



ADULT REDEPLOY ILLINOIS

Project Summary

Bridges to Justice: A Community Engagement Toolkit for Adult Diversion Programs

Overview

This toolkit aims to improve the operation of Adult Redeploy Illinois (ARI) through a roadmap to strengthen the role of community in local ARI programs. Snapshots of ARI sites within the toolkit highlight robust community involvement and include program descriptions, challenges and navigation strategies related to community involvement, and how community involvement has enhanced programs.

Methodology

Information was collected from June to October 2016. Findings come from 21 interviews with 43 interviewees and 6 site visits, representing 12 counties and 6 program models.

Five Best Practices for Engaging the Community

1. Reach out to community entities (e.g. churches, service organizations, and associations) through presenting at their gatherings.
2. Engage higher education institutions through hosting interns or collaborating with faculty.
3. Have program staff and participants volunteer at community events as a team.
4. Celebrate program successes with your community.
5. Create ways for community members to be meaningfully involved in the program.

Integrating Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a theory of justice rooted in indigenous cultures that is framed as a shift away from punitive approaches and toward a community-based, humanistic understanding of justice. Community restorative boards (CRBs) are a restorative program used by diversion programs in order to allow citizens to be directly involved in the justice process. CRB actively facilitate opportunities for participants to constructively address their criminal behavior and make amends with individuals and the communities they harmed. Tips for implementing a CRB include:

- When matching participants to CRB members, tailor the members to each participant's individual needs, strengths, identities and limitations.
- Provide ongoing training opportunities for CRB members and ways for members to support and consult with one another.

Featured program models: Macon County CRB, Madison County CRB

Building Resources in the Community

Fundraising within the community can help with increasing the unrestricted funds in a program, which is useful for periods when grant funding is limited or when there is an unusual cost that needs to be covered in the program. Fundraising also is an opportunity to help the community better understand what the program does and its benefits to the community thereby creating a more supportive environment for participants. Tips for fundraising in the community include:

- Plan and implement strategic outreach to community leaders to build a broad base of support and widely disseminate program information.
- Share participant testimony, when appropriate, to illustrate the impact of the program.

Featured program models: Crawford County RE-NEW, Lawrence County URCHOICE, Grundy County Treatment Alternatives Court

Employment Supports

Employment is crucial for supporting the long-term success of participants. Job skill training programs for participants can help with developing job skills, connecting participants to employers, and reducing barriers to employment for participants. Tips for creating and implementing a job skill training program include:

- Collaborate with universities and experts in workforce training development to design and teach the curriculum.
- The curriculum should cover the very basics of financial management, job skills (e.g. computer skills, job interview etiquette), and housing and leasing issues.

Featured program models: Lutheran Social Services of Illinois – Employment Skills School

Family Involvement

Family support is essential to maintaining the recovery of participants. It is important, then, to create spaces for directly addressing family concerns, needs, and trauma. Providing educational support to families also helps them to more effectively interact with service providers and advocate for the participant. Tips for implementing family programming include:

- Define family broadly to include close friends and other supportive people in the participants' lives.
- Designate an individual or team that specifically handles issues relating to family engagement.

Featured program models: Will County Drug Court, Winnebago County Therapeutic Intervention Program Court

Peer Support

Peer support can help participants access new support networks and develop deeper connections with the community. Mentoring relationships in particular can be a safe place for participants to bring up concerns or questions that they may not feel comfortable broaching with staff. Recruiting graduates as mentors within a diversion program can also support their recovery. Tips for implementing a peer support program include:

- Create clear boundaries between the roles and responsibilities of the mentors and staff.
- Start new mentoring programs with a smaller participant caseload to ensure the quality of experience for all individuals involved

Featured program models: Cook County ACT Court Ambassador Program, Lake County Veteran's Treatment and Assistance Court – Mentoring Program, Effingham County – Communities Restoring Wellness

Community Celebrations

In order to maintain enthusiasm and morale in the program, it is important to celebrate the accomplishments of participants, staff, and/or volunteers in the program or the program as a whole. They also provide an opportunity for programs to share with the broader community the benefits of a diversion program. Tips for planning community celebrations include:

- Tell stories at the event that help humanize and concretize the work of the drug court and the importance of it.
- Invite past graduates to attend and speak at the event.

Featured program models: Will County Drug Court Graduation, Boone County Drug Court Graduation