

Women Arise – A Day Reporting Center* **Detroit, Michigan**

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Genesis of Program:

Women A.R.I.S.E. (Arise) is a community-based agency that has provided rehabilitative programs for offender and ex-offender women in Wayne County, Michigan. The first agency of its type for women in Michigan, Women Arise began in Detroit in 1986 under the sponsorship of the Team for Justice. The goals of the agency were researched in the early 1980's and are based on some of the earliest diversion studies in the State of Michigan by Dr. Merry Morash of Michigan State University. These goals were:

1. To curtail the “revolving door” syndrome for females who are likely to return to the socially deviant lifestyles that contributed to their initial charge and conviction (recidivism goal); and
2. To provide for the courts a viable sentencing alternative to incarceration for women in Wayne County (diversion goal).

The program is currently housed in the former offices of a Catholic parish. The facility has the look of a well preserved historic home. There are multiple rooms on the first and second floors. Three rooms are used as classrooms for GED, computers and cognitive skills classes.

After passage of the Michigan Community Corrections Act in 1988, the Wayne County Community Justice department was established and funded. Female offenders were targeted in the county's plan. Their first step was to review existing programs. Based on that review, only two programs continued to receive funding: Women Arise and Project Transition (residential program).

Women Arise's Mission and Goals:

Women Arise's mission is to provide female offenders and ex-offenders with the education, training, interaction and environment necessary to become productive community members.

* This case study was compiled from a variety of sources, interviews and publications. It is not intended to be an endorsement by the authors of a particular program, method or approach. The case study is intended to provide an illustration and example of one type of approach to mother-child programs.

Women Arise provides a community sentencing option designed to meet the individual needs of participants and prepare them to effectively change the pattern and rate of incarceration and recidivism, thereby reducing social costs.

Individual participant development plans seek to 1) identify and address the physical, social, psychological and other primary needs of female offenders and ex-offenders; 2) assist in the development of a more positive outlook within participants; and 3) facilitate and provide personal and professional alternatives.

Women Arise provides an opportunity for the women to learn and develop the skills to make a positive contribution to their own lives, and to the lives of their families and communities. The day-reporting nature of the program allows mothers in the program to continue to oversee their child's development.

Women Arise's Program Components:

The Women Arise program provides services to women offenders in pre-trial status and on probation, parole or incarcerated in the jail.

About half of the population enrolled in the program is between the ages of 30-39. 76.6 percent are African American females. Of the women served, fewer than half have their GED or High School Diploma. 80 percent of the women have dependent children, a large proportion of whom are between the ages of 2 and 11. 50 percent of the women have had a prior felony conviction.

The primary services offered include:

- **Child Care Assistance:** The program staff assist the woman in selecting a day care for their children, accessing financial assistance available for day care and on program days provides transportation for the children to day care.
- **GED preparation:** The classes are provided on site by the Detroit Board of Education. Continued availability of on-site GED classes is determined through performance measures set by the Board of Education.
- **Cognitive Skills:** Historically the program offered the Reasoning and Rehabilitation program by Robert Ross. Recently they have been trained and will begin offering Wanberg & Milkman's Criminal Conduct and Substance Abuse Treatment curriculum.
- **Women's Health Issues:** Classes are provided by the Detroit Health Department, which address AIDS and other women's health issues.
- **PROVE:** The PROVE program (Post-Release Opportunities for Vocational Education) began from funding by a settlement between the Michigan Department Of Corrections and female offenders regarding equity in educational opportunities in the state's prisons. \$382,000 was awarded to Women Arise to provide education opportunities for women returning to the community from prison.

Growing Pains – What We Wish We Would Have Done:

Although Women Arise was originally seen as an innovative approach to maintaining women offenders in the community, the effectiveness of the program began to be questioned by probation officers during recent years. The lack of access to on-site substance abuse treatment was identified as a major limitation, as was the location of the program which is several blocks from the nearest bus line. This sparked a reduction in client participation from the community.

In February 2001, the original Executive Director resigned and a new Director was appointed. As is often the case, the new director is revamping the vision for the agency. The new director worked as a probation officer for several years and has also worked with children in Head Start. Her vision includes relocating the program to a larger facility which is more accessible by mass transit. The director hopes the size and accessibility will allow the program to include a Head Start component for the children of the women being served to also increase participation. The program is also attempting to become licensed as an outpatient treatment facility for substance abuse.

The vision for the agency includes these enhanced service areas:

- **Domestic Violence Services**
- **Anger Management**
- **Parenting**
- **Head Start and Pre-Head Start On-Site**
- **Substance Abuse Services**
- **Expanded Reentry Services through PROVE**

Financial Resources and Support Needed for the Program:

The Wayne County Community Justice Department is the primary funder of the Women Arise program (\$220,000). There is also the one-time funding by the court to begin the PROVE program. In the past, funds were received from the Public Welfare Foundation and other local foundations.

The new vision for the agency includes diversifying its funding base. Foundations are being approached to assist with the new program enhancements.

Currently, on average there are 17-20 women in the program each day. A cost study which was completed in 1997 stated that the daily cost per woman was \$55-\$60.

The program is a 501(c)(3) with a Board that oversees the organization. The new director feels this board needs to be strengthened to include more criminal justice professionals and elected officials.

Other than service providers, the local community is not actively involved in the program. The present director says she has even had neighbors mention to her that they

did not know the program was operating in their area. The positive side of this feedback is that there have not been incidents with the participants to draw attention to the program; the negative side is that the community is not aware that the program needs its support.

The program has benefited from relationships with nearby universities. Many students have done internships and conducted research on the program. The students include future nurses and are primarily from Wayne State and Eastern Michigan Universities.

For the winter holidays, two individual volunteers have provided holiday gifts and food for the residents. This past Christmas, a church adopted a family and provided Christmas presents for them.

How Does Women Arise Measure Success?

One of the most unique aspects of this program is that they began collecting data from their first day. The Access database provides a wealth of possibilities for further analysis of the program and is currently used for demographic data and recidivism studies. The connections already in place with universities could provide the on-going program evaluation to assure the program is meeting the needs of the participants.

The data that the program maintains on each woman includes:

1. Demographic
2. Information on children
3. Sources of income
4. Education
5. Criminal history
6. Substance abuse history
7. Family involvement in the criminal justice, substance abuse and mental health systems

Upon intake and twice afterwards at six month intervals, the following tests are also administered with each woman:

- Profile of Adaptation to Life
- Work Relevant Attitudes Inventory
- CES-D Scale (depression)
- Locus of Control Scale

The staff's view of success for the women is to be living a responsible life in the community and remaining in contact with the program. Historically the primary indicator used to measure success has been recidivism. The Women Arise researchers have defined recidivism to be an arrest within a three-year period following release from the program. In a study conducted in 1997, there was no recidivism finding for 47.7 percent of the women served. Of those who did recidivate, they did so by violation of

their probation requirements (36.36 percent) or by a new felony charge (close to 16 percent).

What Issues Remain a Challenge for Women Arise:

Achieving the new vision for the agency will be a challenge, in terms of the substantial change involved and locating funding for those changes. The vision includes moving the program to a new location, providing head start services for the children and additional gender-specific services for the women.

The program has recently hired a person with a masters degree in social work who is a certified substance abuse counselor. This is one of the program's first steps towards licensure as an outpatient treatment program.

Recommendations to New and Emerging Programs:

- Keep all avenues to funding open.
- Collaborate with others.
- Include on-site substance abuse treatment and day care.
- Establish control of the program's length, not just by sentence.

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