risk and needed level of supervision.

These tools help determine if the client meets the criteria for mandatory ISR or discretionary ISR.

In Hennepin County, we assign the client an appropriate level of supervision, which falls under either ISR, high-risk, traditional, or low-risk. A probation officer then supervises the client accordingly.

The department's SR and ISR agents utilize strategies and programming to ensure our clients remain compliant with their DOC-ordered conditions.

Agents in the ISR unit have a maximum caseload size of 15 clients and make frequent face-to-face contact. They utilize a variety of electronic monitoring systems including EHM and GPS monitoring, strict curfews, required employment or education, drug testing and other programming.

While agents in the SR unit may utilize some of those same tools and strategies, their contact standards with their clients vary depending on the client's risk level and their agent's caseload size, which does not have a strict maximum limit.

"In order to best align with EBP, the SR unit utilizes risk assessment tools in

order to provide services to clients deemed the highest risk to reoffend, with the goal of lowering the rates of recidivism and increasing public safety," said Neal Margolies, a unit supervisor in SR.

A major difference between probation and parole clients is how agents and the courts handle client violations. Normally, for probation clients, our agents file a violation and a Hennepin County judge handles the violation hearings.

For clients on parole, this is not the case; our agents provide information to the DOC's Hearing and Release Unit and they decide if they are going to issue a warrant. The Hearing and Release Unit then holds a hearing to determine the appropriate response to the client's violation. This can be as extreme as sending the client back to prison to serve out the remainder of their sentence or it could be a restructure of the client's release conditions.

Being an agent in either the SR or the ISR unit means that your clients have committed serious offenses, have a lengthy criminal background, and/or have failed repeatedly on other levels of supervision.

"This job is extremely stressful and very difficult, most days," said SR agent Kris Sprague, who has worked for ISR/SR for 15 years. "However, when you see one success story every once in a while, you remember why you do this job. A female client, who had a felony DWI, and was addicted to drugs and prostitution for most of her life, drove to my office for our appointment because for the first time in her life, she has a license. To me that is a success story."



Intensive supervised release and supervised release probation officers experience different challenges than their traditional supervision counterparts.

New research on gender-based programs show positive impacts

By Andrea Hoffman

A new evaluation report published by Wilder Research finds that, not surprisingly, systems-involved youth have mental health needs.

In 2014, the Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCCR) collaborated with Wilder to look at department-funded programs to see how we can better capture information about mental health needs of clients in a manner that is culturally aware.

The focus of this collaboration was to examine the impact of gender-based programs, or programs targeted to female probation clients.

“There’s not enough research specific to girls programs,” said girl’s services coordinator Kristi Cobbs. “This is a step in the right direction in looking at what the department is doing for girls.”

After interviews and post-assessment surveys, the Wilder report highlighted several key themes.

Girls participating in the Girls Circle H.E.A.R.T. (GCH) therapy program, which

provide support and intervention to girls who have experienced sexual trauma or abuse, indicated they felt the programs offered a safe space where they could share their stories. They also emphasized that the program

allowed them the time to spend with others who share similar experiences, provided an opportunity for relationship building, and helped them start recognizing their strengths and build resiliency.

Girls reported improvements with the ability to talk about their feelings, self-regulation skills, and felt more assertive and self-aware.

After participating in the programs, girls generally reported they learned positive coping skills and their feelings of sadness or being depressed had improved.

“Another big takeaway from this report is that all girls expressed hopefulness for their futures,” said Cobbs. “That is huge, especially since that’s not always something we hear.”

In 2016, the department is continuing to collaborate with Wilder to assess the impact of trauma-informed and gender-based programs on DOCCR clients. We will also be submitting an OJJDP grant to further assess trauma-informed practices in the department.



Administrator Hough and STS partner to promote leadership

By Neil Ruhland

What do you get when you combine the Sentencing-to-Service program’s ability to build almost anything with the county administrators’ desire to spread leadership principles to all Hennepin County staff? A really good partnership.

Throughout his career, County Administrator David Hough has bought, received or has been assigned to read many leadership books. However, after he finished them they just sat there collecting dust.

Then it came to him, he should find a way for employees to read these books and soak up some leadership ideas in the process.

He could not just send out a mass email, put boxes of books outside his office door and hope for the best. He needed a mechanism for distributing them.

Enter the Sentencing-to-Service (STS) program.

