



Innovation Award Application 2014



Juvenile Community Justice

Sandra K. Metcalf, MS

Director of Juvenile Services

20th Judicial Circuit Court, Ottawa County

12120 Fillmore Street, West Olive, MI 49460

616.786.4126

smetcalf@miottawa.org

Describe the Program/project/ product/ service innovation:

Juvenile residential treatment programs have always been a costly venture for juvenile courts and their funding units. Although sometimes necessary to use, residential treatment facilities costs range from \$135 to \$400 + per day, and often result in poor outcomes; thus, residential treatment programs are used by juvenile courts as “last resort” for youth who are considered to be a danger to public safety or not amenable to treatment in the community. They are also used because at times, it is easier to place a youth in a program outside the community than to treat within. Research clearly shows treating court-involved youth in the community is strongly preferred to residential placement because it allows the family to participate in the treatment process and doesn't remove the youth from his/her community, thus retaining the youth's positive connections and resulting in improved outcomes. Through a collaborative approach in the Juvenile Community Justice (JCJ) program, the court contracts with local lead, non-profit agencies to surround a youth with services based on their identified, unique needs. The court additionally supports this process by providing a year round school – the Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) - to assist in educational programming, which is also a partnership between the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District office and the court. The court provides case management support through a surveillance officer and a case manager who is an Ottawa County Sheriff Deputy assigned to Juvenile Services, to facilitate intensive connections to the youth and their families. Criminogenic risk assessments are utilized at critical points to measure the success of the youth and modify treatment approaches as they progress the treatment process. This program model is continuously refined, and the results have served the youth, their families, the community, and the court, well. Over the past four years, data reveal 90% of youth committed to JCJ have not escalated into residential treatment; 60% have increased their grade point average; 65% have increased their employment and/or training opportunities; and 91% have decreased their alcohol/drug use. In addition, the JCJ program is used as a step down program for allowing youth who are in residential placement to return earlier through living in specialized foster care homes and/or receiving specialized services in their own home. This saves additional dollars through early return from costly placements and works to support the treatment they received within the residential placement.

Short description of the importance, internal impact, and community benefits:

Typically, courts focus on the judicial processing of cases and enforcement of court orders for which they were created. An additional purpose of the juvenile courts is to also be rehabilitative in scope. Thus, it is essential juvenile courts conduct business from a holistic perspective, treating the whole person, involving the family system, providing effective services, and addressing community service gaps for those in need. The impact of JCJ has resulted in the reduction from an average of sixty-two youth residentially placed youth per year, to an average of four. This translates into a

potential savings of \$3,960,250 per year, assuming a modest per diem of \$175. Since the state reimburses the counties for court run, direct service programs at a rate of 50% and the county funds the remaining 50%, the JCJ program provides a significant cost savings to the county's general fund budget as well as the state's Child Care Fund budget. The program impacts the county, court, and community on multiple levels. Through successfully treating the youth in the community and providing them with services that address their specific needs, the youth benefits through no longer leading a life of crime; and the community benefits through a healthier, happier person who is positively engaged in his/her life and contributes to the future of our community. More specifically, this model program results in significantly improving the following: 1) Positive treatment outcomes; 2) Public safety; 3) Quality of life for the youth, family and the community; 4) Staff engagement; 5) Nimble, responsive approaches to the individual needs of youth and community; 6) Data driven decision making; 7) Cost reduction; and 8) Collaborative partnerships with the non-profit and private sectors of the community.

What makes this a quantum leap of creativity?

