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**CROSSROADS: A COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT AND
ALTERNATIVE-TO-INCARCERATION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN OFFENDERS IN
NEW YORK CITY**

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CROSSROADS: OVERVIEW

New York City and New York State have jointly funded a variety of alternative-to-incarceration (ATI) programs through the Deputy Mayor's Office in New York City. Crossroads is one such program. It aims to assist the City in meeting its dual goals of reducing jail and prison overcrowding by redirecting women away from criminal careers and providing viable treatment options for women offenders with a history of drug abuse problems.

Crossroads is managed by the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA, formerly known as National Center on Institutions and Alternatives/Northeast), a non-profit organization committed to developing alternatives to incarceration consistent with public safety. Crossroads serves women from all five boroughs of New York City. It is an intensive day treatment program that places special emphasis on helping pregnant women and women with children. Crossroads is designed to provide substance abuse and habilitation services including maternal and child health care, with the requirements of the criminal justice system. Thus it incorporates mechanisms for responding to concerns of the criminal justice system, particularly in regard to issues of public safety and accountability. Crossroads offers a variety of services designed to complement and enhance traditional substance abuse treatment and is specifically oriented toward the special needs of women drug abusers through an individualized, holistic approach. Crossroads staff believe that the consequences of substance abuse are not only the reflection of individual crisis, but also a problem that affects the children of abusers. On the basis of this belief, the program emphasizes maternal, prenatal, and neonatal health by providing nutritious meals, parenting skills classes, nutritional counseling and acupuncture.

Population Served by Crossroads

The program targets women defendants aged 16 years and above, who have been arrested on felony-level charges, have a confirmed substance abuse problem, and are detained for 14 days or longer. The focus is on felony-level charges involving non-violent offenses including possession of illegal drugs. Women offenders charged with an offense defined as violent under New York State Law may be admitted to the program if the offense was related to domestic violence or if other mitigating circumstances existed. In order to have an ATI impact, the program targets women with prior criminal histories or those for whom program participation would assist in achieving a negotiated plea to an offense which does not mandate an indeterminate sentence or state incarceration.

The program expects to serve 100 women annually. Approximately 55% of the clients are expected to complete the program successfully. Thirty-four women have been admitted since the inception of the program in 1992. Currently there are 14 clients undergoing treatment. Most of these clients are crack cocaine addicts. Their median age is 29 years. Most do not have a high school diploma. Clients are African-American or Latina. Ninety-five percent of them were victims of child abuse, domestic violence and/or incest survivors.

Program Staff

Program staff include the project director, director of treatment, a treatment specialist, three case managers, two court advocates/case assessment specialists, receptionist/administrative assistant, food service/facility manager and an acupuncturist. Staff are well qualified with appropriate training in dealing with substance abuse cases. The program uses volunteers and interns to assist in program and administrative tasks.

The project director is responsible for the operation of the center and the director of treatment takes care of the following tasks: development of the program, staff management, and oversight of the various reports, including reports on clients and reports to funding agencies.

The court advocates conduct the initial client screenings, and interviews, carries out a background investigation on clients, collects background documentation, assists the project director in making decisions about client eligibility, prepares a summary of client's needs, and serves as a court liaison.

The three case managers conduct vocational assessments, refer clients to appropriate training sites such as Wildcat corporation and the Fortune Society, and handle job development and job placement. They are also responsible for identifying life needs (e.g., in the areas of health and housing); developing and implementing programs on parenting, health and AIDS education, nutrition, and domestic violence; and developing links between clients and relevant community services. They also develop individual community schedules for women completing the day program and transferring into community programs, conduct home and community visits, referrals to community agencies, coordinate services, prepare monthly progress reports, and accompany clients to all court appearances once they are released to the program.

REFERRAL, SCREENING, AND INTAKE

Referral Process

The program has accepted referrals directly from defense attorneys at the New York County Special Narcotic Prosecutor's Office, Legal Aid Special Defender Services, and Women's Prison Association. Defendants who are referred post-conviction are accepted into the program if there is enough space, providing the following criteria are met: (1) they meet ATI requirements and (2) they have offered a plea which includes at least a city-sentenced term of one year or an indeterminate term.

Clients are also referred to Crossroads from the New York City Department of Corrections (DOC). Within the DOC, referrals are initiated from one of the following: (1) the SAID program, DOC's in-house program at Rikers Island; (2) the Detoxification Unit; (3) the DOC Bail Re-evaluation Project (which reviews the status of defendants in the system for at least 14 days); and (4) the WINGS program (run by Montefiore Hospital), which houses women with babies under one year of age.

