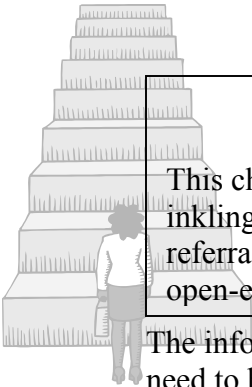


Chapter 3

STEPS IN CREATING A DIVERSION PROGRAM


SUMMARY



This chapter presents nine steps for starting a diversion program, from the first inkling that there is a need for alternative services for juveniles to taking the first referral. Many additional resources have been included as well as best practices, open-ended questions, and helpful hints.

The information in this chapter is meant to guide you through the many of the issues that need to be addressed in order to establish a diversion program. This discussion is meant as a general overview and is by no means exhaustive. Please refer to Appendix III for resources that provide more information on starting a community-based program.

There are many reasons to start a diversion program: a need for alternatives for youth who are involved with the police and courts, crime issues that are not being addressed through traditional justice, or youth who are falling through the cracks. Each community deals with its youth in different ways, reflecting the attitudes and personalities of the people involved, as well as the availability of community resources in the area. How problems are handled, or not handled, will be instructive in helping you form the ultimate design and success of your program. When determining the need for a diversion program, you will want to become familiar with the criminal justice and social service operations in your community.



Step 1. Conducting a Needs Assessment

The best starting point is for you to meet with those in the judiciary and law enforcement working with juveniles and the personnel serving youth in the social service agencies. Discuss the concept of diversion with them. If it is an idea they have already explored, discover why a program was not implemented or why prior efforts failed. If these roadblocks are identified and addressed at the beginning of the project, you will have a much greater the chance for future success. In order for the project to get off the ground, you will need the assistance and cooperation of the people and resources already in place. They will be helpful in directing you to additional information sources and can identify people who control decision-making processes in your community. Ensuring the early involvement of these people and agencies in the start-up phase will help greatly in promoting community and individual citizen participation in your diversion project.

A. Collecting Important Information:

Juvenile crime statistics:

This data will determine the estimated number of youth who might profit from new or improved diversion programs. Supporting information for this estimate may be obtained from court and police records. Interviews with police, probation officers, school personnel and judges throughout the service area will provide you with a comprehensive



base of information and ideas. All this, of course, needs to be done within the boundaries of confidentiality.

- ? How many juveniles per month/per year are arrested in the community?
- ? How many are referred to court? How many are counseled and released by police?
- ? How are they distributed by age and sex?
- ? What are the frequencies and trends of different kinds of offenses?
- ? What are the characteristics of those who are typically counseled and released versus those who are petitioned to court?
- ? How many youth return to court as recidivists?
- ? How are juvenile cases being handled by the court?
- ? What are the most frequent dispositional options used?



Interested in more data on juvenile crime?
Try the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at
www.ncjrs.org
New Hampshire information at: www.state.nh.us

Create an inventory of existing or potential providers of services:

- ? What community agencies already exist and what services do they provide?
- ? Where are there gaps in services to youth?
- ? What individuals and agencies in the community can or will offer their assistance to diversion programs?
- ? How well do these resources already serve the needs of the community's youth?

Determine how the juvenile justice process is currently working in your community:

- ? Where do log jams, pressure and frustration typically arise? (Interview the police, local lawyers, judges, and probation officers to understand the existing system and to determine how decisions are typically made, listing the criteria and considerations that enter into them.)
- ? Ask youth and families who are involved with the juvenile justice system about their perceptions of the system. What do they see as problems in that system? What services are being made available to them? What suggestions do they have to improve the system?
- ? Contact the victim advocates for the court system. What do they see as problems in the system? What suggestions do they have to improve the system?

B. Evaluating the Need



Identify the specific problem areas or types of offenses that youth are involved in that might qualify for diversion. If it appears that there is a large population for whom an alternative program may prove feasible, then the need for a diversion project seems likely. These questions need to be addressed:

- ? What kinds of offenses will the police and courts handle in a less formal manner?
- ? What type of youth can be dealt with in this manner?
- ? Does the community already offer the resources that can address these needs? If not, what resources can readily be tapped?
- ? Do the police or courts already have an effective method for dealing with youthful offenders?

