

### **1) Program Abstract**

Project Fresh Start recognizes and addresses the dynamics that surround street-level prostitution including childhood physical and sexual abuse, rape, substance and alcohol abuse, mental health disorders, physical health disorders, education, employment and homelessness. By taking women off of the streets via arrest by sheriff's deputies and then monitored closely by the 36<sup>th</sup> District Drug Court, this 18-24 month program provides jail-based sub-acute detoxification, mental health evaluations, medical and STD screenings and short-term treatment readiness. Upon completion of jail-based triage and treatment, the participants are released to community-based, intensive residential treatment followed by transitional housing where participants receive GED preparation and testing, continued medical, mental and dental care, life skills, parenting, employment preparedness, training and placement, independent living and finally, family reunification, all provided by the City of Detroit Health Department and Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention Treatment and Recovery's (BSAPTR) provider network. Upon graduation, the criminal records of the participants are expunged.

### **2) The Problem/Need for the program**

There are approximately 500 known prostitutes on the streets of Wayne County. With an intense outcry for help from the citizens of Wayne County (primarily in the city of Detroit) to address the issues in and around prostitution and with limited jail bed space for misdemeanants at the Wayne County Jail, Wayne County Sheriff, Warren Evans sought to find other programmatic alternatives.

Until the inception of Project Fresh Start in April 2004, prostitution enforcement was such: The offender (prostitute) would be ticketed by the Detroit Police and released. The offender would return to "business as usual." The offender would fail to appear in court on the ticket and then a warrant would be issued for her arrest most often, and due to the surge of more serious crimes in Detroit, without follow-up. If by chance, an offender was arrested and held in a city lockup, she would be given a low bond (some as low as \$50), the offender would post bond and then be released and return to "business as usual." If the lockup was overcrowded, the offender would be released as soon as she was booked in and again, return to "business as usual." In other words, offender would return to the original area of arrest and back to prostitution with no repercussions for her actions. The cycle became repetitive. Some of the initial arrestees of PFS had as many as 50 outstanding tickets for soliciting, flagging and other prostitution related offenses.

The most common complaint the Sheriff's Office received from the community in various meetings across Detroit was that of street-level prostitution. Recognizing the overwhelming challenges that the Detroit Police Department faced, and his philosophy of assisting Wayne County's 43 local police departments, Sheriff Evans decided that "business as usual" was no longer acceptable.

Sheriff Evans and his staff determined that if prostitution was going to be seriously addressed several mechanisms other than jail time would have to be in place, i.e., residential, substance abuse treatment and counseling, sexually transmitted disease (STD) screening and treatment and mental health. Prior to this initiative, many of those services were available, but never tied together in one comprehensive program targeting a specific group of individuals. The reason for that was a lack of vision, leadership and collaboration. After approximately one year of meeting and planning, a solid collaboration was formed with the Wayne County Sheriff's Office, The City of Detroit Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Recovery, City of Detroit Department of Health, Wellness and Promotion, City of Detroit Legal Department, and the 36<sup>th</sup> District Drug Court and Probation Department.

### **3) Description of the Program**

In the state of Michigan, prostitution is a 90 day misdemeanor offense. In order to make the desired impact on the community and to treat the various needs that are associated with this population, each Fresh Start participant would have to be in the program for several months. In order to have a 90-day misdemeanor in an 18-24 month program, she would have to have a large number of outstanding warrants or tickets. Identifying women with a large number of tickets gave the court leverage. Because much of Fresh Start falls under the auspices of Drug Court, and the program duration range is between 18 to 24 months, the judge could sentence the participant for 90 days on each ticket. At that point, the judge would give the potential participant a choice between serving time on each ticket or volunteering for the program. Once the woman agreed to participate in the program, she would be processed in through signing a participation agreement form and from that point, either one of two things will happen. The participant will either be sanctioned to jail for short-term treatment readiness or the participant will be sent to community-based residential treatment.