Screening

As soon as a woman is referred to the program, staff do a screening to determine whether she meets the minimal program criteria. If the potential client meets them, she is contacted by the staff who explain the nature and purpose of the program. Only if the defendant shows interest in the program do staff proceed with the screening. The defendants are required to sign a consent form to allow staff to collect various background records relating to legal, medical, and school matters. Then the staff conduct an in-depth interview to obtain background information on arrest history, social history, substance abuse history, treatment history, psychiatric history, medical history, employment history, and legal history. This information enables the staff to assess the client's level of motivation and emotional stability. It helps in identifying family and emotional supports and determining eligibility for program services. Wherever possible, staff also obtain information on the rap sheets from the defense counsel.

Intake

Once accepted into the program, the clients are asked to sign a contract agreeing to program rules and procedures, and a consent form recognizing the voluntary nature of the treatment. Where appropriate to the treatment needs of the clients, an authorization for release of confidential HIV-related information and a form relating to the confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records are obtained. These forms are required by federal regulations before any client information can be released to appropriate agencies.

When a client is accepted into the program, the staff provide the court with information about the specific services available and indicate their willingness to accept the client as an alternative to her detention. The staff track future court dates and verify these dates periodically with the defendant's attorney. They take responsibility for notifying defendants of upcoming court dates, and they accompany the clients to court. At each scheduled appearance, the staff provide a progress report to the court, as well as to the referral agency and the defense attorney.

The clients are expected to participate in the program for a period of one year. Crossroads takes responsibility for those clients whose cases cannot be disposed of within one year. If the defendant is sentenced to probation during the course of the treatment program, Crossroads takes responsibility for overseeing probation requirements and provides reports on client progress as requested. The program notifies the court and probation officers in case of any significant infractions (such as rearrests and absconding) or if, for any reason, the client is about to be negatively terminated from the program.

Within 21 days of admission, the staff fill out the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) Preliminary Client Admission/Transfer/Referral/Discharge Form (OASAS Form TR-211TRD). This form constitutes a detailed record of the client and the treatment and, when the client is discharged, it is given to her supervisor.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND MATCHED SERVICES

Within 21 to 45 days of intake, staff undertake a psychosocial assessment. The information collected is similar to that collected on admission, but it is more detailed. Staff obtain particularly detailed information about the history of homelessness (cyclical patterns, stressors, forms of coping, length of time since last permanent residence) and the current housing situation. Psychological information obtained includes mental status of the client (attitude, attention, activity, affect, mood, hallucinations, delusions, impulse control, memory, judgment), suicidal or homicidal potential, intellectual ability, and daily living skill. Information obtained through the psychosocial assessment guides the staff in planning suitable treatment plans for the clients.

Program Plan

The program provides 12 months of drug-free day treatment. The latter part of the treatment is a transition into community-based activities. Educational and employment activities, such as preparing for the GED and computer lab work, are emphasized during the latter part of the program. During the first two phases, clients attend the program five days per week, six hours per day. In order to strengthen client's reliance on a community support system, therapists encourage the women to support each other. Clients participate in individual and group counseling, acupuncture (twice a week), AA/NA group meetings, and drug and alcohol education targeting such issues as fetal alcohol syndrome, high risk pregnancies, maternal health, and AIDS. A special emphasis is given to nutritional issues. A weekly report is made by the staff on the clients' progress.

After completing phase I, clients are prepared by the program to develop their own plans for the future. Following this phase (phase II), clients are transferred from full-time day treatment to community work schedules. At this juncture, the staff provide intensive case management services to ensure continued abstinence and success in community living. The case management services are directed toward assisting women in obtaining necessary health services for themselves and their children. Once transferred to the community schedule, clients are referred for follow-up health care services, continuation of acupuncture, individual counseling, and participation in AA/NA meetings. The program also assists women in arranging for day care services and obtaining public assistance.

Random testing of urine is also a component of the program. The program has on-site urinalysis equipment (an EMIT machine). The staff use urine test results to assist women in identifying the events and circumstances surrounding their drug use, not as a criterion for an automatic termination. However, a consistent pattern of drug use revealed by urine testing, along with other behavioral factors, is considered a potential cause of termination.

Client Discharge

Crossroads defines "success" as a combination of abstinence over time; positive accomplishments with regard to child care, education, employment, and housing; evidence of self-esteem; and absence of rearrest or failure to appear in court. After successful completion of the program, the clients are followed up for six months. Termination criteria include rearrest, absconding, significant relapses, consistent absences from the day program, a consistent pattern of "dirty" urine, and consistent unwillingness to cooperate with case management. In cases of failure, the program notifies the court, defense attorney, and other relevant agencies of termination.

SUMMARY

Crossroads is a new and as yet untested program (it began in 1992). It is an example of a program developed to provide comprehensive treatment services for substance abusing women offenders in terms of meeting their special needs. It also attempts to satisfy the demands of the criminal justice system for a credible alternative to detention/incarceration programs. The design of the program is promising for treating women offenders who are eligible for ATI. The particular problems encountered by the programs include the difficulty of obtaining eligible clients and also the difficulty of obtaining sufficiently detailed information from other agencies about the clients who are admitted.