

**Mother-Child Community Corrections Project (MCCC)
Technical Assistance Meeting
Emerging Mother-Child Programs**

**Kings County District Attorney's Office
Brooklyn, NY
October 4, 2000**

Meeting Highlights

Participants: Sherry Albert, Joan Mont Bach, Kaydeen Bishop, Patricia Blair, Elaine Cohen, Teresa Fabi, Stacy Fresconia, Mary Hughes, Joseph Hynes, Ann Jacobs, John Jeffries, Gwen Knowles, Tanya Krupat, Marsha Maloff, Therese Matthews, Terrie McDermott, Carmen Pena, Deborah Richardson, Denise Robinson, Sonya Ward, Diane Zompa

MCCC Project Staff: Judy Berman, Karen Chapple, Becki Ney, Mary Shilton

A participant list was included as part of the meeting materials.

Welcome and Introductions

Judy Berman welcomed everyone on behalf of the MCCC project. She stated that the meeting had been convened to bring policymakers, planners, and practitioners of mother-child community corrections programs together to discuss their interests, exchange knowledge, and share experiences in developing and implementing programs for women offenders and their children. The group acknowledged that there was a lot to be learned from each other. Mother-child programs represented at the meeting included both emerging and well-established programs:

- Fresh Start, CT
- Community Solutions, Hartford House, CT
- Department of Women's Justice Services, Cook County Sheriff's Office, IL
- Baltimore Pre-Release Unit for Women, MD
- Department of Corrections, MD
- Department of Corrections, NJ
- Kings County DA's Office, NY
- Rikers Island Visiting Program, NY
- Women's Prison Association and Home, Inc, NY
- Alvis House, OH
- Department of Corrections, Puerto Rico
- University of Texas Medical Branch, TX

Welcome from Kings County District Attorney Charles J. (Joe) Hynes

The meeting was hosted by the Kings County District Attorney's Office. We thank Mary Hughes and Theresa Fabi

for all their work in providing the meeting space, refreshments, and other arrangements.

District Attorney Hynes welcomed the group. He stated that the Kings County District Attorney's Office was committed to family unification. He believes that separation of offenders from their children is cruel and does not make sense. His office is committed to developing a comprehensive program for offenders and families. Mary Hughes and Theresa Fabi, experienced prosecutors, are responsible for this effort and are moving quickly to develop a comprehensive approach in their jurisdiction.

Expectations for the Day

Participants reviewed the proposed agenda and discussed their expectations for the day. They identified issues that were most pressing for them and these were discussed in the context of the Panel Presentation that followed.

Three Current Programs: How They Got Started and What Are Their Strengths?

- Women's Prison Association and Home, Inc., New York, New York
Ann Jacobs, Executive Director

The Women's Prison Association is a well-established organization that addresses all of the complex dimensions of mother-child programs. Programs presume preservation of the family unit, as well as jail for more dangerous women and community programs for non-violent offenders. From a legal status perspective, it is important that community corrections programs be available for preserving families who have housing, those who can support a drug free lifestyle, and who can participate in school or work. Case studies and other written documents exist that describe the program in detail. Many participants had the opportunity to visit the program the night before the meeting.

- Summit House, Greensboro, North Carolina
Karen Chapple, Former CEO

The idea of Summit House was originally conceived of by a group of women in Greensboro who were concerned about first time offenders, the loss of custody of their children, and the family disruption that resulted. Originally, Summit House included 8-10 families in a small house environment. Although Summit House faced some resistance from the community, it now enjoys broad community support. Over the years, Summit House has re-focused its program efforts to include more programming for children.

Now, 82% of the women who come to Summit House are long-term substance abusers. Many have been in foster care. Some women need to search for their children. Most have not achieved a high school education. Summit House was designed so women offenders can be in the community with their children and at the same time maintain their children's education and their own treatment. The local community college provides GED services; college scholarships are available for women who achieve educational goals.

