



SAFER COMMUNITIES STRONGER FAMILIES

In Partnership with

The Michigan Department of Corrections

Year End Report

October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020

I. Executive Summary

The overall objective of the Flip the Script (FTS) Safer Communities Stronger Families (SCSF) project is to promote offender success, and to reduce recidivism, by providing additional cognitive, educational, and employment programming and supports to offenders who are deemed “moderate to high risk”. This six-year collaborative effort between Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit (Goodwill Detroit), the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), Detroit Police Department – Better Together Project (DPD), and the Wayne County 3rd Circuit Court provides Wayne County Courts with a viable alternative sentencing option for low, moderate, and high risk offenders. We are helping men and women probationers whose barriers to employment are among the most challenging in the Wayne area, create productive and meaningful lives for themselves and their families.

The MDOC and Goodwill Detroit agreed to a long-needed, logical update to the quantitative goals for SCSF programming. The updates were related to the Women’s Violent Felony Offense (VFO) ratings, from Med-High to Low-High considerations. As well as job placements for all participants are now counted as a single competitive placement, unless wage increases are applicable.

In fiscal year 2020, the SCSF project continued to execute the goal of decreasing recidivism by providing enhanced restorative training workshops and modules, along with offering online/virtual learning opportunities for those who were employed, and those unable to attend the Goodwill program in person due to childcare or transportation challenges. The SCSF team diligently worked to maintain an engaged connection with participants to support their personal goals achievement and independent stability, resulting in cost-savings to the taxpayers of the State of Michigan as individuals integrate into their community. The outcomes achieved were delivered in the face of overwhelming odds and pandemic environment that impacted full daily participation of participants during the state’s Executive Order shutdown.

Participant adult education outcomes for the year were significant. Individual financial literacy and financial management outcomes continued to excel. Employment outcomes for male participants were below the quantitative goals for FY 2020, primarily due to the mid-year national pandemic program reduction during the months March - June. Results for women participants were also impacted. It is important to note, at the beginning of the FY20 second quarter, the program averaged 40 probationers in attendance per month, participating in the Rite of Passage classroom modules, and GED preparation. Participant GED testing was nearly double the average from previous years.

The current pandemic environment forced the temporary suspension of ‘in person’ services in compliance with the state’s Executive Order, yet afforded our team the opportunity to develop creative methods for service delivery and to create new ways to motivate, inspire and reach our participants remotely in order to maintain close to the same level of engagement.

II. SCSF Participants and Their Challenges/Barriers

Participants for SCSF programming are referred directly to FTS - SCSF by the MDOC's Probation Department, and the Wayne County Third Circuit Court Judicial Branch.

Many SCSF participants in the City of Detroit, and Wayne County overall, have an array of barriers to employment, education, and life success. While the list of barriers may be similar to the list for offender populations across the state, the intensity of the challenges for SCSF participants is likely much more acute (mirroring other aspects of Wayne County population data as compared to state population data).

Overall, many participants struggle significantly, and are not prepared for what it takes to be successful in life. Housing, food insecurity, low academic skills, reflect the immediate challenges that most face. Individuals are disconnected from the financial, health, educational, and employment systems that could offer a positive path forward. Many do not have a State ID, Birth Certificate, Social Security Card, or Driver's License, nor do they have personal/dependable transportation, and many program participants have limited to no work experience.

Participant educational attainment levels are low at 4th grade reading and 3rd to 4th grade math; and many struggle with identified and unidentified learning systemic difficulties. While many persons can identify certain familiar words (i.e. home street or address), most have very low reading levels, and a number have difficulty expressing their thoughts in writing, and cannot adequately or legibly complete employment applications on hand written or online.

The need for child care continues to be a major barrier. When combined with the transportation, food, low academic skills, and housing challenges, the resulting many barriers can be overwhelming for a participant.

Approximately 75% of women served reported being traumatized as a result of sexual abuse by trusted family, or friends of family, and many have experienced sexual assault and/or domestic violence. Many are also dealing with family court issues including the potential removal of children from their care, while being underemployed and/or unemployed.

Combined with these challenges, approximately 85-90% SCSF participants were reared in environments where criminal behavior was acceptable. Their social networks are of little help in advancing beyond the aforementioned barriers, and in most cases the social networks are actually a hindrance. In particular, 60% of the men served were involved with formal or informal street gangs that are engaged in regular criminal activity. Those that aren't members of such gangs were generally "raised by the streets" and, as a result, were either socialized in a similar manner or learned to avoid all social support systems as a survival tactic.

