



SAFER COMMUNITIES STRONGER FAMILIES

Mid-Year Report

October 1, 2016 - March 24, 2017

Project Funded by

Michigan Department of Corrections

## I. Overview and Background

Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit is a Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) accredited organization with a proven success in serving diverse populations with barriers in the City of Detroit-Wayne County and surrounding communities. The Flip the Script program was recognized by the accrediting body in November 2016 for exemplary conformance to quality employment and training standards as a vital program to consumers and changing lives every day.

Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit Flip the Script's Safer Communities Stronger Families (SCSF) program continues to focus on critical issues involving court ordered male probationers ages 16-29 and female probationers 16-39 years of age (per amended eligibility requirement January 2017) residing in the City of Detroit -Wayne County incarceration as first, second and possibly third time felony offenders. Diverting probationers from potential costly state confinement as Michigan Department of Correctional inmates. Young urban males pose as the nation's and the Wayne County-Detroit areas' troubled population, most often described as violent, potentially violent, less educated and less disciplined than any of their predecessors, specifically young African American and brown males.

Safer Communities Stronger Families (SCSF) addresses a plethora of issues involving our urban youth and young adults specifically probationers by connecting or reconnecting men, women and subsequently their families with an opportunity to gradually transform their lives. The Goodwill resources provided each probationer are extensive and intensive and are strategically focused on 'root cause and hidden issues that have disenfranchised far too many poor urban youth. High school completion credentials through GED preparation and instruction within small group and/or one-on-one tutoring and subsequent skill competency testing remains a lifeline to educational remediation. In most cases each probationer is provided educational enhancements including those with severe cases of illiteracy that constitutes over sixty-percent of SCSF probationers that promote employment readiness, subsequent job placement opportunities, as well as career identification and development. Other services include support to obtain full identification, including valid State Identification, Birth Certificates, Drivers Permits, Driver's road-testing, and obtainment of a "legal" Driver's License.

Activities during this reporting period continue to dispel the notion young men and women on the fringes of or entrenched in certain type of criminal behavior cannot matriculate and mature in a community setting, and that incarceration is required or is the best method of socialization. Young probationers have progressively moved from negative survival skills, tactics, and behavior and now are learning how best to live in an environment that requires self-discipline, self-empowerment, reasonable structure and adherence to laws governing society; behaviors they either had not been taught or lacked appreciation for previously.

Safer Communities Stronger Families is a beginning process and does not necessarily facilitate a rapid transformation for the majority of probationers. Years of distorted cognitive thinking disorders and inadequate pro-social and educational development cannot be reversed within a matter of weeks. In most cases it requires a minimum year. Importantly, SCSF probationers and other young men and women are “met where they are”, in a supportive service environment amongst individuals who they perceive love and genuinely care for them and who they can trust, while experiencing gradual integration into mainstream society, overcoming devastating systematic social, life and educational gaps and underachievement. Safer Communities Stronger Families programming provides a sense of hope, a new perspective and opportunity for the participants and their impact on their children and families.

In many cases probationers are transferring the life lessons and resources acquired through SCSF on to their parents, other family members, peers, siblings or their dependents. Safer Communities Stronger Families reach is far greater than the men and women we serve. The impact reaches beyond mere funding and has proven to have a positive effect on the community at many levels; participants are not engaging in criminal behavior or entering long term incarceration. Word has continued to spread throughout the Detroit-Wayne County community “the school to prison pipeline” no longer has to be a self-fulfilling prophecy but rather an unwise and unnecessary option, and mistakes or repeated poor decisions within reason can be overcome.

The community now understands and has realized there is a hopeful disruption in the pipeline to prison; with the Michigan Department of Corrections funded unique diversionary relationship and partnership between Goodwill Detroit’s Flip the Script services, Wayne County’s Third Circuit Court and Department of Corrections Probation Department. Community support is available potentially diverting persons from incarceration.

In most cases probationers are learning and acquiring *“first time life skills”*, the skills required to live productive and promising lives. They are shedding “survival by any means necessary” destructive tactics they have incorporated by way of learned habits that far too often has become normal behavior. In most cases probationers have a *“first time”* or renewed sense of what comprises a meaningful quality of life. Flip the Script is assisting probationers to prepare for obtaining employment/jobs who were not qualified and who did not understand how to effectively prepare for or seek employment. Many individuals have only been taught or trained in many cases how to carry-out street level criminal activity to survive. Most probationers do not have an awareness or the confidence of how to complete the job application process, how to research job opportunities, how to complete on-line job applications, on-line employment exams, or how to acquire legal identification when their peers, brothers and sisters and even family members have never stressed or advocated for obtaining legal identification or real employment.