Most women who come to Summit House have more than one child. Many of the children need clinical and developmental assessments to determine their health, education, and treatment needs. Mothers are kept fully involved with their children's care and progress. Once treatment is near completion and a GED obtained, the women search for employment and a suitable living situation. Most women choose to remain in the area. At this time, efforts at family reintegration are also initiated, if appropriate.

Summit House has been evaluated over time and has been shown to achieve its goals and outcomes. Evaluation and monitoring is critical to understanding what works with women offenders and their children. A draft case study of Summit House was provided to participants at the meeting.

- Fresh Start, Community Renewal Team of Greater Hartford, Connecticut
Sherry Albert, Asst. to the Vice President

The Fresh Start program was designed as an alternative to incarceration for women offenders and their children. Bureau of Justice (BJA) funds were originally used to pilot a women's and children's program. After the first year of operation, the State of Connecticut assumed the costs of the program. Fresh Start is operated by a private, not-for-profit agency. The program's original annual budget was \$710,000 for the operation of a 20-bed residential program. Currently, the annual budget has been reduced to \$584,000. The program includes a number of components, including: health and mental health services, substance abuse treatment, residential, financial planning assistance, childcare, food and other basic needs, life skills training, community service, aftercare, and subsidized rent. Over the years the program has been asked to do more with fewer resources.

The program collaborated with the Institute for Living, a local mental health provider. Through their joint efforts, the program was able to obtain an existing residential facility that was no longer being used. The building was already zoned residential, and with some renovation, they were able to implement the program very quickly.

Fresh Start program components are designed around graduated tiers. The first tier occurs at assessment and intake. Most of the women who enter Fresh Start are in pretrial status; some have been sentenced to probation or are serving parole. Intake assessments are conducted within 48 hours in order to get information to the courts in a timely manner. Tier 2 is composed of a residential, chemical dependency program. Outpatient treatment is also supplemented for up to eight weeks once the residential component is completed. Once sobriety is maintained for a period of time, the women go to Tier 3. Tier 3 consists of job readiness training and preparation for release. AFDC and WEA assist in training. The women who progress to this tier are expected to search for employment and go to work each day. Tier 4 is the transitional phase of the program. The women search for appropriate living situations in the community. Staff and Fresh Start graduates assist in this process.

Originally, there were 22 women and 11 children in the program. There are no age restrictions on the children. Many of the women do not have their children with them or have them only on a part time basis. Some have lost custody of them. For women who do have their children with them, Fresh Start has room for up to 4 children for each mother. There may be up to 30 children at the program on a monthly basis. Written materials about Fresh Start were made available to participants.

- Kings County District Attorney's Office, Brooklyn, New York
Mary Hughes, Assistant District Attorney

The Kings County District Attorney's Office is in process of planning a program for mothers and their children. Female felons who agree to participate will be diverted to the program by the District Attorney; their charges will be dismissed if they successfully complete the program. Currently, the DA's Office is incorporating a not-for-profit organization as the vehicle to receive funds, and build and operate a residential facility for 25 mothers and their children who are under 18 years of age. Commitments have been made from the Housing Authority to secure low-income housing for women offenders who graduate from the program. Planning partners include the Bank Street School of Education, the East Street Co-op, and the Housing Preservation Development Corporation.

Identification of Issues

The following list of questions, issues, comments, and expectations were developed and discussed by the group.

1. How can the MCCC project assist emerging mother-child programs?

- by providing information about what programs exist;
- by providing limited technical assistance;
- by encouraging networking and sharing of knowledge and experience in the field; and

- by helping to identify potential resources for mother-child programs.

2. How can we shape MCCC programs and learn more about what is going on in the field?

- by developing a list of issues or areas that programs should consider as they begin to develop mother-child programs;
- by getting assistance from experienced service providers and experts; and
- by developing a leadership working group of people in the field.

3. How can we link programs focused on acute care, prevention and public health for pregnant mothers, teenagers and other high-risk groups with "core" MCCC programs?