#### **Program Objective**

To significantly reduce the number of street-level prostitution in the County of Wayne, particularly, the City of Detroit, by offering programmatic alternatives to incarceration, in collaboration with other local governmental and community service agencies

#### **Phase I – Initial Arrest, Sub-Acute Detoxification Wayne County Sheriff/36<sup>th</sup> District Court**

A woman is arrested by Sheriff's deputies on a number of prostitution violations and is brought to jail and is taken before the judge the next day. The judge sanctions the woman to jail for a 7-10 days in jail for sub-acute detoxification. During this time of incarceration, the woman is screened for sexually transmitted diseases, receives a mental health evaluation, and a basic medical assessment. In addition, she is evaluated and assessed by the by the short-term treatment readiness counselor who, based on her findings, will recommend to the judge that the woman be returned to jail for additional treatment preparedness, or, be released to community-based treatment.

## **Phase II – Residential Treatment**

### **36<sup>th</sup> District Court/City of Detroit BSAPTR**

Client appears before the Judge and is given the option of jail time (for each ticket), or go into the program. When client agrees to go into the program, she will receive extensive 24 – hour intensive residential drug treatment. Participants are not allowed to leave the facility during this period. Client is assessed after 90 days to determine the next step. If treatment is successful, the client will move on to Phase III. If the assessment proves that the client is not ready, she will remain in residential treatment, reassessed at a later date as determined by the judge and treatment provider. In addition, the client entitlement process begins to obtain proper identification, birth certificates, social security cards, FIA/SSI benefits etc.

## **Phase III - Transitional Housing**

### **City of Detroit BSAPTR**

Includes sexually transmitted disease education, parenting and life skills, counseling, GED preparation and testing, employment preparedness, and training, continued substance abuse counseling and education, domestic violence and victimization and over all health and welfare services. Clients are afforded the opportunity to leave the facility with a peer mentor to conduct personal business i.e., attend classes, go to various appointments and to seek employment.(This portion of the program can accommodate women who have children under 13). This portion is available to the client for up to two years, however after 90 days, the client is again assessed to determine if she is able to proceed to the graduation phase.

## **Phase IV - Detroit Recovery Project - Community Reintegration**

### **City of Detroit BSAPTR**

Provides wrap-around services, and continuous after care. Assists with reintegration back into community as well as provides employment opportunities, assists with housing, promotes and provides avenues for clients to give back through a variety of community service activities, weekly relapse prevention workshops. Provides peer mentoring and strong 24-hour support services.

## **Role and Responsibilities of Each Partner**

**Wayne County Sheriff's Office:** Acts as the lead police agency that positively identifies clients with egregious backgrounds to participate in Project Fresh Start and provides jail bed space for initial arrests and absconders. Further, this office provides legal case management from the time that the client is arrested to the point of release via the Fresh Start Project Officer. The Project Officer's functions include collecting demographic data on arrestees, re-arresting absconders, visiting the clients in all stages of treatment, providing feedback to the judge and attending monthly case management meetings.

**Wayne County 36<sup>th</sup> District Drug Treatment Court and Probation Department –:**

This entity provides intensive court supervision through drug treatment court for all eligible Project Fresh Start participants. During the initial court appearance, the Fresh Start participant is assessed for eligibility by a Drug Court Case Manager and assessed by the Detroit Bureau of Substance Abuse assessor. Defense Counsel explains the terms and conditions of drug treatment court to the participant. Once the participant is accepted into the Fresh Start Project, any outstanding warrants are set aside by the court and a new order for drug treatment court/Project Fresh Start is entered. The participant begins substance abuse treatment immediately and is monitored by the Drug Treatment Court.

**City of Detroit Law Department:** This department will provide legal consultation to the Project Fresh Start Prostitution Task Force to ensure that policies and procedures are within compliance of federal/state laws and statutes, client's rights are adequately protected, and that clients are granted sufficient due process.

