



SAFER COMMUNITIES STRONGER FAMILIES

Mid – Year Report
October 1, 2017, - March 31, 2018

Project Funded by
Michigan Department of Corrections

Background

In 2003, Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit (GIGD) established the Flip the Script program to achieve a two-fold mission: intervene in the lives of young men and women who have encountered but are not yet lost to the criminal justice system, and relatedly, prepare them for non-traditional careers in Wayne County. In October 2014, in partnership with the State of Michigan, GIGD was privileged to receive funding from the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) to administer the Safer Communities Stronger Families (SCSF) program in service of this mission.

Through SCSF, our program, Flip the Script has supported court-ordered probationers in successfully completing their General Education Development (GED) test, and provided employment and training to young men and women who otherwise would have continued an unproductive and dangerous lifestyle. In short, the program continues to operate as an effective diversionary model. It has been transformative in diverting young men and women from the criminal justice system toward personal development, job readiness and productive, healthy relationships with their families and communities.

As such, it is clear that our program has contributed to a reduction in the state's recidivism rate, and therefore its spending. Each person we serve and save is one who does not return to a judge for sentencing to a prison at an annual estimated cost of \$47,000 per year (Maxwell, August 2015).

Services, Strategies and Activities Summary

SCSF programming at GIGD's Flip the Script continues to leverage four foundational components: 1) alternative community-based sentencing versus costly incarceration, in partnership with the MDOC; 2) a partnership with the Wayne County Third Circuit in diverting young men and women from incarceration; 3) education recovery for probationers in order to resolve some of the base stimulus of criminal activity; and 4) systematic, detailed, evidence-based instruction, training and mentoring by an accredited organization and experienced staff.

Participants in SCSF since October 1, 2017, face many barriers to success. The list of challenges can be overwhelming in cases. For example:

- Nearly 88% of participants enrolled during this period are repeat felony offenders, and therefore are at the literal doorstep of incarceration.
- Over 85% of men and over 65% of women lacked a high school diploma or equivalency degree, and many struggle with undiagnosed learning disabilities. Indeed, the majority of participants, consistent with past years, initially score below the 4th grade level in math and at or below the 4th grade level in reading.
- Less than 35% of men have been previously employed.
- Over 50% of participants report being homeless or near homeless upon program enrollment.

As one might suspect, it is not unusual for an individual participant to present with all of these challenges.

In response to those challenges, our programming provides a variety of support, including:

- Assistance obtaining legal identification: state identification, birth certificates, and driver's licenses;
- Financial literacy and support services: credit counseling, credit repair, assistance with recovery from identity theft, budgeting and money management training, assistance opening their first bank account, exposure to other financial tools, and more;
- An intense “rites of passage” program that teaches personal accountability;
- Work readiness counseling and coaching; and
- Education recovery services, including individualized instruction and GED preparation.

As with previous years, first quarter enrollment, completion, and placement outcomes lag due to the seasonal holiday disruption, which also results in low mid-year outcomes.¹ However, also consistent with past years, a large number of participants are actively enrolled in the program as of this date, and are expected to reach completion before the end of the term. Consequently, GIGD anticipates meeting and likely exceeding enrollment and placement goals through the end

¹ Job placement outcomes, also consistent with past years, are especially uneven at this point, given the lack of work history among participants. However, while 30-day retention at the initial job remains challenging, the second and/or third placement results in success much more often.

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of the term, consistent with past years, as the pace of outcome attainment increases through the spring and summer.

	Planned Outcome (10/1/17 – 9/30/18)	Actual to Date (10/1/17 – 3/23/18)
Number of probationers entering program	185	105
Number of participants completing program	148	30
Number of competitive job placements	104	42
Number achieving 30-day retention	80%	33 (79%)
Number achieving 90-day retention	80%	8 (19%)
Number enrolled in education recovery	175	132
Number of participants achieving grade level increase	135	49
Number achieving GED credential	N/A	7
Number of participants in progress (passing some modules, but not yet all)	N/A	63
Percentage of participants passing GED modules	N/A	78%

Flip the Script also runs a tailored program for women that is attentive to their circumstances, which are often distinct from the men we serve. Many are not only pursuing GEDs, job training and the soft skills that will keep them employed; they are escaping and overcoming the effects of partner violence, drug abuse, and also establishing new stability to meet their responsibilities as mothers. Guiding their process goes beyond curriculum to helping them see their own power in the journey to becoming self-sufficient. For some this is spiritual work, as they confront abuse, addiction and complex histories. We support and encourage that as part of their healing.