4. What are strategies for keeping mothers and their children together?

- Develop work release and pre-release community programs for mothers and children in transition.
- Develop a range of programs that include housing and residential care, treatment options, family counseling and assistance, child assistance, and the like. Some programs mentioned include Huntington House for homeless women, the NY Steps Program, La Bodega de la Familia for families involved in drugs and alcohol in NYC, Summit House, a halfway house for women and their children in NC, and the Fresh Start Program in Connecticut.

4. How do we maintain successful programs? How do we continue to do more with less? How do we continue to develop multidisciplinary approaches that integrate family, social services, mother child programs, transition assistance, support networking?

- by linking programs with funders;
- by linking private service providers with government leaders;
- by providing wrap-around, comprehensive services for women and their children;
- by involving clients in their own successful programming;
- by continuing to examine and ask questions about the ethical, legal, and moral implication of mother-child programs --
 - What are the collateral effects and consequences of involving young children in the justice system?
 - What are the consequences of separating mothers and babies/children?
- by recognizing that states may need legislative and agency guidance with respect to healthcare issues for women offenders and their children;
- by evaluating and monitoring our programs so that we begin to understand what works to achieve the outcomes we desire; and
- by being sensitive to and working to resolve conflicts that arise when corrections system security measures and program requirements clash with mother-child bonding.

4. We shouldn't forget that incarcerated parents and their children are important sources of information about their own needs and resources. They should be involved in program development efforts.

5. We must keep the focus on women offenders (rather than allowing the needs of male offenders to dominate the discussion) and remember that their issues can be very complex.

- More gender specific programming should be developed.
- Understanding the context of relationships is important to women.
- Self-esteem, abuse history, mental health and depression, suicide history, and victimization are all issues that come up time and time again for many women offenders. Most of them are

also mothers.

- Most women offenders and their children have medical, health, and housing needs.
- Most of the evaluation and assessment tools that exist have been developed for men and programs serving men.

6. What resources are available to plan and implement mother-child programs?

- Some programs use funds available for women offenders and match them with children services funds.
- Explore everything you can about state and local funding mechanisms.
- Some programs participate as partners with state and local agencies.
- Some programs utilize child services resources to promote child development and child centered services within their programs.
- Some have used school resources; others have used truancy program resources.
- Interact with and include child welfare and other children's agency representatives in your planning activities. Explore possible options for resources with them as well.
- The MCCC can explore what we know about resources nationally and can help to identify resource gaps.
- Some programs have been successful by looking at the family unit and building programs around serving the whole family. Getting families involved as supporters and advocates for programs and services is always helpful.

7. What are issues related to the legal status of women involved in the criminal justice system?

- How do funding possibilities flow from the legal status, family status, and treatment status of the women offenders and their families?
- We need to identify issues that surround the loss—or potential loss—of child custody. This is a very real issue for many women offenders.
- We need to explore the linkages and relationships of immediate and extended family members or other designated caretakers.
- We need to inform women offenders of their rights and legal status, and help them get legal assistance, if needed.
- We need to work with child advocates when the status or rights of the child are in question.
- We need to work to remove the barriers to employment, housing, welfare, Medicaid, and social services for women offenders and their children.
- Are (should) program goals and outcomes (be) different depending on when the program intervention is available in the criminal justice process? For example, would we handle family (re)unification differently at different stages in the legal process? Are homeless issues only critical at certain stages, but not others?
 - At/during pretrial phase?
 - At/during sentencing to community?
 - At/during sentencing to incarceration?
 - At/during transition from jail or prison?
 - At/during another point of re-entry to the community?

7. How do we gain political support for our efforts?

- How do we communicate what it takes to work with women offenders and their families and to provide community programs and services?
- We need to describe our needs in human terms as well as program outcomes.
- We need to get elected officials involved in our issues by providing them with consistent and sound information.