Lastly, there are aspects of the criminal justice system that create obstacles to employment and life success for SCSF participants. Prior to the COVID outbreak, probationers often shared that they are required to visit with their probation officer during the day—a requirement that is inconsistent with the expectation that they gain and maintain employment, especially in cases where they are expected to work an 8 or 10-hour shift.

During the fiscal year, we noted the following additional participant observations:

- Over 70% of SCSF participants had difficulty using technology in the classroom assignments and activities.
- 85% of participants enrolled were on probation, and 30% are repeat felony offenders, and therefore are in need of a diversionary strategy in order to avoid long-term incarceration.
- Over 85% of men and over 70% of women lacked a high school diploma or equivalency degree. The majority of male and female participants, consistent with past years, initially scored below the 3rd grade level in math, and at or below the 4th grade level in reading.
- Less than 65% of men have held a traditional job, or have been previously employed.
- Over 70% of participant's report being challenged with both transportation and housing, which usually means there is no permanent residence in place after program completion.

III. Services, Activities and Outcomes

Goodwill Detroit's Flip the Script SCSF program continues to successfully support probationers to overcome their challenges to flip their life's script. The program's rich history of an impactful service model for men and women parolees and alternative sentencing diversionary service design for probationers has resulted in reducing the probability of recidivism among offenders.

Flip the Script's holistic and person centered approach is continually designed to successfully divert probationers from costly state confinement, while continuing to produce measurable outcomes. Even in the face of a national pandemic, SCSF participants were expected to focus on their personal growth, educational attainment, and skills acquisition. In addition to building this lifestyle resolve, participants must learn and embrace personal accountability for life's demands, such as childcare, regular work/employment, and life-long schooling.

Supporting SCSF probationers and ensuring their success is a total community effort. The continued validation from our community partners, including the Detroit Police Department (DPD), the Office of Detroit Mayor Michael Duggan, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, and the United States Attorney's Office ensures that our reach in supporting SCSF participants extends beyond Flip the Script's facility. Rookie officers from DPD join their veteran deputy police chiefs in immersion sessions with SCSF cohorts, building bridges that will assist in fostering healthy relationships between police and community residents.

SCSF participants consistently report high client satisfaction results when surveyed of their service experience. Over 95% of respondents expressed SCSF had a positive direct impact on their lives.

SCSF programming includes an array of relevant services designed to meet the needs of participants:

- Wraparound services and supports to meet basic needs.
- Intense counseling, coaching, and mentorship.
- Assistance obtaining legal identification, including state ID, birth certificates, and driver's licenses.

- Financial literacy and related services, including basic budgeting, debt avoidance, credit counseling and repair, assistance with recovery from identity theft, money management, assistance opening their first bank account, and exposure to other financial tools.
- Remedial education services, Basic Literacy, and Digital Literacy.
- An intense “Rites of Passage” program that teaches social skill building and personal accountability.
- Work readiness counseling and coaching.

During this current environment in which many are cautiously navigating due to the pandemic, FTS implemented facility safety protocols and protections, including all participant and staff daily temperature recording, social distancing measures, use of sanitizer, placement of sneeze guards in classrooms, mask and face shield wearing, and use of gloves. Classroom participation was limited to no more than 10 people during in person sessions. All participants were supported to use our new online/virtual platforms to continue their engagement.

A. Community-Based Male Alternative Sentencing Diversionary Program

Per MDOC’s request, we are reporting this data in a new method. Many program participants require two or more job placements before achieving employment sustainability. They frequently fail to maintain their first job placement due to the accumulation of years of poor interpersonal and social skills, household distractions, and negative peer pressure. The table below reflects reporting of a single placement per participant. The data does not reflect the total number of job placements unless the participant is employed in a position where there is an increased wage.

	Program Metrics	Outcomes	%
Target Number of Enrollees	185	152	82%
Number of program completers - 80% of total enrollees	148	83	56%
Number of Job Placements - 70% of total of participants placed in competitive employment within 90 calendar days of completion	130	44	33%
Number achieving 30 day retention - 80% of employed participants achieving 30-day employment retention	104	33	31%
Number achieving 90-day retention - 80% of employed participants achieving 90-day employment retention	104	21	22%

When participants fall short of success with their first placement, they are coached, and receive additional retention supportive services in job retention, and are subsequently placed into a new employment opportunity.