Our observations and ongoing interaction with probationers enrolled in fiscal year one (2014-15) and fiscal year two (2015-16) services who are realizing maturity after completing programming, and in many cases have returned to the Flip the Script offices seeking additional counseling or employment opportunities rather than committing criminal offenses or fall prey to poor advice and gang activity.

For this mid-year reporting period, as in the first year one and year two of the project, first quarter participant enrollments, program completion and competitive placements numbers typically lag one quarter due to the initial cohort enrollment in October 2016 and participant's completion of program activities mid-January 2017. The second cohort enrolled in services January 6, 2017 with a projected program completion date March 31, 2017. Only two cohorts have completed programming by this report date with expected outcomes realization with 30-60 days of all modules completion (third quarter).

We anticipate achievement of all program component metrics by September 30, 2017 as participants successfully complete their program and obtain competitive employment with the assistance of the program's job placement team.

We met or exceeded all program metrics in fiscal year 2016 with the exception of the women's services component due to insufficient referrals caused by the age eligibility concern. The second half of the grant year is job development and job placement focused as participants complete their program modules.

## II. Community-Based Alternative Sentencing Diversionary Program

The *Community-Based Alternative Sentencing Diversionary Program* is a collaborative effort between Goodwill, the Wayne County 3<sup>rd</sup> Circuit Court and 36<sup>th</sup> District Court to expand the Goodwill's Flip the Script program to decrease the number of men and women committing first and second non-violent but serious offenses and contact with the criminal justice system. The service component provides Wayne County Courts a viable alternative sentencing option to offer moderate risk offenders self-sustaining life, social, vocational, academic and employability skills in an effort create safer communities. The project primarily focuses on low risk, non- to medium- violent offenders in the City of Detroit and Wayne County.

This service component also incorporated financial literacy training and coaching through Goodwill' Center for Workings Families initiative, where they are assisted with accessing credit reports, repairing credit histories, establishing fundamental credit scores, starting saving accounts and learning the fundamentals of budgeting and money management.

Program Metric (annual): Number of diverted enrollees - 185

Mid-year: A total 164 (89%) probationers have enrolled in program.

*Fiscal year 2016, 114% of metric was met.*

Program Metric (annual): Number of program completers – 148

Mid-year: A total 54 (37%) enrollees have completed program. Sixty-four participants (43%) enrolled in program March 6, 2017 and are progressing towards completion.

*Fiscal year 2016, 106% of goal metric was met.*

Program Metric (annual): Number of job placements (70%) – 103

Mid-year: A total 28 (27%) enrollees have entered competitive employment. Sixty-four participants (43%) enrolled in program March 6, 2017 and are progressing towards program completion for job placement assistance.

*Fiscal year 2016, 106% of metric was met.*

The principles of SCSF community based alternative sentencing programming and services are multi-layered, and are facilitated using Flip the Script’s evidence based practices that continue to connect with young and disenfranchised urban men and women especially those that have been unceremoniously raised and by the “streets” and/or a part of less organized street gangs. SCSF module requirements continue to be only a portion of each probationer’s Individual Service Plan.

Goodwill Industries employs a third of its professional staff who are formally incarcerated employees coupled with the Flip the Script unique principles, methodologies, solid experience, diverse staff and community resources and leadership has made Flip the Script highly regarded and respected in connecting with its participants. Importantly young men and women need assistance from an array of individuals. Young troubled adults passively and secretly seek wisdom and solitude from those representing missing elements from their families and community.

Societal issues in urban American cities have and continue to be a way of life; Flip the Script’s staff is able to produce a high degree of success because of the diversity of cultural competences that addresses the cultural change needed.

For 85% of alternative sentencing probationers the employment provided through Flip the Script SCSF resources is their first employment experience. For many participants, their employment is the first job their immediate family has experienced, given being raised in families where illegal activities and lifestyles were the norm. When you factor in nearly ninety (90%) percent of court ordered probationers enter program services lacking a high school diploma or GED certificate, and are equally clueless as it relates to accessing employment, have no realistic career plan; the task of changing this culture is daunting. However, doable when time allows for true matriculation.

Our experience has been maturation typically takes 16-18 months as witnessed by the number of probationers that return for services beyond their one year program.

### III. Education Recovery for Special Adult Populations

The *Education Recovery* program is a multi-tier literacy program.

