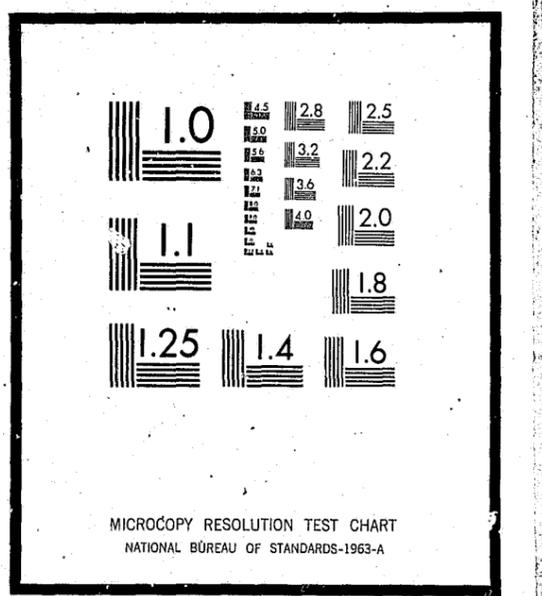


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GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION
ON CRIME PREVENTION
AND CONTROL

DIVERSION AND REHABILITATION PROJECT

PROJECT EVALUATION

16684
48991

DIVERSION AND REHABILITATION PROJECT

A Preliminary Evaluation Report

prepared by

Project Evaluation Unit

Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control

March, 1974

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I. DESCRIPTION

A. THE PROJECT

1. Background Information

Diversion and Rehabilitation is a demonstration project which is expected to provide Beltrami County with both a Pretrial Diversion capability and a Community-Based Rehabilitation and Reentry service. This project is located in Bemidji, the county seat of Beltrami County, and is sponsored and operated by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. The funds which have been allocated to support this project for this, its first year, have come from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (\$5,180.00), the State of Minnesota (\$4,220.00) and the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control (\$31,650.00). The project officially began on October 1, 1973 and is expected to complete its initial funding period September 30, 1974.

The Pretrial Diversion capability which this project is designed to provide has not yet, apparently, been able to establish itself as a frequently used alternative to prosecution. It should, however, be kept in mind that this observation is based upon the very limited data which are available after only five months of operation and may or may not reflect the intentions or ultimate achievements of the project. Nevertheless, it must be observed that at this time only four of the twenty-eight cases on which data are available were diversions. Before developing this point further, it seems that it would be well to digress for a moment to clarify the definition of diversion which is being employed. In order to do this, we refer to the definition supplied by the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals that is; "The term 'diversion' refers to halting or suspending, before convic-

tion, formal criminal proceedings against a person on the condition or assumption that he will do something in return."¹ and it is further stated that "To qualify as diversion, such effects must be undertaken prior to adjudication and after legally prescribed action has occurred or is alleged to have occurred."² Cases which have already been adjudicated cannot be considered diversions. The reason for this requirement is clear as it is precisely the costs of adjudication in terms of damage to the client and in terms of court time and resources which diversion is expected to avoid. If adjudication has occurred before the client is treated, this cannot be considered diversion within the generally accepted meaning of the term as used within the criminal justice system.

The Community-Based Rehabilitation and Reentry services aspect, however, gives all indications of being well accepted as is reflected by the number of clients (24) who are being referred for rehabilitative services. These referrals appear to be coming primarily from probation officers and the Juvenile Training Center with the approval of the judiciary. The extent to which these services are being effective cannot, of course, be judged after only a few months of operation but it does seem that the local officials are quite willing to send offenders to the project for these services.

The level of acceptance of the project seems, therefore, to vary depending on which component of the project is being discussed. By and large, it seems that the Rehabilitation and Reentry facet is receiving wide acceptance

1. National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Task Force on Courts, Courts, page 27.

2. Ibid.

within the local criminal justice system whereas the acceptance of the Diversion facet remains questionable. It is not possible at this time to determine whether this lack of utilization is due to hostility toward the idea of diversion, unfamiliarity with the project, or some other reason. We can say, however, that the local officials seem to give all indications of accepting the Rehabilitation and Reentry services provided by the project and give few indications of accepting the Diversion capability.