If the answers still indicate a need for an alternative, you are ready to develop specific goals and objectives for the diversion project. You must develop an overall description of the existing system, the proposed alternative, the differences between the two, and the benefits of developing the alternative. Your data should support:

- ☞ The need for a juvenile diversion project in the community.
- ☞ The present operation of the juvenile justice system.
- ☞ The proposed alternative, showing the process from referral of the youth to completion of the diversion contract along with the components and procedures necessary at each step of the diversion process.
- ☞ The difference between the proposed alternative and the present system.
- ☞ The relationship between the proposed operation and the objectives of the proposed project.
- ☞ The benefits, both monetary and societal, to be derived from an effective juvenile diversion program.

C. Getting Community Feedback and Buy-in



Now you are ready to take the diversion project model to the community. Re-contact those people and organizations that you met in the beginning in order to get their feedback. Start with those personnel involved in the juvenile justice process. Their support is crucial for this project to be a success. Next, contact the agencies that deal with youth for their response to the proposal and answers to the following questions:

- ? Are the problems you identified significant to the community?
- ? Have you pinpointed a common concern?
- ? Are your expected results realistically tied to the solution proposed?
- ? Can these results be monitored?
- ? Is there support among the agencies for this project?
- ? Is there a potential for partnership or inter-agency collaboration on this project?
- ? Is the implementation of this project feasible at this time?

Using the feedback, re-examine your project outline. Enlist some support from the people you have contacted to act as a sounding board, reworking the outline, tightening it up, and ensuring that the project you propose will address what the community identified as their main concerns in the juvenile justice system. Make sure you have the support of individuals in the juvenile justice system or other strong opinion makers in your community. Try to keep in mind that the diversion project is not your idea, but is your community's idea. Begin now to make sure that you have a wide base of support.

D. Forming a Steering Committee



Armed with a strong project outline, form a steering committee or advisory board best to keep the number small while ensuring that you have representation from a diverse group within your community. Try to have at least one representative from the juvenile justice system, but do not exclude schools, the chamber of commerce, business, civic groups, church groups, etc.

This small working group is responsible for:

- ☞ Keeping the juvenile justice agencies up to date with the ongoing development of the diversion project.
- ☞ Re-examining the project outline, problem area, the source(s), and the proposed solution to identify areas of potential difficulties in implementation.
- ☞ Validating the target population to be served and the number of juveniles who will go through the diversion process.
- ☞ Identifying possible sources of staff including volunteer and professional staff in administrative or service delivery roles.
- ☞ Identifying sources of technical assistance. There are numerous other programs already in existence in the state, as well as other agencies or people who can provide support and information; (See appendix III)
- ☞ Locating potential funding sources and making initial contact to determine requirements, deadlines and scope of funding operations.
- ☞ Drafting the budget. Have someone on the steering committee who is familiar with budgeting and staffing requirements or has access to that person.
- ☞ Establishing guidelines for program monitoring. In order for the project to be successful, there has to be an effective means of measuring program performance based on objectives.

E. Holding a General Meeting



This meeting provides a forum for an open discussion of the draft proposal. It is a critical step for ensuring the favorable acceptance of your program by the community.

Remember, first impressions are lasting impressions. In the initial presentation to your community, you need to be able to communicate clearly what you are doing and why you are doing it. Active community involvement in the diversion process will directly relate to the community's understanding of the project.

1. Before the general meeting is held, determine the agenda and tone of the meeting. It may be beneficial to have this meeting convened by the justice of your local court.
2. Arrange for coverage by the press, the radio, or TV through press releases or Public Service Announcements.
3. The meeting should be convened in a location that is large enough to accommodate the people involved, but not so large as to dwarf the number attending and make the meeting seem smaller or less successful than it is. For

example, if the local court can be used, it would serve as a reminder of what the meeting is all about and why people have been asked to attend.

4. Confirm the support of important decision-makers within the community to help make this general meeting a success.
5. Provide adequate time to answer any questions from the audience.
6. A short, concise, yet thorough description of your proposed project should be available for attendees to take away with them. Displays and graphs and statistics are highly desirable and should be visible and easily understood. These aids will help provide structure for a general discussion.

After all of this background work in determining the need for and feasibility of diversion, you should know whether or not you and the community is ready to support a diversion program. When the answer is affirmative, you are ready for the design phase.



Step 2. Determining the Structure of the Organization

Available research literature does not provide clear information on which programs or components work best, because a model that works well in one setting may not work successfully in another. The components must be tailored to a community's needs and must work in harmony with other parts of the program to get successful results. Program designers must not confuse the need to serve youth with the equally pressing need to improve the juvenile justice system. A diversion program is an *alternative* to the existing system and may be able to provide services not normally found in the administration of justice.

