

SERVICE COORDINATION TEAM PROGRAM SUMMARY: JUNE, 2010

The Service Coordination Team (SCT) was established by the Portland Police Bureau in 2003 to address chronic public safety issues in Portland's Downtown/Old Town neighborhoods. The Bureau determined that the majority of crimes in these areas were being committed by a small concentration of long time drug addicts who were committing drug and property crimes to feed their addictions. The SCT was formed with the underlying premise that if the drug addiction was eliminated, the criminality associated with supporting it would decrease as well.

The goal of the SCT was to reduce the incidence of crime in the central city by offering treatment as an alternative to cycling habitual offenders through the criminal justice system without sanction and without addressing the underlying cause of their criminal behavior. The program was designed to address this entrenched cycle of chronic criminality and drug addiction by combining tougher sanctions while offering housing and treatment services.

A blind data run created a list of the most prolific criminals in the Downtown/Old Town area. This Chronic Offenders List was used to prioritize the population receiving services from the program. Criminals on the list are mandated short periods of detention when arrested, but as an option to longer jail sentences are given immediate access to treatment and housing. Court oversight and sanctions provide the necessary tools to encourage and sustain the treatment alternative. Recently program services have been expanded to include chronic offenders from other parts of the city.

Many SCT clients have been arrested over 100 times and have been committing crimes and using drugs as early as grade school. Most have had long periods of incarceration. This client population typically does not fare well in traditional treatment models and is considered one of the most difficult to serve. In addition to addiction and criminality, mental health issues are frequently present. The SCT treatment program is designed to address all three issues as a path to recovery – drug addiction, criminality and mental health.

The City of Portland funds the program through the Portland Police Bureau. The program pays for a full time program manager and funds a Multnomah County district attorney and a probation and parole officer dedicated to the program. The Police Bureau contracts with Central City Concern for the supportive housing services and the Volunteers of America for specialized treatment. The Police Bureau provides two officers and a walking beat to patrol impacted neighborhoods and to work directly with the clients.

This program is unique in that it brings all partners to the table to determine the best criminal justice and treatment options for each of the affected clients. SCT partners include: the Portland Police Bureau; Multnomah County Sheriff's Office; Multnomah County District Attorney's Office; Multnomah County Department of Community Justice Probation and Parole; Multnomah County Mental Health Department; Volunteers of America; Central City Concern; Portland Business Alliance Clean and Safe; Portland Patrol Incorporated; Project Respond and JOIN.

The program began in 2003 and has been fully funded with treatment and housing services since July, 2008. Since then, over 150 clients have received some level of service, from temporary

housing to intensive six-eight month treatment. 84 have received drug treatment services and 23 of them have completed the entire treatment program, including wrap-around services for employment and permanent housing.

The SCT has a current treatment completion rate of 27%. The nation average for treatment completion for cocaine addiction is 33%, with cocaine addiction being the lowest completion rate of all drug additions. Given that the SCT client population is one of the most difficult to treat – addicts who have had decades of homelessness and incarceration, the majority with mental health issues and most lacking education and employment skills – a 27% completion is remarkable. Most treatment providers have given up on these clients as “untreatable”, yet the specialized efforts of the SCT get to the core of their issues, and many succeed where they have not before.

Statistics show that even those who do not complete the treatment program have reduced their criminal behavior as a result of contact with program services. A recent Portland State University analysis shows that as clients increase their engagement in the program (housing and treatment) their criminality decreases. This is an indication that treatment completion should not be used as the only benchmark for program success, but should include each exposure, which research has tied to positive outcomes, creating a safer community, improved lives and a reduction in taxpayer resources.

The program has played a role in significantly reducing crime in the impacted neighborhoods. Since 2005, the impacted neighborhoods have experienced a 32% decrease in crime. The overall average arrest rate among the client population has been reduced by 36% since 2006, with 63% of the offenders having had decreases in bookings.

Significant cost efficiencies are attributed to this program. While the specific savings are difficult to quantify, a recent federal study estimates that for every dollar spent on treatment, the public saves seven dollars in criminal justice costs, including jail beds, probation and parole, courts and legal fees. Using the arrest and incarceration records of the program’s five most recent graduates, the average of all 23 graduates represent a collective total of 1840 arrests and 354 years of incarceration. Clearly, the criminal justice costs associated with processing and incarcerating these people are enormous, with the jail beds alone costing over \$20,000,000.

Additional savings are in the reduction of stolen goods and insurance claims as well as the health and social cost savings of reducing criminal and addictive behavior in our communities. The PSU study conducted in-depth interviews with eleven of the program participants. Their findings shows that, on average, each of these clients had to steal property worth over \$100,000 a year in order to support their \$30,000 a year drug habit. Most of these crimes were committed in the Old Town/Downtown area. With these clients in recovery, these crimes are no longer being committed.

The Service Coordination Team has not only reduced crime and saved taxpayer resources, it has restored hope to lives previously shattered by drug addiction and incarceration. Program graduates are engaged in their community and committed to their recovery. They have formed an Alumni Association which sponsors activities to help the homeless and disadvantaged youth, allowing them to give back to the community they stole from. This program has given them the opportunity to be sober and accountable members of the Portland community, and they are deeply grateful to their former jailers for giving them this second chance.