2. Project Goals

This project, as most projects, has both formal goals and implicit goals. By formal goals we refer to those which are articulated in the grant application and by implicit goals we mean those which, even though not formally stated, are implicit in the project's organization and operation. While it is far too early to make judgments concerning the accomplishment of project goals, it is possible, and we believe useful, to offer some observations concerning the extent to which the project seems to be advancing toward achievement of its goals. It should, of course, be borne in mind that these are tentative observations which are not supported by the kind of hard data and analysis which will be possible as the project and its associated evaluation component progress beyond their present embryonic stage. Nevertheless, some preliminary judgments may be helpful and will be offered even though they are somewhat premature from an evaluative perspective.

The project states six general goals and three specific goals in its grant application.

General Goals. 1. To create a rehabilitative service model in Beltrami

County Court which actively demonstrates diversion. This model will include screening, evaluation, referral and service provisions.

COMMENT: There is serious question as to whether a viable diversion system presently exists in Beltrami County. The infrequency of diversion does not seem to be attributable to a failure of the project to accept diversion clients but it is apparently occurring because the project is designed so that it only screens clients which are referred by court officers and these officers have not, as of yet, demonstrated much willingness to refer alleged offenders to the project prior to adjudication. Whether this failure to divert is the product of a lack of enthusiasm for diversion on the part of court officials or a failure of the project to provide adequate information is unclear -- but it is clear that little diversion is occurring in Beltrami County as of this time.

2. To actively pursue the possibility of carrying the (diversion) model to district court level after successful project operation.

COMMENT: It is not possible at this time to accurately judge the extent to which the project has promoted diversion at the district court level. It does seem, however, that diversion has not yet been used very extensively at the district court level. Since, however, this is a rather long-term goal this modest accomplishment does not seem inappropriate at this early stage of program development.

3. To assist in the requirements and assessment of bail bond procedures to the applicability and possible excessiveness, in consideration of the rehabilitative process.

COMMENT: This goal, as the previous goal, is predicated on the assumption that court officials will be referring clients to the project prior to adjudication. Since few clients have been referred prior to adjudication, the project has not generally been in a position to make bail recommendations. They have, however, on one occasion been invited to make such a recommendation but it was judged to be unnecessary as the bail, as set, did not seem to be interfering with rehabilitation efforts.

4. To provide a system of follow-up and evaluation of the model for purposes of assessing its value.

COMMENT: This goal need not have been included in the grant as this function is being performed by the Project Evaluation Unit of the Governor's Crime Commission. It should be noted, however, that the project has been most cooperative and responsible in providing the Project Evaluation Unit with all of the data and information which has been requested for the evaluation effort.

5. To ensure vocational rehabilitation services through coordination of services from all available resources to the County Court System, Juvenile Learning Center, and Corrections in Region II.

COMMENT: Preliminary indications are that the project is doing an excellent job of providing rehabilitation services for its clients. Even at this early stage, there seems to be little doubt but that this project exhibits a very high degree of competence and professionalism in the provision of rehabilitative services to the clients which are referred to them. The principal agencies which appear to be benefiting from these services are, as stated in

the goal, Region II Corrections and the Juvenile Training Center. There is, however, little evidence that the County Court System is directly benefiting to any important degree as they have, as of yet, seldom chosen to avail themselves of the diversion services this project seeks to make available to them.

6. To demonstrate that the availability of a competent social, psychological; medical and vocational diagnosis can offer an acceptable alternative to prosecution with minimal supervision.

COMMENT: Again, as noted previously, the infrequency with which the court system has chosen to employ this project as an alternative to prosecution suggests that the project may have difficulty demonstrating that diversion is an acceptable alternative to prosecution. If, however, more diversions are forthcoming the project may ultimately accomplish this goal. In any case, it is impossible to address this issue at this early stage of program development.