Hough and STS staff brainstormed many different ideas and decided on building book houses, similar to the community libraries people can find all over the Twin Cities. After construction was finished the book houses would be placed throughout the Hennepin County Government Center.

“With the possibility of losing a major complement of our staff in the next couple years, we need to find ways to groom leaders for the future,” said Hough. “I hope the new book houses will be a step in the right direction.”

Most of the book houses will be located on bridges between the “A” and “C” towers at the Government Center.

“In the DOCCR,

we are always on the lookout for new leaders,” said Director Chet Cooper. “If people take advantage of the materials in these book houses and other leadership training opportunities, it will go a long way in preparing them to take over the reins of the county when the baby boomers retire.”

This is not the first time that STS clients have made a major contribution to improving life at the Government Center.

Several years ago, STS clients and staff built nine picnic tables that were placed throughout the county. Seven of those picnic tables are located at the Government Center’s north plaza.

“Projects like the book houses and picnic tables demonstrate to county employees, from all departments, the impact STS has all over the county,” said John Ekholm, program manager at Community Offender Management.

Sentencing-to-Service clients can be seen throughout the county improving citizen’s way of life.

They have established a community garden and a straw bale garden in North Minneapolis to increase access to healthy food to a community that struggles with access to fruits and vegetables.

Sentencing-to-Service continues to look for opportunities that will benefit citizens throughout Hennepin County.



Sentencing-to-Service clients and staff constructed 10 book houses that will be permanently placed throughout the Hennepin County Government Center.

Diversity: More than just a black and white issue

By Fred Bryan

Our clients come from all races, nationalities, religions, genders and ages. None of which are exactly alike. To provide effective services to clients, Hennepin County needs to be just as diverse as the population it serves.

Too often people think of diversity as racial. Even worse, they think of it as a quota.

Diversity comes in some many different shapes and sizes. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines diversity as an instance of being comprised of differing elements or qualities.

It is true that the department needs to expand its racial demographics, but it also needs to increase its demographics in other areas.

We need diversity in thinking, experiences and ideas.

Everyone has been a part of a group decision making process, whether it is at work or their personal life. Think about the times you had a group of like-minded people come together. The process was probably pretty smooth, but

did it result in the best possible outcome?

What about the time when you had to make a decision where people did not agree with each other? It was probably not as smooth of a process, but you got a lot of different opinions from people who have been through varying life experiences. I will bet you that these situations yielded a more comprehensive solution.

In corrections, critical discourse leads to richer conversations.

Increased diversity has the potential to increase the reputation of the department. If we increase the diversity of not just the department, but the entire county, it will improve how people view us as an organization. It will show our clients and the general public that we offer a new way of thinking and expansive services.

I have tried to foster the expansion of all kinds of diversity throughout my career.

During my career in DOCCR, I have been involved in several projects and initiatives that

have required significant changes to business practices. I wish I could say that in all situations things went off without a hitch. Unfortunately this is not the case. For those situations that could have gone better, I can point to my inability to recognize the need to involve a diverse group of staff in the planning phase. As when it came time to implement, staff had little to no incentive to buy into the change.

In learning from these mistakes, in future projects, I and my management teams sought out diverse opinions. Staff may still not always be satisfied with the change, but expressed appreciation that their views were heard. Additionally the ultimate "product" of our work was better as it was based on a diverse and inclusive process.

Not just as an area director but as a fellow Hennepin County employee, I encourage you all to express your diverse opinions as the DOCCR continues to move forward.

Hennepin County is tapping into a new and impressive workforce

By Neil Ruhland

Both private and public organizations want to attract the best people. Many people with a wealth of experience are finding it difficult to secure employment, and this is particularly true for veterans.

Hennepin County started the veterans hiring initiative to bring in qualified applicants who have served in the military, but are transitioning to employment outside the military.

The county realized that veterans are under-represented among its more than 8,000 employees, even given their extensive knowledge and experience. The problem was never a question of merit, but rather the hiring process; the skills veterans acquire during their time in the military do not always match up well with job postings.

The Human Resources department partnered with Jewish Family and Children's Service to help veterans interested in employment with the county bridge the terminology barrier between military and traditional employment language.

The county identifies positions they are interested in finding veterans to fill, and then send the job descriptions over to Jewish Family and Children's Service. The organization then finds candidates that are best suited for the position and work with them on writing a resume and preparing for an interview.

