

HCRS' Windsor County Sparrow Program

Diverting Individuals from the Criminal Justice System and Incarceration



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Overview:

Funded through a grant from the Act 179 Justice Reinvestment Pilot Project, the Sparrow Program began in March 2009. Sparrow was designed to bring criminal justice and social service providers together to develop an integrated approach to serving the needs of individuals with substance abuse and co-occurring mental health issues who come in contact with the criminal justice system. Sparrow staff work with Windsor County residents who have been charged with non-violent property and drug felonies who are willing to engage in treatment to provide their unmet treatment and social service needs. Many Sparrow clients are re-offending individuals with serious functional impairments who do not appear to meet eligibility criteria for other state funded programs. The goal of the program is to provide these individuals with an improved quality of life, reduce the amount of time clients spend in jail, increase engagement with substance abuse, mental health, and other social services, and to keep individuals in the community while moving towards self-sufficiency and recovery.

Total Referrals	Number Graduated	Estimated Cost Avoidance
421	122	\$2,253,950

Sparrow Services

- Intensive case management
- Housing options (rental assistance)
- Access/transportation
- Access to physical health care
- Access to substance abuse, mental health, and developmental disability services
- Employment and pre-vocational services
- Social skills training (healthy decision making)
- Working with family and natural supports
- Creating a bridge between designated agency, field services, and criminal justice
- Benefits and entitlement supports

Outcomes

- Participants who successfully completed the project (58%) had a reconviction rate of 17.9% which is substantially less than the 29.3% recidivism rate for those participants who were dis-enrolled from the project (Vermont Center for Justice Research, Program Evaluation, May 2012).
- There were no felony reconvictions for participants who successfully completed the project, whereas there were four felony reconvictions for the dis-enrolled group.
- According to the UVM Program Evaluation (9/15/10) conducted on the first year results of the Sparrow Project, the estimated criminal justice savings for keeping Sparrow clients out of jail was \$80,000-\$178,000.
- Preliminary finding for cost avoidance for incarceration beds in the first year of the project: \$211,640. Average cost avoidance per program completer: \$12,449.
- Sparrow was determined by the Vermont Center for Justice Research to be a promising approach for reducing recidivism amongst project participants.