Specific Goals. The grant application under which this project was funded lists three specific goals which it will accomplish in its first years of funding. These goals are to (1) evaluate 75 referrals from the courts system; (2) accept 50 individuals into service and to (3) rehabilitate 15 individuals. All indications are that the project is well on the way to accomplishing the first two goals, except that few referrals appear to be coming from the courts system. In the first five months of operation the project has already evaluated 30 referrals and accepted 28 individuals into service. We are, of course, unable to make any judgment as to whether the project will succeed in rehabilitating 15 individuals as it is much too early to expect such effects to appear.

The only problem which effects the project's accomplishment of these specific goals is that almost none of the clients it services are, strictly speaking, coming from the courts system. Most of the clients, to this point, have come from the corrections system with the exception of two referrals from the police. In sum, then, it appears that the project is well on the way to accomplishing its specified goals except that it is taking its clientele from the corrections system rather than from the courts system.

Implied Goals. There are, as mentioned earlier, certain goals which are implied in the organization and operation of this project which require systematic attention. Principal among these are the reduction of recidivism, the reduction of unemployment and the reduction of costs. These implied goals, however, tend to reflect long-term effects and impacts and cannot be approached usefully in the short-term perspective from which this report is written. Systematic long-term data collection efforts are underway, however, which will make it possible to address these issues in future reports.

In sum, then, it appears that the project is showing indications of accomplishing some but not all of the goals which appear on the grant application. This is due almost entirely to the fact that almost all of the goals are predicated upon the assumption that the courts system will refer larger numbers of clients to the project prior to adjudication for rehabilitative services. This has not occurred. The project, however, appears to be doing an excellent job of providing rehabilitative services to adjudicated offenders. It would seem, therefore, that this project is giving strong indication of succeeding as a community-based rehabilitation and reentry project but it is not, as of yet, an effective pretrial diversion project.

3. Project Staff

The project staff consists of four individuals occupying four different types of positions. The project director is Mr. Dale Nelson, the Area Director in the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation with offices in Grand Rapids. The project director in this case is basically an administrative position rather far removed from daily operations. This distance is both administrative and geographic. Inasmuch as he is a rather high-level administrator and located seventy miles from the project, his project-related activities tend to be primarily administrative and advisory. The management of the project is essentially in the hands of the DVR Program Supervisor located in Bemidji, Mr. Warren Green. Mr. Green is program supervisor for the fifteen county area and in addition to supervising the operations of the project is responsible for program planning and management, fiscal planning and control, public relations, personnel relations, progress evaluations and program coordination for DVR activities within that fifteen county area. Mr. Green gives all indications of being a highly capable professional and appears to be the dominant force in the management of this project.

The counselor in the project, Mr. Merle Singer, is responsible for the first-line operation of the project. That is, he makes all initial contacts and interviews clients, giving the necessary information and explaining the program. He also reviews and analyzes medical, criminal and psychological reports and discusses these with the supervisor. He determines, with the approval of the supervisor, eligibility and suitability for rehabilitation services and collects and organizes data for the evaluation effort. He is also responsible for administering and interpreting, with the assistance of the supervisor,

standardized tests for vocational purposes. In sum, Mr. Singer is the operational mainspring of the program and devotes 100% of his time to implementing the project within the framework established by the supervisor.

A secretary is also part of the project and she is responsible for the usual secretarial tasks such as record keeping and correspondence and such duties as the supervisor or counselor may assign.

4. Program Structure

This project, as noted earlier, basically operates on the basis of referrals from the criminal justice system. These referrals may come from law enforcement agencies, judges, court services or any other agency or individual within the system. It is also possible that a referral could come from any community resource or even from the client himself. The critical point here is that someone must bring the client to the attention of the project. The project does not itself seek out clients and must, therefore, depend primarily on others to identify potential clients. Therefore, when other agencies do not, for whatever reason, send potential clients to them prior to adjudication, as seems to be the case here, they do not receive clients of this type and consequently are unable to function as a pretrial diversion service.