"Non-military personnel do not realize that the armed services have their own language when it comes to skills and job related tasks," says Kari Boe-Schmidt, veterans hiring

initiative program coordinator. "By working with the Jewish Family and Children's Service, we can find the right candidates for the right jobs without all the terminology discrepancies."

If the applicant succeeds in the interview, they are brought on as a trainee. The new employee remains a trainee for six months and if the supervisor feels they have succeeded in their new role, they are brought on full-time.

To date, all the veterans hired through the initiative are still employed with the county.

The program has also helped to establish more resources for veterans hired with Hennepin County, for example, the Veteran Employee Resource Group (VERG).

The VERG assists newly hired veterans with getting acclimated to the county. They provide access to wrap around services that will help them be successful. The group also connects new hires with a mentor who is also a veteran.

As of June 1, 2016, the Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation has hired three staff members through the veterans hiring initiative.

Tou Vue is one of these veterans.

"The veterans hiring program was a great experience for me," said Vue. "I probably would not have considered working for Hennepin County without the program because I didn't know of all the opportunities here."

Vue served in the Navy for eight years before coming to Hennepin County.

"Veterans are out of the employment game



Tou Vue is ready for his tour of duty as an Office Specialist III with the DOCCR.

for a long time," said Vue. "Starting a new job in a non-military setting can be difficult, but the veterans hiring initiative and VERG make the transition very smooth."

Veterans come from a place of great responsibility when they serve in the armed forces. They are proactive and dedicated to work.

If you are interested in filling an open position with a veteran hire, please contact Kari Boe-Schmidt at 612-348-7148 or Kari.Boe-Schmidt@hennepin.us.

Take this job and shove it

By Neil Ruhland

Everyone has been there at least once in their life. Your boss is making you mad and it takes all your strength to not tell them what you really think of them.

That impulse control keeps the average person employed.

Better yet, it keeps them out of jail.

For many of our residents and clients, controlling emotions in stressful situations is not always where they excel. To counter issues like this in employment settings the Adult Corrections Facility (ACF) created their jobs club.

Jobs club is a place where residents participating in the Private Sector Work Program (PSWP) can come up with positive responses to difficult situations that come up during the course of their employment.

"It is really a problem-solving group," says Tom Schmalz, ACF corrections institutional supervisor. "We have a lot of guys out here that

have lost jobs in the past because they quit over an issue they had with their employer. We want these guys to be successful and keep the jobs they have."

The group meets every Thursday from 6:30-7:30 p.m. and usually attracts 15-25 residents.

"These types of groups exist in the community, so we thought that creating one at the ACF would benefit our residents," said Gary Printup, jobs club coordinator.

The most interesting aspect of the program is that residents drive the conversation, not ACF staff.

Difficult situations that jobs club members experience are presented to the group and they are asked to look at the same situation from the perspective of the supervisor or manager.

"When the group talks about these situations as the manager or supervisor it shows them what the resident may be doing wrong," said Printup. "It allows everyone to think about the

problem differently.

The group also provides residents with access to other resources, including interview skills and resume building advice.

Residents are connected with community resources to help them locate employment opportunities in addition to practicing cognitive-based skills.

"It is good to have a job. It is pro-social and keeps residents from re-offending," said Printup. "We try to get residents into a routine with their day, so that working is a normal part of life and shows them what the benefits of having a job can be."

Fourteen residents who participated in the PSWP program last year found full-time employment because of their involvement.

In the past several months, the PSWP has signed four new contracts with employers, so the ACF expects more employment opportunities for residents.

Hennepin County announces the Adult Detention Initiative

By Alison Meerkins-Weiler

Acronyms. Hennepin County is an organization with so many levels, facets, and titles that things become easier to understand when everything becomes an acronym.

Many of the Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCCR) staff have heard about something called ADI, but what is it? And, more importantly, what difference does it make to the work you are doing?

The Adult Detention Initiative (ADI) is a coalition of Hennepin County professionals with very specific goals geared toward clients age 18 and older, who are currently being held in detention far longer than necessary. The mission of ADI is to analyze our use of detention and ensure that it is being used appropriately by our criminal justice system.

"What I like about the initiative is that we are working collaboratively," said DOCCR Director Chet Cooper. "This is big; we have law enforcement on board, the county attorney, the public defender, the city attorney, the chief judge, and so many more."

The ADI team is researching the county's client population to identify those that suffer from mental illness, those who failed to appear in court, violated probation or conditional release, and which clients are an actual public safety risk.