In previous fiscal years, the partners agreed both the first and subsequent assignments would be counted toward the job placements outcomes.

Twenty-four (24) participants entered the SCSF program were employed July 1 - September 30, 2020. Their 90-day employment retention measure will be reached post September 30, 2020. The Flip the Script team continues to focus on job retention, supporting participants to retain employment beyond their initial 30 days. Unfortunately, many of the SCSF participants were negatively impacted after the pandemic resulting in layoff. More than 65% employed were unable to establish long-term job retention due to business reductions or closures, resulting in furloughs and permanent layoffs.

B. Education Recovery for All Adult Populations

One hundred thirty-six (136) probationers enrolled in the multi-tiered educational programming. This year GED preparation was introduced to participants during the first day of their tutor/coaching services, a positive service delivery change from prior year when participants were not engaged until the completion of classroom modules. Participant services included classroom activities in reading and math, as well as one-on-one tutorial sessions.

The FTS team expanded an additional 10 seats to the GED online academy in order to offer a virtual opportunity to those individuals working, or those unable to attend face-to-face sessions. We also created our own GED online tutorial program, using Facebook and YouTube. This enables FTS to include more probationers who are near to being test ready, and to utilize this platform to gauge their readiness for the test.

We implemented increased teaching of digital literacy to help improve the probationer’s ability to engage with the program in a more virtual platform, as many participants lacked the navigational tools to connect in the virtual classroom.

The following table reflects participant’s educational achievements.

	Program Metrics	Outcomes	%
Number of Enrollees	175	136	77%
Number of participants achieving grade level increase (80% of total enrollees)	140	128	91%

An additional 15 participants successfully achieved their GED certification.

Fifty-nine (59) participants were actively engaged in educational services as of September 30, 2020. Unfortunately, the national pandemic forced individuals to delay pursuing their GED due to access. These individuals will continue in program to achieve their educational goals.

The following table reflects the reading and math grade level improvement outcomes for all enrolled Educational Recovery participants. Note: This data includes persons with and without high school diplomas.

	Entry (TABE) Reading Level	Reading 1 Level Grade Increase	Reading 2 Level Grade Increase
Grade (9th -12th)	37	17	12
Grade (7th – 8th)	32	20	10
Grade (5th – 6th)	38	34	12
Grade (4th – 1st)	58	21	6
	Entry (TABE) Math Level	Math 1 Level Grade Increase	Math 2 Level Grade Increase
Grade (9th -12th)	28	13	6
Grade (7th – 8th)	40	19	7
Grade (5th – 6th)	44	36	10
Grade (4th – 1st)	42	15	11

We have expanded the service design to offer participants opportunities to achieve grade level increases via Goodwill’s online platform.

C. Beyond Jobs Women’s Empowerment Services

This service component offers gender and cultural specific career development and continuing education for women 16 - 39 years of age. Supportive services focus on workforce development and workplace readiness for eligible women facing critical issues including poverty, homelessness, and domestic abuse.

During this fiscal year, the women’s program continued to experience low referrals from the MDOC and Wayne County 3rd Circuit Court due to referral participant’s personal life and child-care challenges.

However, with the new program metrics for women, FTS SCSF is now able to enroll **all** women referrals from the MDOC and Wayne County Circuit Courts. Re-enlightening our partners at the MDOC Probation Offices has proven to be more challenging than expected. Many continue to believe the women referrals must be at Med-High VFO for service participation. We anticipate our team’s continued outreach will result in significant increase in women’s referrals in the new program year.

	Program Metrics	Outcomes	%
Number of Enrollees	75	15	20%
Number of Completers - 80% of total enrollees	60	1	1%
Number of Job Placements - 70% of total enrollees	53	4	8%

Although there were referral challenges, there were participant successes. Three (3) women achieved their GED and eight (8) successfully completed 3 of 4 parts of their GED exams. Four (4) women obtained competitive employment in jobs with an average wage earning of \$10 - \$12 per hour. Eight (8) women were active in program at September 30, 2020 and will continue.

D. Other Program Service - Financial Literacy and Coaching

All SCSF participants were provided the opportunity to access Goodwill’s Center for Working Families, through our United Way for Southeastern Michigan partnership for financial literacy, financial planning, and income supports services. This service supports low-to-moderate income individuals and families in achieving greater economic prosperity and the means to pursue their life goals.