Nearly 70% of probationer enrollees are functionally illiterate, testing at third to fifth grade reading level, and less than fifth grade mathematics skills competency (pre-division and multiplication). Most participants cannot adequately or legibly write and/or complete employment applications. During the SCSF programming, participants have increased their reading and math skills which previously were a severe impediment to employment.

Education Recovery continues with a high degree of success in serving as a holistic educational service model. The program design focuses on encouraging measureable literacy that requires a, methodical pace process of academic instruction and tutoring addressing individual, cultural and/or generational learning styles, where underlying mental and emotional health challenges, generational failure and social trauma serve as daily barriers. Our experience is to effectively administer GED preparation for the population; it constitutes the development of a culture of trusting relationships, as well as intense small group and individualized strategies and services.

The Wayne County Circuit Court utilizes the Flip the Script's SCSF programming and Education Recovery services to push high school completion. Notable probationer improved attendance and participation have continued to gradually trend upwards as individual's self-esteem and confidence increases with their educational enhancement.

From October 2016 through March 2017, the program has averaged 25 new enrollments per month. More than eighty (80%) percent of the new enrollees are community probationers, court referred, or heard about the program through referrals from other trainees by word-of-mouth. Young men and women have heard the Education Recovery offers intense and consistent one-on-one development, tutorial help, and allows students to progress at their own pace toward acquiring their GED. Participants have shared they appreciate Education Recovery's learning environment that minimizes distractions and creates a friendly atmosphere.

Education Recovery's focus is specifically on creating a positive and mentally enriching environment that helps remove the mental blocks and barriers our probationers bring into the classroom setting. Education Recovery utilizes team building activities, such as puzzles, mental math, vocabulary challenges, and board games (scrabble, brain quest, jeopardy, 24, etc.) to stimulate learning and to create an atmosphere of fun, and to boost confidence. These techniques help to foster a higher ability to focus and concentrate, and helps to challenge their long held self-defeating attitudes, and to dispel their personal myths about the possibility of achieving academic success.

Many of the participants lack discipline and find it difficult to feel at ease in a classroom setting, having dropped out of school at or around 9th grade, and thus it requires a lot of patience, care, creativity and innovation to inspire them toward academic success.

The other vital area of focus in the classroom is effectively addressing the day-to-day survival needs and issues our trainees bring with them to Flip the Script each day. We have become their help center as they cope with everything from homelessness, hunger, lack of water, lack of income, family issues, and parental (child-related) problems inhibit their ability to focus on learning. We provide opportunities for them to talk through many of these issues, redirect them toward possible services and solutions

Helping probationers understand the dynamics of a 21st century, information driven market economy, and the importance of educational success in order to be a productive citizen is essential to their matriculation through GED preparation and to move toward completion.

Many probationers require a minimum of one year to accomplish their educational objectives, and to overcome the barriers (illiteracy/literacy) which have inhibited their progress in the past. We have experienced probationers returning to program after prolonged absence to finally achieve GED completion.

The Education Recovery instructional team works collaboratively to minimize participant's personal frustration associated with learning, and to create a positive learning curve for our clients, and to help each one of them overcome past fears and/or obstacles to learning and growth. Our motto is: success is the best motivation for academic progress and achievement. We strive to create ongoing successes, providing needed incentives and positive verbal feedback daily. The classroom is set up to utilize Smart Board and white board instruction, as well as hands-on (one-on-one) learning instruction. Removing all distractions and barriers to learning (cell phones, ear plugs, etc.) which is a daunting task helps participants build up their concentration and focus capacity. Participants are given test taking skills, study skills, vocabulary skills and regular oral reading opportunities to enhance their academic progress.

Probationers who have severe academic challenges (reading at 1st through 5th grade levels) are assigned into small groups and receive direct instruction and one-on-one tutoring daily. Each probationer is provided individual support in specific areas where their skill level is lacking.

Every four weeks probationer's are tested for grade improvement. Seventy-five percent of probationers engage in a minimum of 10-12 hours of classroom participation per week (at least three days, three hours) and many complete homework exercises regularly.

During this reporting period, participant enrollees have made positive gains in progress towards their GED preparation. On average, a minimum 30 participants register to take a portion of their GED examination each month.

Our GED successful completion rate is 70%, seven out of every ten individuals who test for the first time, pass a specific GED Test (Science, Social Studies, Language Arts or Mathematics).