While the project is still in its beginning stages, there is a clear picture of helping an individual transition from offender, to client, to

good neighbor. "A big piece is looking at the criminal justice system from the time a person is arrested all the way to re-entry into the community," Cooper said.

Acting senior administrative manager Jerald Moore and administrative assistant Janell Rand are coordinating the project for the department.

"The idea behind ADI is to utilize the jail as it is intended to be used," said Moore.

Too often offenders are placed in a detention setting when alternatives could be used. The ADI initiative will try to implement changes to the Hennepin County criminal justice system that will cease unnecessary detention of offenders.

"This initiative will make a more efficient criminal justice system from beginning to end," added Cooper.

At this point, ADI is exploring possible additions and subtractions to current justice system practices. The initiative has already started soliciting for court reminder volunteers. These individuals will work with clients to make sure they do not miss court appearances.

The initiatives' members promise that more changes to the justice system will be coming in the near future. Most of these changes will focus on keeping low-risk offenders out of a detention setting.

If an individual has not committed a violent crime, isn't high-risk, and is not a threat to the community, perhaps detention is not appropri-

ate for the individual.

"Public safety is my number one priority. I want our staff to be safe, our clients to be safe, and all Hennepin County residents to be safe," said Cooper. "I am confident we can uphold public safety while still allowing our clients to receive the treatment they need both inside and outside of a facility. The Adult Detention Initiative should be able to accomplish both of these aims."

ADI goals

- Use objective, race neutral assessments, tools, and procedures to determine who needs to be held in detention, and who doesn't
- Promote the development of alternatives to detention for the mentally ill
- Find alternatives to cash bail for those who live in poverty
- Promote policies so that bench warrants and arrest and detention warrants are used only when necessary
- Work on practices and procedures to ensure that those who do belong in detention have their cases resolved as quickly as possible



Two of the most significant changes that occurred during the ACF remodel is a new waiting area for visitors (left) and state-of-the-art video visitation room (above) that offers more privacy than the previous setup for the men's section.

Adult Corrections Facility: A diamond in the rough

By Alison Meerkins-Weiler

The Adult Corrections Facility (ACF) was built in 1931 and has been referred to over the years by some as outdated, dangerous, old, ugly and non-welcoming. Hennepin County's Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCCR) took note of these opinions and decided it was time to remodel this diamond in the rough.

The facility's superintendent, Sean Chapman, had a goal of improving staff moral by making the facility safer and more secure.

The remodel of the facility included creating three separate entrances for staff, clients and the community. It also included a new intake area, automated key boxes, an elevator and staff information billboards.

Staff has repeatedly mentioned that these upgrades increase efficiency, production and training capacity.

The new training room, which used to be known as the garage, is now spacious and well equipped with meeting tables, projection screens and a podium.

In addition, new locker rooms and a gym have been added for staff use.

"The facility was brought into the 21st century," said one staff member.

The front office environment was transformed with a completely new layout, ergonomic furniture and energy-efficient lights.

"It looks more professional and inviting," said another staff member.

"The improvements made at the facility have made staff feel like they were up to par with the rest of the county," said Kathy Wollersheim, ACF's intermediate administrative assistant.

The remodel has not just improved how staff view the facility, it also makes a better impression on potential employees who come to interview for positions.

"Sherburne, Ramsey, Anoka and Dakota Counties all have jails that potential staff could seek employment at," said Chapman. "We need to be able to attract the best; and having a facility that looks good when a person comes in for an interview helps us do that."

One major complaint from community members visiting the facility was its lack of waiting room, restrooms, and visitation space for friends or family of residents. This is no longer the case. There is now a large waiting room and state-of-the-art video visitation monitors are available for people to reserve.

"Visiting was first come, first serve basis. Now people can schedule ahead of time and they don't have to wait. No one will be turned away to visit a resident now," said Chapman.

These changes drastically improved the ACF, but the renovation is not done yet. The facility is about to enter the final phase of the project.

The facility's administration is planning on making the outer landscaping safer with additional parking lots, cameras and lighting.

"It has been a large effort and was well worth it in the end," Wollersheim said.

When asked about the new and improved ACF, administrative assistant Chad Gangelhoff put it best: "It is a place to be proud of and is more accommodating for everyone."

Feedback or ideas?

We rely on you to help keep our communication efforts on target with staff needs. If you have information that you would like to have considered for distribution to the department, please contact Communications Coordinator Neil Ruhland at Neil.Ruhland@hennepin.us.



Published by the Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation

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