During this fiscal year, one-hundred eighty-two (182) SCSF participants benefitted from these services. One-hundred fifty-two (152) probationers accessed their credit report for credit counseling and developed a personal budget. Fifty-four (54) individuals began building savings, with an increased net worth. Twenty-three (23) probationers reduced their non-asset related debt.

IV. Future Plans

We continue to observe when a SCSF participant is encouraged and inspired, and one’s physical/emotional needs are adequately addressed, attendance improves moderately, participation significantly increases, and transformation begins.

A close relationship between Flip the Script staff and the MDOC and probation officers is a significant determinant of long-term probationer success. When SCSF participants realize that the teams are working in collaboration to support resolution of their challenges, participants become more accountable to the court’s orders. As a result, Flip the Script staff have encouraged all agents who have trainees enrolled to take advantage of our site/space to engage probationers, and to designate times after 3:00 p.m. at Flip the Script to conduct their interviews, which improves probationer compliance and attendance. Since the pandemic, the SCSF team now encourages virtual meetings with both the probationer and case manager with hopes to ensure all parties are aligned for win-win outcomes.

The chances of participants completing the program improve dramatically when they are engaged and focused throughout the entire 12 weeks. More importantly, the odds of a dramatic transformation in the life of the participant also improve during this same period of time. SCSF participants develop a trusting relationship with the role model staff at Flip the Script and begin to realize how deep-seated trauma has affected their lives and explore options to address their issues.

The Flip the Script team will implement continuous improvement strategies for SCSF programming to support participant's service outcomes. Future plans include:

- Use of digital literacy skills and technology applications for probationers. We will devote more time and effort to enhancing this skill set among the participants, by introducing them to virtual platforms, and allowing persons to participate in program through these unique systems. The applications will be important for probationers who are parents to equally assist their children in today's virtual school era. Virtual technologies will also assist in the job readiness and placement activities. Enabling probationers to learn how to prepare for digital job interviews and trainings.
- Addition of new GED and academic testing tools and resources inclusive of the Singapore Math Strategies, and Trauma Informed Teaching.
- Establishment of GED testing space at Goodwill's main headquarters to provide participant accessibility in Detroit.
- Improved strategic alliances with local employers, especially those located on 24-hour bus lines and other human service agencies in order to ensure competitive placements and job retention.
- Enhance electronic outreach to Wayne County Circuit Court and to Probation Officers.
- Expand partnerships with local mental health and substance abuse professionals, including childcare providers.
- Advocacy for those probationers who are on a tether to engage their agent or judge to adjust their time for them to maintain employment or attend classes, or obtain a restrictive drivers' license
- Partnering all SCSF participants with a financial coach prior to employment as opposed to post-employment for the probationer to budget for court fees, supervision and restitution.

Lastly, the FTS SCSF team will continue to leverage other programs and opportunities within Goodwill Detroit to support participant goals. Individuals have previously been able to enroll in Goodwill's welding school upon completion of SCSF. Those participants, upon graduation, have entered careers as welders at \$15-\$20 per hour. Goodwill Detroit has relocated and expanded its welding training school to increase the number of students to graduate yearly. The expansion of the welding training program at Goodwill Detroit will allow more SCSF participants to enter the welding training as Goodwill is now a recognized Detroit Employment Solutions (DESC) designated eligible training provider for WIOA funded participation.

Goodwill's Donated Goods and Retail division has also allowed probationers from the SCSF program to take part in Transitional Work Experience (TWE) opportunities, where they learn customer service, product inventory management, and logistics. Goodwill's Industrial Solutions operation will continue to offer transitional work experience (TWE) opportunities in its newly expanded center for soft skills and work skills development for competitive employment transition.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, Flip the Script’s SCSF services continues to be a critical impactful alternative sentencing model in Wayne County, and offers probationers a viable option out of criminality for those with felony convictions seeking an oasis of hope and transformation.

The FTS SCSF program will incorporate additional trauma sensitive teaching technique into our content delivery processes, both “in person” and online, to address the reported participant ill effects resulting from the ongoing pandemic.

Participants have expressed FTS SCSF is an alternative to gang life and petty criminality. The SCSF program remains highly regarded by local law enforcement agencies and judicial partners. Goodwill Detroit’s Flip the Script SCSF project continues to be a proven, community-based resource for reintegration of offenders and the reduction of recidivism.