

San Mateo County's Service Connect Project

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the passage in 2011 of the Assembly Bill (AB 109) on realignment, San Mateo County developed the Services Connect Project.

This legislation affected inmates released from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation after serving a commitment for non-serious, non-violent, or non-high-risk sexual Offenses. Supervision was changed to local County Probation Departments.

San Mateo County developed a One-Stop Shop to meet the housing, food, clothing, and transportation needs of these customers. Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Services, and other services were all provided on-site, and referrals to other entities were possible when needed.

San Mateo County's Human Services; Health System, which includes Behavioral Health, Recovery Services, Correctional Health; and the Probation and Sheriff's Departments with peer mentors, created a supportive, multi-disciplinary approach for dealing with the re-entry population. The 550 Jobs! program was also developed in the same location for those who are job-ready. Training in café and catering operations, manufacturing, shipping and receiving processes are also offered on-site.

This very impressive program with its built-in support systems has had great results in reducing the recidivism rate in San Mateo County.

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Introduction

The California Legislature passed Assembly Bill (AB 109) in April 2011 because of the large number of offenders in the state's prison system contributing to California's growing fiscal crisis.

With the passage of this assembly bill, sentencing for those convicted of minor crimes was changed. Those convicted of the 3 "NONs" (non-violent, non-serious, and non-sexual offenses) now serve their time in local jails instead of state prisons with the hope that the legislation can close the revolving door of low-level inmates cycling in and out of prison. This legislation, called Public Safety Realignment, transferred responsibility to supervise offenders convicted of these specific low-level crimes from state parole to local county probation departments. San Mateo County developed its plan to meet the requirements of the assembly bill and service needs to support the realignment population who would be coming back to San Mateo County, specifically through the development of Service Connect (SC).

Background

In May 2011, San Mateo County began their departmental pre-planning meetings. In October 2011, AB 109 was implemented and by April 2012 a local implementation plan was adopted by San Mateo County's Board of Supervisors.

The goals of San Mateo County's local implementation plan are to:

- Protect public safety through appropriate custody, supervision, and law enforcement activities
- Create opportunities for rehabilitation and recovery

- Provide case management, substance abuse, mental health, vocational, and housing support services

Service Connect/550 JOBS! Development

Service Connect began as a collaborative partnership between the Human Services Agency, the Health System (including Behavioral Health, Recovery Services, and Correctional Health), the Probation Department, and the Sheriff's Office.

The goal is to prevent re-arrest and re-incarceration of individuals who meet criteria under AB 109 by providing emergency resources, referrals, and case management.

In the development of this program there are phases of re-entry support. The first is called "getting ready," accomplished by preparing the individual while he or she is still incarcerated. There are in-custody visits from staff to introduce themselves, provide encouragement, and help create a re-entry plan. Correctional Health works out the details of either a "warm hand-off" or something more if needed. Correctional Health walks the individual to the lobby and is met by a SC staff person. The "warm hand-off" is handled for those with or without probation supervision and is chosen by the client.

In 2012, San Mateo County Human Services Agency developed 550 JOBS! as an internal collaborative between Human Services Agency programs: SC and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. They were able to immediately place clients in short-term training and transitional employment opportunities which allowed them to engage the clients in services, such as vocational counseling and job development.

These services have resulted in positive outcomes and success of placement in competitive community employment opportunities for re-entry clients.

Key Elements

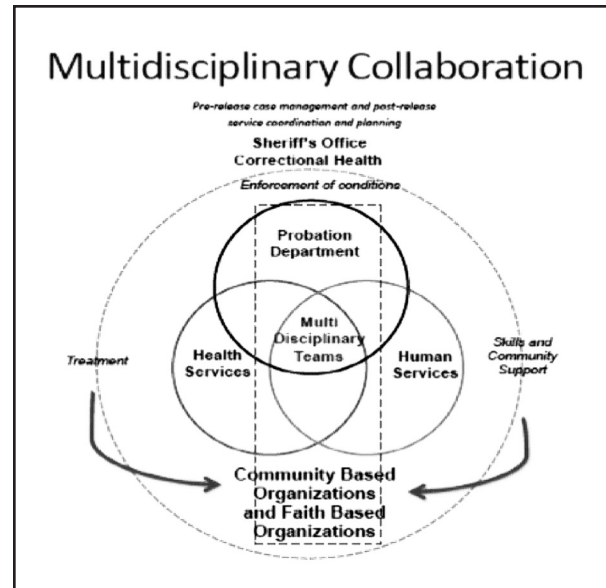
County departments reviewed evidence-based practices and developed a multidisciplinary team approach to coordinate services. This is accomplished by San Mateo County's Human Services, Health System, Sheriff's Office, and Probation Department working together. Team meetings with the key partners are held regularly to discuss issues, progress of participants in the program, and next steps which may include interventions.

The program initially was held at the Probation Office. It was convenient for the supervisees as they were escorted to the SC program on-site. Due to expansion needs, it was necessary to find a larger location.

The current location at 550 Quarry Rd. in San Carlos is quite impressive. Walking in, one is greeted by a clerical trainee who serves as a receptionist. This location is a one-stop service center where newly released supervisees are individually assessed by a Human Services Department social worker and provided an array of services as appropriate.