Program Metric (annual): Number of enrollees – 175  
Mid-year: A total 82 (47%) participants have enrolled.  
*Fiscal year 2016, 146% of metric was met.*

Program Metric (annual): Number of enrollees who increase grade level (80%)  
Mid-year: A total 43 (31%) have increased their grade level.  
*Fiscal year 2016, 88% of metric was met.*

We anticipate 80% participants' achievement of the grade level increase by September 30, 2017 as individuals' progress through their reading and math skills development and ongoing testing. Scheduled additional cohort enrollment dates are May 8, 2017, July 10, 2017 and August 28, 2017.

#### IV. Beyond Jobs Women's Empowerment Services

The primary target audience of Beyond Jobs Women's Empowerment Services (Strengthening Socially and Economically Dependent Women) is African-American women; however, enrollment is open to all women in need of services offered by this initiative.

The program design consists of five (5) modules – 1) Getting to Know You, 2) Introduction to Emerging Careers, 3) Social Media Networking and Messaging, 4) Healthy Body – Healthy Life, 5) Strengthening Families Through Financial Literacy, and 6) Academic Upgrade.

Additional supports include: Intense One-on-One Coaching and Counseling; Mentoring; Mom & Early Youth Social Gatherings – Development Dialogues; Domestic Violence Prevention Counseling and Referral Services; Reading Enrichment, and Introduction to Computer Literacy and Computer Use.

Program Metric: Number of diverted enrollees – 75  
Mid-year: A total 34 (45%) of women have enrolled.  
*Fiscal year 2016, 40% of metric was met.*

Program Metric: Number of program completers (80%)  
Mid-year: A total 5 (8%) of women have completed.  
*Fiscal year 2016, 36% of metric was met.*

Program Metric: Number of job placements (70%)

Mid-year: A total 5 (12%) of women have entered competitive employment.

*Fiscal year 2016, 33% of metric was met.*

Eleven (11) female probationers enrolled are currently enrolled in their third week of training and are on target to complete their program by week 12 of training (June 1, 2017). Attendance participation has been positive for this cohort.

Eleven (11) women have returned to class to make up modules/workshops missed due to issues that have included probation violation, poor attendance, ongoing family court issues (involvement with child custody cases), and giving birth immediately prior to training or training completion.

Four (4) female probationers have returned for subsequent training or to complete training and have been integrated with the current cohort. Those probationers are on track to complete training by 4/27/17.

Three (3) of the thirty (34) women enrolled in program services have absconded from probation.

With the new age eligibility requirement changed to 16 to 39 years from 16-29 years and our recruitment strategies, we anticipate achievement of the women's enrollment metric and job placement outcomes by September 30, 2017. Scheduled additional cohort enrollment dates are May 8, 2017, July 10, 2017 and August 28, 2017.

We have observed a high number of the women served are traumatized as a result of prior sexual molestation, have experienced sexual assault and domestic violence. Flip the Script's environment provides reasonable safety and is seen as a spiritual retreat.

Systematically women's program services provides ongoing supportive services that focuses on workforce development and job readiness for women facing critical issues including poverty, in intimate experience with partner/signification partner violence, dealing with family court issues including possibly removal of children from their care, while being underemployed and/or unemployed. The women under Flip the Script and SCSF services are disenfranchised from mainstream society. Women participants specifically single mothers are coping with trauma related past life experiences.

Through daily engagement often lasting 12-16 weeks our staff facilitates extensive one-one case management and wraparound services that help identify and address "the hidden and root causes, obstacles, and barriers that have adversely affected their lives" and serves as barriers to employment and personal transformation. Issues such as emotional and a some cases physical trauma as a result of domestic violence, abuse, sexual assault that often goes unreported based on fear, unhealthy relationships, stresses associated with single parenthood and returning home from incarceration, or being on probation while navigating simple survival. These issues are addressed in ways to help women restore their dignity, self-respect and confidence while opening their eyes and minds to employment and/or career development

## V. Participant Challenges, Barriers and Observations

As of this reporting cycle probationers continue to receive services within a process where they are assigned social/life skills Case Managers and a Workforce Development/Placement professional.

The staff teams guide and navigate probationers to a level of maturation previously not approached. It cannot be underscored Flip the Script is not training young men and women, we are literally “raising them”! It is not an easy task to raise individuals who consider themselves adults yet have social, life, cognitive and educational skills of someone 10-12 years younger.

Without our approach, strategies and methodologies minimally sixty-five percent have reported they would have eventually been incarcerated.

Goodwill’s Flip the Script staff in many cases are attempting to accomplish within eight to twelve weeks or a couple months what parents, educators, juvenile detention centers and local jails have failed to do over the probationers life time.