Further Discussion of Selected Issues

The list of potential issues and questions was reviewed and discussion priorities selected for the time remaining. Items identified included:

1. What are strategies for zoning and siting residential programs?
2. What is the full range of program components we should consider?
3. How do we identify and retain program resources, including funding?
4. How do we recruit, train and maintain competent and caring staff?
5. How do we incorporate gender specific/culturally specific resources into our programs?
6. What is the assessment of the woman's legal, family, and needs status and how do we "match" that knowledge with appropriate programming?
7. How do we monitor and evaluate our programs? What do we need to do now?
8. How do we build effective partnerships with other agencies and garner the support of elected officials and the public?
9. What are some strategies for helping mothers bond with their children?
10. What are the ethical, legal, and moral issues related to mother-child programs?
11. How do we begin to put a mother-child program together? Where do we start?

Involving Child Welfare Agencies (CWA) in our Work with Mothers and Children

1. Mother-child programs seem more effective when state or local child welfare agencies work closely with program staff.
2. We need to help CWA workers and program staff learn how to talk the same language—They come from different disciplines.
3. Important issues to consider: Who has custodial responsibility for the children and who has responsibility for programming? If the mother-child program has custody responsibility, how does that impact on funding and how they conduct their business? At Fresh Start, the mother has custody of the children, not the program. As such, the mother makes all decisions related to the health and well being of her children. If the mother fails to parent responsibly then DCF workers are contacted. At Summit House, mothers have temporary custody of children with DCF supervision. This works because DCF and Summit House workers view themselves as partners. If a mother fails in the program, they work with DFC to make appropriate placements for the children. If the mother and children are separated, Summit House finds that the children are often placed in the same community as the mother so that the potential for reunification exists. Some noted the importance of taking a complete family history when women enter the program -- even when the family has been uninvolved or hostile, because working toward the involvement of extended family can provide an alternative placement for the child if necessary.
4. There are times when it is difficult to keep mothers and children together. For example, when mothers are on work-release, childcare arrangements must be made. The Federal Bureau of Prisons takes care of the medical needs of women and infants, but there are always conflicts and differences.

Identifying Research Questions and Resources for Conducting Research

1. How can we frame research questions about the family context of programs so that we can begin to ask legitimate research questions on this topic? Is there a way to incorporate family history and current issues as part of the intake and assessment process?
2. Program evaluations should include a robust review of assessments, treatment needs, services provided and the legal status of women to understand the various connections and relationships between these areas of concern.

The Duration and Scope of Mother-child Programs

1. Is there an optimal timeframe for how long mother-child programs should be? Most participants agreed that programs should be up to two years in duration with the caveat that many women offenders may need ongoing support for much, much longer.
2. What are options for providing community support for women offenders and their children short of correctional supervision? The group discussed the fact that some families may need years and years of support to maintain sobriety. Reunification can be a horrifying and difficult experience for both mothers and children. One idea suggested was more lengthy and intensive involvement of social services with the family once permanent housing is achieved. Other ideas included gaining Section 8 supportive housing for families, if available.
3. Comprehensive services and "one stop shopping" are provided as part of the program in Chicago. Because providers are sharing operating costs, the program is able to keep per diem costs to \$130 per participant. Per diem costs are supplemented with Medicaid dollars for the children. Up and above this, service providers must reach out to others for funding. Initially, they developed a Request for Proposal that they sent to potential service providers. A program statement, client responsibilities, and provider roles and responsibilities were articulated as well as the timeframe for service delivery, liability issues, and expected deliverables.

Dealing with Elected Officials and the Public

1. Make a point of visiting local and/or state officials on an annual basis (city council, mayor, county commission, judge, DA, legislature) to let them know what you are doing and why it is important

Legal Issues

1. The Adoption of Safe Families Act (ASFA) has wide-sweeping implications for women offenders and their children. For example, if children are in foster care, mothers now lose all of their parental rights within a certain timeframe if they are not reunified with their children. This timeframe poses extreme problems for mothers who are incarcerated as they may well lose custody of their children while serving their sentences. There are also many other restraints on services and entitlements. Women's Prison Association has a legal advocate working with women to try to meet those deadlines and prevent them from losing custody permanently. The pressure on program staff can be very intense.