In our history of serving women, we have discovered several realities that have impeded expansion of their program: Some we can navigate with new strategy and one is a systemic challenge, which we raise here in order to share an approach we intend to implement.

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It is erroneous to conclude there are insufficient numbers of women being diverted to and successfully completing SCSF. A more critical analysis of the women’s program uncovers the requirement that many judges rightfully deduce that substance abuse treatment is a necessary first step before beginning the rigorous curriculum at Flip the Script. Accordingly, we have proposed that for the 2018-19 fiscal year, SCSF have a rolling acceptance of a goal of 75 women diverted by the 3rd Circuit Court, as well as parolees recommended by the MDOC, and that the the SCSF program be permitted to carry-over participants from one fiscal year to the next. This will allow for more accurate metrics on the success rate of the women’s program in future years.

Mid-year women’s outcomes are noted below. As with the men, outcome attainment will accelerate during the spring and summer months.

	Planned Outcome (10/1/17 – 9/30/18)	Actual to Date (10/1/17 – 3/23/18)
Number of women probationers entering program	75	54
Number of women participants completing program	60	16
Number of competitive job placements	42	16
Number achieving 30-day retention	80%	10 (63%)
Number achieving 90-day retention	80%	4 (25%)

Conclusion

Gary Lightfoot, a Safer Communities Stronger Families probationer as of October 2, 2017 who was referred to Flip the Script by a Wayne County Third Circuit Court order, is a testament to what can be achieved when we provide participants who are willing to do the work access to both a program and faculty who are capable of guiding them on their path to productive citizenship.

Gary was a standout in “Rites of Passage” as he was willing to expose his vulnerabilities and work aggressively to clear the hurdles that were previously insurmountable. He was disciplined with time management, arriving to class early each day and having few absences. Gary demonstrated focus and leadership throughout his progression. He led classroom discussions

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amongst his peers and proactively pursued opportunities to learn and exceed expectations. As a result, Gary was one of this term's first trainees to obtain employment.

With assistance from the Workforce Development Team on February 9, 2018, Gary secured full-time employment with Sentech Services, at New Center Stamping in Detroit, where he serves as a Machine Operator. His responsibilities include stamping steel/metal automotive parts that are shipped to various assembly plants throughout the region. Gary is currently still with Sentech Services and is approaching two months of continuous employment. A great achievement for someone who had no previous exposure to the demands of long-term employment.

In addition to maintaining full-time employment, Gary is working diligently with the Education Recovery GED instructor and staff to begin taking portions of the GED exam. In partnership with his case manager, Gary is continuing to take responsibility for his past by addressing traffic violations that have precluded him from having a driver's license. By the time of our next report, Gary's goal is to have obtained both his driver's license, as well as his own apartment.

Gary has made tremendous progress due to his commitment to improving his quality of life and his participation in Goodwill Detroit's - Flip the Script SCSF program. He is grateful for the opportunity he's been afforded and as he continues to focus and maintain a strong work ethic, Gary's future is one filled with possibilities with the promise of being fully diverted from the criminal justice system.

Stronger Communities Stronger Families is one component of the Flip the Script family of services. With Flip's stellar reputation throughout the community, Goodwill Detroit has been able to further leverage the State's investment and be a valued community partner. For example, Detroit's elected officials and community leaders have lauded Flip the Script for the role it has played in reducing crime numbers by providing educational and job training to US Department of Justice Cease Fire participants.

Goodwill Detroit is the first and leading social enterprise of its kind. We are also a model of what can be accomplished when public, private and philanthropic partnerships work in tandem for the betterment of our communities. We are pleased with the progress achieved to date in the 2017-18 SCSF program year, and anticipate another successful program year by the end of the term.