However, to adequately prepare probationers for sustainable success evidence has proven in many cases it requires an initial 18-24 week process of active engagement and participation.

Other participant observations:

- High illiteracy, specifically amongst male probationers is a major barrier to their and SCSF success. In excess of eight-five percent are functioning far below a high school academic level upon enrollment. Nearly seventy (75%) percent were functioning below sixth grade level upon enrollment.
- Over ninety-percent (90%) of male probationers lack a high school diploma or GED certificate. Sixty –five (65%) percent of female probationers lack a high school diploma or GED certificate.
- Less than twenty-five (25%) percent of male probationers ever been (“legally”) employed.
- Nearly sixty-percent of probationers report being homeless or near homelessness upon enrollment. Twenty-five (25-38%) to thirty-eight percent have become homeless after program enrollment and/or after they have obtained employed. This has affected 30 day employment retention, and second or third job placements have resulted.
- Initial attendance was in many cases was poor. However, after “second or third” court appearance attendance improved. Many probationers see incarceration as a prophecy and/or “rite of passage” until court orders are reinforced and/or Flip the Script demonstrates it will not give up on them.

- Fifty-percent of male probationers and over 50% of female probationers have never held a job or longer than 30 days prior to their Flip the Script job placement opportunity. Initial competitive placement prior to transitional work experience or prior to a 20-24 week assessment period comes at a risk. A vast majority of probationers have never arrived any place on time, including walk-in court appearances and struggle with balancing workplace arrival time and poorest public transportation system. Increasingly probationers still post lower test scores in math and STEM areas on arrival.
- A lack of or the ability to pay for childcare acts as a barrier to male and female probationers attendance as well as more than a handful have been terminated from employment due to chronic childcare issues. Often upon the second or third placement Goodwill has assisted in resolving and training probationers how to handle childcare issues.
- An estimated 30-35% of male probationers suffer from minor emotional or mild mental health issues and nearly seventy (70%) percent of female probationers are in unhealthy relationships with issues involving domestic violence and/or abuse, some sexual.
- Typically probationers require two or more job placements before employment sustainability can be conceptualized and realized as result of years of poor interpersonal and social skills and household distractions and negative peer pressure. It is unreasonable to expect any program model to totally overcome years of destructive lifestyles, poor decisions and disenfranchisement.
- Evidence has shown when probationers have engaged Flip the Script for three-four months prior to competitive employment in an intense and consistent training and social ‘raising” stage inclusive of available transitional work experience opportunities probationers are overwhelmingly more successful, more confident and more focused.
- Hunger and homelessness or near homelessness is a major distraction for participants.
- Evidence has shown probationers often commit petty criminal acts as a result of homelessness and hunger. Housing and the affordable housing remains a barrier. When probationers physical needs such as hunger is addressed attendance improves moderately, participation drastically improves and transformation begins. Included in their needs is the availability products that address personal hygiene including basic items such as tooth brushes/toothpaste, mouthwash, soap, deodorant and underclothing.
- Word of mouth has proven to be a plus as many probationers witnessing the transformation or friends, family and peers arrive more trusting of Flip the Script SCSF, including many street-level notorious gang members.
- Providing consistent hours of GED preparation and literacy services has allowed Flip the Script to become a drop-in center, safe haven and place of solitude from probationers. This has increased their willingness to focus on deep seeded personal issues and challenges as probationers are very trusting of Flip the Script staff members.

- Many probationers have never had positive relationships with discipline and consistent adults. Many young men having been fatherless, sometimes parentless and homeless are realizing how trauma has affected them. Typically after Goodwill's Flip the Script has engaged probationers for twelve to twenty weeks the likelihood of measureable transformation and outcomes increase substantially.
- Where the Probation Department and/or Probation Officers have exhibited a partnership with Flip the Script, probationers have become more trusting of the probation department.

V. Program Modifications to Enhance Outcomes Success – Next Six Months

- The addition of new GED and academic testing tools and resources.
- Internal strategic alliance of staff team work to insure competitive placements gradually trend upwards as well as retention while erratic first time placements improve with subsequent placements.
- Ongoing meetings and discussions with court officials to facilitate increased women referrals.
- Continuing to seek viable transportation alternative for probationers travel home in late evening.
- Re-institution of Flip the Script's previously successful pre-skills and construction training and career development with local construction companies and builders, to facilitate interest and opportunities for entrance into apprenticeship programs.
- Encourage probation officers designate later than 3:00 pm for the probationer to report or conduct their interviews at the program site to improvement a participant's full day attendance.