What the juvenile courts do within their respective communities is directly correlative to the quality of life in that community. This is often overlooked or not visible because it is easy to forget about adolescents who are breaking the law and approach the issues from a "one size fits all" perspective. Like governmental entities and business, some juvenile courts get stuck in just focusing on their judicial obligations. Although judicial administration of the law is extremely important, juvenile courts must go further, and the approaches to meet the individual needs of the youth are not as simple as interpreting the law. Court-involved youth are part of the future of tomorrow's community, and thus, it is critical the juvenile courts take up the challenge to develop nimble, individualized, cost-effective ways in which to positively change a young person's life and in turn, preserve the quality of life for everyone in their community. Developing a comprehensive, collaborative, community-based, residential treatment diversion program like JCJ allows the juvenile court to be extremely creative, and work beyond the enforcement of court orders. It provides the juvenile courts an opportunity to adjust services to meet the community's youthful offending trends and to address them responsively. It makes certain critical elements of public safety are included in the court's approach to delinquency, and significantly reduces costly, ineffective, residential treatment options. It is a very creative approach because everyone involved wins – youth, family, community, the funding unit and the state!

Who benefits?

As stated above, the county, state, court-involved youth, family, and community benefit, significantly. The basic fabric of a community can be positively impacted by such a program. In addition, the business community wins because they have a better

employee pool of young people from which to hire, and the non-profit sector receives an opportunity to render services through contracts with the court. Education benefits because they have support for those students who are chronically struggling in the local schools but through the JCJ school, the Juvenile Justice Institute, may return a better student following their involvement in JCJ.

How was the program/project/product/service initiated and implemented?

The 20th Circuit Court, Juvenile Services Division sought to identify an alternative to residential placements by: 1) Forming a multidisciplinary task force to examine the problem, 2) Profiling the youth who were placed in residential programs, and 3) Exploring community-based alternatives. The result was the development and implementation of the Juvenile Community Justice program which diverts youth from residential treatment by developing comprehensive, community-based programming to meet the individual treatment needs of the youth in the community. The court contracts with lead agencies to provide all the services a youth needs, and the court works to support the treatment process through advanced case management techniques and developing solid relationships with the youth and their families.

What risks were taken?

The risks involved concern for public safety and potential for criticism by the public for treating troubled youth in the community rather than sending them away for treatment. Profiling the youth who were placed clearly showed that if the needed service was available in the community, the majority of the youth could be effectively treated in the community as long as they were closely monitored and their needs were being met on a comprehensive basis.

What, if any were the costs and/or savings?

The first year, the court experienced a drop from sixty-two placed youth to fifteen youth in residential care. The first year of operation saved the county/court and the state approximately \$1.5 M the first year, each, and has continued to save them similar dollars each year through diverting significant numbers of young offenders from residential treatment.

What are the lessons learned that other local governments can learn from?

- 1) Don't assume residential treatment is the only option for court involved youth who appear to behave in a threatening or disturbing manner; 2) True collaborative partnerships are critical to the success of any initiative and must be sustained over time; 3) Be open minded and hear what other resources in the community are willing and - not willing - to offer to help solve the problem; 4) Acknowledge court-involved youth are also the future of the community and therefore, are everyone's concern

and hope for a better future. They are creative, smart and tenacious youth who are worthy of the community's time, resources, and support; 5) Make certain to utilize quality data to inform the decision-making process and refinement of program but don't over-rely on it, recognizing that data is only as good as the business rules for data entry and the quality of data entry existing; and 6) Embrace change and new approaches – be nimble and responsive while supporting the institutional knowledge of what works.

What department and/or individual(s) championed the innovation? If a contractor was used, please list the name and their contact information.

The 20th Circuit Court, Juvenile Services Division – Sandi Metcalf (smetcalf@miottawa.org); Bethany Christian Services, - Steve Eckert and/or Mark Peterson (EckertS@bethany.org/PetersonM@bethany.org); Pathways of Michigan - Jeanette Hoyer (jhoyer@pathwaysmi.org)

Any additional information you would like to share?

The JCJ program has allowed the court to be continually, fiscally prudent and a good steward of the taxpayer's dollar. Equally important, it has resulted in an effective and useful treatment program in the community for court-involved youth. The reduction in criminal behavior directly impacts the quality of life within the community, and the success of JCJ can be attributed to its collaborative, wrap around approach; community based format; professional commitment of all involved; intensity of services; and the shared fiscal of the court and the county.