The services offered are as follows:

- Safety Net Bundle (Emergency Food, Clothing, Shelter and Transportation Vouchers)
- Emergency shelter, transitional, and long term housing referrals
- Drug & Alcohol & Mental Health Assessment and referrals
- Benefits Eligibility Determination
- Employment Services referrals
- Long term case management plans and supportive services
- Peer Mentoring and Support Groups
- Restorative Justice Activities
- Community and Family Events
- Family Reunification Support



The Human Services staff in this collaboration consists of:

- 1 Social Work Supervisor
- 3 Social Workers
- 1 Benefits Analyst
- 1 Peer Mentor Coordinator (Community Worker Classification)
- 1 Employment Services Specialist
- 1 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- 1 Job Development Specialist
- 3 Contracted Peer Mentors (part time)
- 1 Clerical Trainee

The Behavioral Health staff in this collaboration consist of:

- 1 Supervising Mental Health Clinician
- 2 Alcohol and Drug Case Managers/Assessment Specialists
- 2 Psychiatric Social Workers/Marriage Family Counselors
- 1 Peer Support Worker (Community Worker Classification)
- 1 Patient Services Assistant (clerical)
- 2 Medical Services Assistants (part time)
- 1 Nurse Practitioner (part time)
- 1 Psychiatrist (part time)

The Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Counselors on site provide individual and group AOD services at the same location. These counselors provide case management and make referrals to AOD residential, intensive inpatient, and outpatient care as needed. There are psychiatric services on site which include Psychiatric Social Worker/Marriage and Family Therapists. There is a part-time psychiatrist who is on-site one day per week. They provide counseling, therapy, and case management. Referrals are made as necessary, and warm hand-offs to other providers are made.

San Mateo County's Health System provides a mobile health van on site for 1½ days per week. There is a Medical Services Assistant and Nurse Practitioner on site who do basic health checks, such as blood pressure screening and physicals, which help divert people from emergency rooms. They also connect patients to other health providers as needed.

On the second floor of the building, there is a large client community room where clients can participate in family activities. There are family events hosted for all and are mostly free of charge. There is a big push for clients to meet and rebuild relationships with their families and others; many have lost touch with their families and friends due to their circumstances.

It is a fact that clients have a better success rate if they are connected with family and friends. There are three PCs for client use in the community room so that they can check e-mails and look for jobs. They even have Facebook available to them so they can communicate with family and others as part of the rebuilding process.

There is a "Wall of Hope" to share success stories and Recovery Stories. The stories are posted on bulletin boards and are encouraging to everyone, especially those in the program. There are support groups held in this area and, at times, they are led by a peer leader.

Graduations for the program participants are held twice a year. This is to recognize those who meet milestones in their re-entry efforts. Participants are acknowledged for completing their probation terms

successfully, or having six months or one year of successful re-entry. The importance of recognizing these graduates is immense. During their lifetime, many have never experienced acknowledgment of their accomplishments, and this can be an important part of the support needed for continued success.

550 JOBS!

The SC participant may be referred to 550 Jobs, an on-site program in the expansive lower level of the building. 550 Jobs is a rapid employment program within which one can begin working the Monday following his or her release if he or she produces Right-to-Work documentation and is deemed job-ready by the Social Worker.

There are three main areas where someone can be referred to in the Work Center:

- Catering Connection: where catering is done and a "Serve Safe Food Handler" certification can be earned. The catering is done throughout the county. They have catered private sector events such as corporate events and weddings ranging anywhere from 25 to 700 people.
- Production and Assembly: where toys and other items are assembled and distributed for local businesses. Some products are sent out internationally. They also create the hospital and jail kits that are given before release.
- Shipping and Receiving: where one can earn a "Fork Lift Operator's Certification.

Throughout these trainings, several people manage supervision. Participants' attendance is monitored as well as punctuality, dexterity, and progress with established goals. If their work is stable, they are eligible for additional opportunities, such as placements in off-site locations like the San Mateo County Parks Program. If their work is not stable, the participants are provided with additional training and skill building on-site.

Success and Obstacles

As of March 2015, SC has assessed and provided services and/or referrals for nearly 800 clients. The

number of job placements between October 2011 and December 2014 was 183.

According to the Probation Department, for the previous quarter, January through March 2015, 79% of supervisees who were terminated from probation during the quarter successfully completed the probation term. This means they had no felony law violations upon completion. This is accomplished by bringing the services to the clients with strong program supports in place.

Some participants come to the program and think they are going to have to take a number and wait for services. They are pleasantly surprised to experience anywhere from two to five staff immediately ready to work with them, depending on the services needed.

Some of the challenges that exist are:

- Mid-and Long-term Housing (There are RFPs pending with CBOs to increase transitional and long-term housing availability)
- There is a data system that spans the four departments involved, but it is not fully implemented. There are ongoing challenges due to limits on confidentiality and sharing of protected information.

Implications for Alameda County

There is a program currently in the beginning stages in the county that in some ways resembles the Service Connect program in San Mateo County. Alameda County Probation Department developed a program for the Re-Entry clients. They opened up a Transition Day Reporting Center last month located at 400 Broadway, Oakland on the 2nd floor. They issued an RFP for Employment and Housing Services; Oakland Private Industry Council (OPIC), Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS), Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) and Acts Gospel Church were awarded the contracts.

Behavioral Health Care services were already in place through the county's ACCESS program, therefore, this aspect of services was easy to coordinate for

the realignment population. So far, the staff involved with this program from the Child Support Department, DA's office, and Probation feel positive about this program.

For next steps, the workforce piece needs to increase; there are currently only four providers involved.

A program is needed in the Tri-Valley area, as it is difficult for people in that area to travel to Oakland for these services. BOSS is researching location possibilities throughout the region as well as in the Hayward area. Family Services is a likely and needed support to offer for the re-entry population. As this program develops over time, it will become easier to assess and identify program and expansion needs.

Acknowledgments

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