**City of Detroit Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Recovery (BSAPTR) –** This agency, which is a division of the Detroit Department of Health and Wellness Promotion (DHWP), funds the substance abuse assessment and treatment aspect of Project Fresh Start through three women's specialty providers (SHAR House-East; Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries' Genesis House II and Genesis House III). Once the participant graduates from Project Fresh Start, she is admitted into the Detroit Recovery Project of the BSAPTR. Thereafter, the Detroit Recovery Project will provide case monitoring support to avoid relapse and recidivism.

**City of Detroit Health Department –** provide medical screening and treatment and dental care.

#### **4) Results of the program**

*“When you save a man, you save a person, when you save a woman, you save a community” - Dr. Calvin Trent, Director, City of Detroit Bureau of Substance Abuse*

Project Fresh Start has been operating since early April 2004. The Project Fresh Start Program goal was to identify and select 100 women to participate in the program. To date Fresh Start has identified and apprehended 108 women. 43.52% are in the program progressing well and are expected to graduate as projected. Given the fact that these are women who have struggled with the effects of sexual abuse (usually since childhood) and years, if not decades of drug addiction, the result are remarkable, especially when look at on an individual basis.

Since October 1, 2004, while 43.52% of program participants have progressed successfully through program phases and are 16.66% have successfully graduated the program and are drug and alcohol free, living independently, employed and have been reintegrated with either children or other family members. 15.74% have absconded from

the program and remain at large and 24.07% have been terminated for excessive violations or volunteer quit.

**Statistics as of January, 2007 are as follows:**

Total number of participants	108
Total number active in the program including jail sanctions and absconders:	64
Total participants in jail -based treatment:	13
Absconders at large:	17
Graduates	18
Terminations:	26

To date, Project Fresh Start has 101 women in the program. There have been an estimated of 860 drug screens. Of the 860 drug screens, results show that only 42 or, 4.88% results came back positive.

Those are the *statistics*. What cannot be measured is the financial burden that is lifted from society by transforming these women from individuals who cost the public money through the criminal justice system to ones who are productive, tax generating members of society. Also impossible to measure is the physical, emotional and spiritual healing that has taken place in many of these courageous women, who were featured recently in a two-day front page series in the Detroit Free Press ([www.freep.com/freshstart](http://www.freep.com/freshstart)). That healing has extended beyond the women to their families and throughout the community. Some have healed their relationships with estranged family members who had written them off as lost causes. Others have formed new bonds with the children they had abandoned during their lost years on the streets.

A poem written by a Fresh Start graduate eloquently illustrates this transformation:

**This Ghost of a Girl**

By BeKira Rollins

Walking down my street I see  
The ghost of a girl that looks like me

I could barely feel her but she was there  
Deserted and lonely, a past we share

In the midday hour, I remember her now  
The skeleton child with a permanent frown

She stops to show me every single place  
Where in my head I thought I erased

No harm she brings, but love I think  
I raise my eyes to her chains and links

Her arms show scars from shots to her veins

To hide the years of abuse and pain

My heart is breaking as we reminisce  
How God spared my life through a hole in that fence

Hand in hand, we step in time  
But suddenly, she slows and lags behind

It's OK, she tells me, her time is near  
She will leave me today with no spirit of fear

March on! she yells. Today is for you  
Look at me as a reminder of what you've been through

We stop at the corner and hug and cry  
I wipe her cheeks and we say goodbye

The ghost of a girl, I know it was me  
She forgave my sins and set me free

### **7) Worthiness of an Award**

The Fresh Start program is the first of its kind in the United States initiated from a County Sheriff's Office. Never has there been such an intensive outreach to women with a powerful collaboration consisting of county law enforcement, city government, the judicial system and community contributors. Because Fresh Start addresses multiple issues in one program: substance abuse, homelessness, mental health, mother/child reunification, employment which contributes to Wayne County's tax base, the program was accepted as part of the White House Office of Drug Control Policy's 25 Cities Initiatives, and is currently being replicated in three states. In addition, Fresh Start was featured at a National Drug Court Conference where the 36<sup>th</sup> District Drug Court placed second in the nation for providing creative, innovative programming.