When a client comes to the project, the counselor first conducts an orientation interview with the prospective client which takes from one to one and one-half hours and which seeks to explain the program to the prospective client. During this interview basic client information is also elicited. An investigation is then initiated by the counselor to determine the client's suitability for services. This investigation will also usually involve the

administration of standardized tests which are interpreted by the supervisor. A decision concerning the client's suitability is then reached within five days based upon the judgment of the counselor in consultation with the supervisor. If a decision is reached to accept the client, as usually seems to be the case, a plan is worked out with the client which outlines what is expected of him. The successful completion of this agreed upon plan constitutes a successful rehabilitation. Decisions as to the nature of the plan and as to its completion are made by the counselor with the approval of the supervisor. Decisions regarding client failures are likewise made by the counselor with the approval of the supervisor. The circumstances wherein an issue of client failure is likely to be involved are cases where a client has been rearrested under circumstances which make continued participation impossible or when a client refuses to continue in the project or when the project has exhausted all of its resources without being able to accomplish a useful plan.

Whenever a client is to be terminated from the project, either successfully or unsuccessfully, the client will be notified of the impending change in status and the counselor will write a summary of the case which will be given to the supervisor. The client and all referral sources will then be notified of the termination if it is approved by the supervisor. In cases where the client wishes to challenge the decision, he may appeal to the supervisor and, if desired, to the higher authorities within the DVR.

5. Project Services

As noted earlier, this project has a very strong service orientation and appears to provide a most extensive package of services to its clients. These services are provided by both the project itself and by referral agencies

with which the project has established relationships either through informal understandings or through purchase-of-services agreements.

The project itself provides two basic services to its clients. These services are individual counseling and vocational evaluation. The individual counseling is provided to every client on a continuous "as needed" basis. This counseling is generally on a one-to-one basis between the counselor and the client. The purpose of this counseling is to assist the client in the resolution of personal problems and to provide personal support and reinforcement. This counseling is aimed toward assisting the client in dealing with the "here and now" and, as such, tends to be practical and immediate rather than directed toward the operationalizing of any theory of psycho-therapy.

The vocational evaluation which is conducted by the project staff is aimed toward determining each client's vocational needs so that a useful plan of rehabilitation can be developed. The general process which is employed here is one of interviewing and testing. The interviews are done by the counselor and are designed to gather data concerning the client's vocational and educational background and any other information which may facilitate the selection of appropriate goals and services. In addition to interviews, extensive use is made of standardized tests such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), Raven Progressive Matrix, Minnesota Vocational Interest Inventory (VII), General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB), and the Kuder Vocational Preference Inventory. These tests are administered by the counselor and are interpreted by the supervisor. Those interpreted test results in conjunction with the information gathered through interviews form the informational base upon which decisions concerning clients' plan and appropriate services are chosen.

The referral services which have been utilized by the project during the first five months of operation along with an indication as to the types of services which these agencies are expected to provide to project clientele are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I Agencies and Services Utilized by Project Clientele	
Agency	Services
Minnesota Manpower	Job placement; job information; testing; OJT; financial
Beltrami County Welfare	Financial support; family services social services
Bemidji State College	Training; volunteer services
Upper Mississippi Mental Health Center	Alcohol treatment services; psychological testing; specialist therapy; consultation
Bi-County CAP	Alcohol counseling
Community AA	Alcohol assistance and support
Sheltered Workshop	Work evaluation; temporary placement
Brainerd State Hospital	Alcohol treatment
Bemidji High School	Academic training; vocational training
Mini-CEP	Testing; information
Dr. Lunston	Medical consultation; general physical
Dr. Reed	Psychiatric consultation
Local Physicians	Medical consultation; general physical
Thief River Falls Vocational Training School	Training; vocational testing
Bemidji Vocational School	Training; vocational counseling
Juvenile Detention Center	GED training; social counseling; residential living facilities
County Probation Office	Individual support
Community Employers	Job placement

Of the referral agencies listed in Table I, project personnel felt that all except four are doing a satisfactory job of providing services to their clients. The four which are judged to be less than satisfactory are Minnesota Manpower, Brainerd State Hospital, Local Physicians and the Bemidji Vocational School. Minnesota Manpower was judged to be less than satisfactory because it was felt that they are not doing an adequate job of performing their responsibilities in the job testing and job placement areas, while local physicians were thought to be much too slow with the medical evaluations which the project needs. It seems that it often takes weeks to get reports which the project needs within a few days. The problem which is identified as existing with the Brainerd State Hospital is that they are not seen as doing all that is necessary in the alcohol treatment area and tend to release clients much too soon and without having any significant improvement.

