



Woman Offender Symposium: Through the Eyes of a Child

Spring 2001 Update

A word from Commissioner Sheryl Ramstad Hvass

It has now been approximately seven months since the *Woman Offender Symposium: Through the Eyes of a Child*. The follow-through has been impressive at the judicial district level to implement strategies formulated at the symposium. This newsletter, published twice annually, will share the very creative ideas that have emerged at the local level.

Mary Scully Whitaker accepted a mobility assignment at the National Institute of Corrections. I have asked Shakopee Facility Warden Lynn Dingle to help participants continue the momentum set during the symposium. Lynn can be reached at 952/496-4459 or dinglel@shk.doc.state.mn.us. Paula Schaefer will be working with Lynn on symposium follow-through and can be reached at 651/603-0157 or pshaef@co.doc.state.mn.us.

Each participant should have received a copy of the symposium proceedings. Please contact Paula or Lynn if you did not receive a copy or if you would like additional copies.

Working together, we can continue on the course set for Minnesota to break the cycle that causes children of offenders to become offenders themselves.

How can we help?

During the symposium each judicial district team was asked how the Department of Corrections (DOC) could be of assistance to participants in implementing symposium goals. The most frequently reported needs and progress thus far are outlined below:

Training – Each judicial district team leader, or his/her successor if the original leader has withdrawn, has been contacted and offered training opportunities. Each district team is invited to contact the DOC to arrange for assistance to plan training. Paula Schaefer is the contact person for training.

Information sharing – Participants requested information about each district. This newsletter is designed as a vehicle to share such data and follow

strategies in each jurisdiction. Please continue to let Lynn know of the actions you are taking in your district in order that they can be included in future issues.

Statistical data – The Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission staff is developing an analysis of female felons and their children by judicial district. This information will be forwarded to participants upon completion.

More agent involvement – In response to the request for more corrections agent involvement, Minnesota DOC Deputy Commissioner of Community Services Mark Carey has directed state agents to work with institution case managers to assist women offenders in making the transition back to the community. Community corrections and county agents work at the judicial district level. Therefore, team members are likely in the best position to encourage more intensive and specialized activity by agents with respect to women offenders and their children.

Information on available funding – In January all district team leaders were sent information on available grant dollars and eligibility criteria (Request for Proposals). If any team leaders did not receive this information, please contact Paula Schaefer.

Judicial district news

1st Judicial District – Dakota County Sheriff Don Gudmundson immediately began allowing family visitation for incarcerated women in the county facility. He also made arrangements with Scott, Carver, Wabasha and Fillmore Counties to exchange their women inmates for Dakota County male inmates. This takes the women out of jails which have very few women and brings them together where larger numbers make programming opportunities more cost-effective. In addition, in their jail expansion planning Dakota County will examine more alternatives for family visits. Sheriff Gudmundson has discussed with the county's Intermediate Sanctions Committee what he learned at the symposium and will also be talking with district court judges.

Scott and Carver Counties are planning to submit a funding application for model programming for female offenders.

2nd Judicial District – To help implement local strategies, team leader Dinny Prichard is establishing a work group that includes symposium members as well as education and human services professionals, community providers, and female offenders.

3rd Judicial District – Cindy Cox has agreed to contact the 3rd Judicial District team to schedule a meeting and decide on action plans. It is anticipated that the team will discuss what strategies may or may not be implemented in the district. Cindy established good connections at the symposium and plans to ensure that there is some follow-up.

4th Judicial District – Judge Denise Reilly is now serving as team leader. Carol Skradski and Judge Reilly are coordinating symposium follow-up with their County Task Force on Women Offenders and Work Group on Female Drug Offenders. Current activities regarding female offenders include: the work of the ongoing Female Offender Steering Committee, Project Rebound for female offenders who are drug offenders or substance abusers with young children, Personal Growth Group facilitated by Glee Hanson, and Rage to Roses Group facilitated by Monica McClain who also runs groups for women at the women's section of the workhouse. A local committee responsible for enhancing services to women in drug court recommends that a probation officer have an exclusive caseload of women in drug court. Hennepin County also contracts with the following community programs that are gender-responsive: Genesis II, Reentry Metro and My Home, Inc.

5th Judicial District – Bob Sutter has indicated a willingness to function as a liaison with team members but will rely on others to coordinate follow-up. He forwarded the notice of the DOC Request for Proposals to Kelly McDonough who is planning on applying for funds, probably to address the needs of DWI female offenders.

6th Judicial District – The goal of the 6th Judicial District was to bring symposium issues to existing groups. Leader Tom Adkins indicated their Female Offender Task Force will bring these issues to the next CCA Corrections Advisory Board meeting and together they will decide which issues will be addressed and goals established.

7th Judicial District – Sheriff Bill Ingebritsen has submitted an article on the symposium to the Sheriffs Association's statewide newsletter. The Sheriffs Association may request some training on female offender issues at their summer conference. Judge

Tom Stringer from Fergus Falls requested and received 25 copies of the symposium proceedings.

8th Judicial District – This district is sponsoring a one-day training session on issues facing female offenders and their children. The session, to be held April 26, 2001, in Willmar from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., is entitled *Woman Offender Symposium: Through the Eyes of a Child – Eighth District Perspective*. Corrections Commissioner Sheryl Ramstad Hvass will welcome the group, and Mary Scully Whitaker will present an overview of the issues facing this population. Time will be included for agencies to share what they are doing to create more comprehensive services for female offenders and their children.

9th Judicial District – Team leader Shirley Cain has changed her position and is now the White Earth Tribal Attorney. She indicated that a new team leader may have to be named.

10th Judicial District – Judge Lynn Olson forwarded the notice of Request for Proposals to her team and it appears they have several ideas they will pursue. Dan Ceynowa and Rina McManus are implementing the KIDS Project in Anoka, providing services to children of incarcerated moms. Anoka County Corrections is partnering with Anoka County Public Health piloting a program for parenting women in jail that links them to ongoing relevant services in the community upon release, including prenatal care. The plan now calls for a public health nurse to review the circumstances of children of incarcerated moms. They plan to review all their current programs in the jail for gender specificity. Parenting classes are already offered to both men and women. They also plan to look at adding visiting for children of women incarcerated in the jail. Anoka County Corrections and Public Health plan to apply for model programming grant money now available to provide these services.

Future reports

Paula Schaefer will contact each team leader and/or judicial district in July 2001 to gather updates on each team's accomplishments for the summer publication of this newsletter. If you have information you would like to include, please send it via email to Paula or Lynn at the email addresses noted above. We hope you find this information-sharing of value and that it keeps the enthusiasm for this project going strong!