Program Staff

1. Competent, well trained, and supportive staff are critical to effective programs. How you build the "right" complement of staff is very important and must be resolved early on in program planning. For example, an executive director is often called upon to do fundraising, maintain public linkages, and manage the program and staff. Staff who are able to work together in a team approach are often more successful than staff who can only very narrowly view their jobs and work.
2. Because mother-child programs do not resemble typical corrections programs, it is important that staff view their jobs in broader ways. For example, staff who work in mother-child programs are not

primarily guards; and to reinforce a safe, nurturing environment, uniforms are often de-emphasized. In Puerto Rico, staff are trained how to work with mothers and their children. They were careful to negotiate all staffing issues with the correctional officers' union so that they are not limited in the kinds of staff they can recruit. They take a gender-responsive program approach and train all staff accordingly. This has resulted in staff teams composed of a correctional officer and social worker.

3. Staff development is also critically important. This is a difficult population to deal with at times. Staff must be supported in and develop ways to deal with secondary trauma. In addition, it is hard for staff to advocate for mothers and children at the same time because at times their interests can be so different. It was suggested that staff be dedicated to either children or mothers, but not both at the same time.

Funding Issues

1. Summit House was successful in gaining the attention of their local legislative delegate (via briefing meetings) and the female legislative delegate in North Carolina. The legislature funded a pilot project; local funds from City Council, the County and private foundation funds paid for services to children. Other sources of funding included: Duke endowment, statewide funding, substance abuse funding. The women pay rent and client fees.

2. Because many of the mother-child programs are housed within government agencies (Department of Corrections or other agency), it is important to consider funding sources and their funding restrictions. For example, many foundations will not fund government agencies, but they will fund a nonprofit service provider who provides services to the program. Forming partnerships for funding and resources is important.

3. Other sources of funds mentioned: Families in Training Funds in Connecticut, United Way, corporations. Some programs encourage charitable giving and have realized several thousands of dollars over the years. Some state lottery dollars are devoted to children, other federated funds like the Black United Fund. Corporate funders include: Philip Morris who has been very active on domestic violence issues. VAWO is another source of federal funds as is the Office for Victims of Crime and the Corrections Program Office. We should remember to think most broadly about resources – in-kind contributions of furniture, clothes, printing for example, as well as volunteers and other nonfinancial resources. Faith-based groups often provide personal care packages, have access to vans, and volunteers. TANF and Byrne funds are federal funds distributed to each state. Community development money is another source of funding. The Alliance of the AMA has been supportive on issues related to women and children.

4. Tips for requesting funds: Face to face contact with local foundations and businesses. Every library has a Foundation Center that will help identify foundations interested in this area. Identify local corporations and businesses; find out what they are interested in and ask them to help; put them on your board; create meaningful things for them to do and get them interested in your issues.

Monitoring and Evaluation issues

1. Think about program monitoring and evaluation as part of program planning activities. What kind of information should you be collecting and how will this be tracked? The profile of the kids and the women must be outlined. Distinguishing between process and program evaluations is important. But, evaluation doesn't have to be onerous. Think of a few critical questions that you (funders, the public, program people, etc.) think are critical to answer. Identify the data, the measures that will help you answer these questions. Identify where the data is and how you will get it. Engage local universities and others in helping you monitor and evaluation your program.

Update on the MCCC Project

As a last discussion item, MCCC staff discussed next steps and plans for the coming months. Staff will:

- Document this meeting

- With NIC, will implement a webpage in November with several links, contact information, and a searchable database of documents.
- Written materials like a resource guide, case studies, check list of activities for getting a program started.
- Sample op-ed articles, news articles, talking points with elected officials

Other events to be looking for:

- NIC will sponsor a national teleconference on female offenders in July 2001.
- ICCA will bring its member providers together in Washington, DC on March 3-7, 2001 to discuss programming for MCCC programs and to meet with federal agency representatives around these issues.

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