The agencies which are judged to be the most important for the project are Beltrami County Welfare, Upper Mississippi Mental Health Center and the County Probation Office, respectively. The factors which are seen as making these services most important is that they are continuously and immediately available to assist with pressing problems and they are willing to assist all types of clients for whom their services are appropriate.

B. CLIENTELE

1. Admission to the Project

The clientele which are served by this project are required to meet only

three admission criteria. These criteria are (1) the person must be of working age (16 and over); (2) the person must have a physical or emotional disorder or other handicap which hampers his employment; and (3) the disorder must be one which can be addressed by the resources at the project's disposal. These criteria, which might at first glance seem rather restrictive are in actual application quite broad. It should be noted that this project, unlike most diversion projects, does not limit itself to any particular class of offender, and as a consequence handles many types of clients regardless of their age, criminal offense or prior criminal record. As will be seen as more information concerning clients is presented, this project is taking on many clients which would be excluded by most other projects as serious offenders or "hard core" criminal types. The extent to which this project will be successful with these clients remains to be seen but they are most certainly taking many clients which would normally be considered "high-risk."

2. Client Characteristics

Since the project has only been operational for a relatively short time, there are only a small number of clients which can be used as a basis for describing client characteristics. The extent to which this small number (28) is representative of the kinds of clientele the project will handle in the future is open to question but it seems useful to provide the information because it does show the direction of the project at this early stage and may give some indication of future clientele.

The demographic characteristics of the project's clients to this point show that most are male (96.4%) with slightly more than one-half being white (57.1%) and the remainder of Indian origin (42.9%). The clients cover a rather

broad age spectrum of from 15 to 58 years. Exactly one-half (50%) of the clients are under the age of twenty-one with the other half, of course, being older. The basic age pattern tends to indicate that most of the clients are rather evenly distributed within the 16 - 23 age bracket with a smaller, but significant number, being older.

The socio-economic characteristics of present clients suggest that they come from a variety of living situations. The only clear pattern is that the younger clients tend to live either with their parents or in the Juvenile Training Center. Among the older clients there is little apparent pattern in terms of the types of living situations within which they reside. That is, some live with a spouse or partner, some live with friends or relatives and some live alone. Few clients support anyone other than themselves with most (82.1%) supporting no one other than themselves, if that.

The educational situation of the project's clients, at least in terms of years of school, is much better than might be expected. A substantial number have twelve or more years of schooling (35.7%) with four (14.7%) having at least some college training. One client (3.6%) holds a Bachelor of Science degree. The majority of clients do, however, have less than twelve years of education (64.3%) but most of these have at least eight years of schooling. One client (3.6%) however, has only completed fourth grade. Educationally, then, the clients tend to be a rather mixed group ranging from fourth grade level to college graduates, with the bulk (67.8%) falling in the high school area.

The occupational skill level of incoming clients is judged to be quite

low, with only one (3.6%) being identified as "skilled" and five (17.9%) being judged to be "semi-skilled." The vast majority (78.6%) are seen as occupationally "unskilled." This lack of occupational skill is undoubtedly at least partially responsible for the rather bleak financial and employment situation within which most clients find themselves.

Financially, all current clients come to the project with a financial problem. Nearly half (42.9%) were judged to have "minor financial problems" while the remainder (57.1%) were seen as suffering from "major financial problems." In spite of these serious financial problems, only one (3.6%) was noted as having governmental assistance as a primary source of income. Most clients received their income primarily from their parents (35.7%) or from their own efforts (37.7%). A significant number (21.4%) were financially dependent on friends or relatives. It should be kept in mind, however, that none of these sources seemed to be providing the clients with incomes which were sufficient to resolve their financial problems.

From an occupational perspective, the project's clients tended to be in an exceedingly poor position when they were taken into the project. Most of the clients (85.7%) are unemployed with only four (14.3%) being employed. There seems, then, to be little doubt that a clear need existed in this area. This is particularly clear as one recognizes that the wages which the four employed clients were receiving averaged only \$1.97 per hour.

It should also be noted that in spite of the rather dismal economic situation in which the project's clients have found themselves, at the time they entered the project they were doing little to improve their job skills. Of the

twenty-eight clients only one (3.6%) was attending vocational school at the time of intake and that was on a part-time basis. Likewise, only one (3.6%) was in an academic program and she was attending her first year of college.

In sum, the project is accepting clients who are in need of socio-economic services. All clients have financial problems and most are either unemployed or underemployed. There can be little doubt that these individuals are in a position to benefit from a good rehabilitation program.

Most clients taken into the project have committed or are alleged to have committed rather serious criminal acts. The charges involved are surveyed in Table II.

TABLE II			
<u>Charges</u>			
Client Number	First Charge	Second Charge	Third Charge
8603	Robbery		
8607	Burglary		
8632	Burglary	Burglary	Escape
8634	Burglary		
8642	Burglary		
8646	Theft (auto)		
8628	Theft (auto)		
8641	Theft (auto)		
8608	Theft (auto)		
8640	Theft		
8637	Theft		
8644*	Shoplifting		
8633	Aggravated Forgery		
8639	Aggravated Assault	Criminal Damage to property	
8630	Aggravated Assault		
8638	Simple Assault		
3128	DWI		
8629	DWI		
8631	Driving with Intoxicating Liquors in the Car		

* Diversions

TABLE II CONTINUED			
<u>Charges</u>			
Client Number	First Charge	Second Charge	Third Charge
8601*	Driving after Suspension		
8602	Damage to Physical Property		
8598*	Disorderly Conduct		
8599	Disorderly Conduct		
8635	Possession-Narcotics	Possession-Marijuana	Open Bottle
8604	Possession-Marijuana		
8643	Possession-Marijuana		
8636*	Possession-Marijuana		
9309	Possession-Marijuana		

* Diversions

In addition to the most recent criminal involvement which led to being referred to the project, many of these clients have a record of prior involvement with the criminal justice system. Fifteen (53.6%) of these clients have been taken into custody as juveniles at least once with most of these fifteen (93.3%) having spent some time in juvenile corrections facilities. Only one client, however, spent more than nine months in such facilities. Likewise, of those old enough to have adult criminal records (26), 18 (69.2%) have previous arrest records. Most (70%) of those with adult arrest records have been arrested up to three times but four (15.3%) have been arrested between six and eight times. One client (3.6%) had been arrested 45 times. Most of these clients who have been arrested have also been convicted of at least a misdemeanor and six have been convicted of either gross misdemeanors or felonies. As might be expected with these kinds of criminal histories, two clients have spent time in jail and four have spent time in both the jail and a state or federal adult correctional facility. This data on prior criminal records

seems to clearly support the observation made earlier that this project is handling very "hard core" offenders and not limiting itself to so called "Boy Scouts."

II. CONCLUSION

There are, of course, a wide variety of important evaluative questions which are not addressed in this preliminary report. The reason important evaluative issues such as assessment of effort, assessment of effect, cost analysis and program analysis are not addressed is that it is much too early. The project has only been in existence for five months and this is simply not enough time to generate the data needed to begin to address these issues. The mechanisms to collect the requisite data have been designed and are operational and analysis concerning these critical questions will be provided when sufficient data becomes available to make useful analysis possible. In the meantime, it is expected that this report will serve to provide general description of the project and its clientele and to identify some of the apparent major strengths and weaknesses of the project.

END