There is great variety in the administration of diversion programs and considerable confusion exists about the implications of the various types of organizations. New Hampshire RSA 169-B:10,13 permits the referral of youths to ". . . court approved diversion programs," but does not offer guidelines for these programs. This is left to the discretion of local communities. The following is a description of four general types of organizational structures for diversion programs, with notes on advantages and disadvantages of each.

Private Non-Profit

A non-profit organization operates much like a *for-profit company* with a staff, a board of directors, and a product. It differs by having volunteers who provide services. It also has different budget and reporting requirements because of the non-profit status conferred by the IRS. The board is generally responsible for oversight of the organization and executive director, for adherence to mission and objectives by approving policies and programs, and for aiding in the fundraising and providing the community awareness and support. The executive director is responsible for day-to-day operations, the administration of policy and personnel matters, and program goals and objectives. In most organizations the ED writes the grants and provides direct service to clients. As the organization grows in scope, the administrative tasks tend to become the primary focus of the position and direct support staff and volunteers provide services. The volunteers most commonly participate as members of the diversion board who may also be responsible

for case management. Organizations may provide just diversion or it may be just one component in a whole range of services. Depending on the community, referrals may come from a variety of sources: schools, parents, and self-referrals, as well as police.

ADVANTAGES

- ! Strong involvement of members of the community.
- ! Freedom to present a positive, caring, and supportive approach to youth in trouble (without the authoritarian image of being connected with police and probation).
- ! Ability to develop new programs rapidly, with a minimum of bureaucratic red tape.
- ! Ability to serve youth officially diverted from the court/police and those who are referred by family or themselves.

DISADVANTAGES

- ! Funding may be difficult or unstable both during start-up and ongoing operations.
- ! Although the community may support the concept, it will not or cannot support the administrative duplication of multiple non-profits.
- ! Volunteers may be difficult to attract and/or retain depending on the composition of the community. This includes board members as well.
- ! The organization must, to a certain extent, be accountable to the board, the community, and the police and courts, sometimes with conflicting standards.

Court-Based Program

In this model, a special diversion officer or JPPO may be *appointed by the court* to manage diversion cases. In either case, the officers work closely under the supervision of the juvenile court judge. The officer receives referrals from the police and possibly from other individuals and agencies. The officer either creates the diversion contract or uses a volunteer diversion board. The client is referred to community programs and outside services. The officer and/or volunteers may provide case management.

ADVANTAGES

- ! Maximum supervision and accountability of the system by the court. The court can often provide staff support and allow for smooth integration of the program with the court process. The judge can monitor all aspects of the diversion program to ensure the protection of the rights of youth and the effectiveness of referrals.
- ! The potential to serve several towns, so it may be more viable than other models in rural areas.
- ! Relatively stable funding and personnel availability.

DISADVANTAGES 🖱

- ! The authoritarian relationship may adversely stigmatize the child. Some of the benefits of diversion may be lost through ongoing involvement and identification with the court.
- ! Inability to create needed services, only refer clients to them.
- ! Possible philosophical conflict between punitive nature of court and restorative nature of diversion.

County or Town Based Programs

In this model, the diversion program may be set up *through a local town or municipality* with sanctioned authority through the court. These programs tend to be youth service offices, providing diversion as one of several program components. The staff consists of government employees. Ultimate accountability lies with the town government. The diversion process tends to be the same, including the use of volunteer diversion boards.

Note: Depending on the composition of the program and the personnel involved, this model may have the same advantages and disadvantages as court-based programs in addition to the following points.

ADVANTAGES 👍

- ! Youth service bureaus offer a variety of programs so that the program is not associated solely with kids in trouble and can, therefore, be less stigmatizing.
- ! Because of greater funding and resources, a greater ability to offer services in-house rather than having to refer clients out, thus better ensuring program quality and continuity.

DISADVANTAGES 🖱

- ! Potential jurisdictional problems encountered when a program is attached to one particular town or city. Problems in ownership and accountability may develop if a program tries to cover a larger jurisdiction by incorporating its efforts with neighboring communities.
- ! The program may be prohibited from seeking funds outside of the government; this may be a hindrance during economic downturns.

Police Based Programs

In this model, *an officer handles diversion*. The officer may work with a volunteer diversion board to create diversion contracts and include an advisory board. Sometimes the police department may subcontract individuals or organizations to do counseling, run a restitution program, or even subcontract the entire program while maintaining police supervision. Under this model, referrals tend to come primarily from the police.

Note: Depending on the composition of the program and the personnel involved, this model too may have the same advantages and disadvantages as court-based programs in addition to the following points.

ADVANTAGES 👍

- ! The juvenile officer has responsibility for reporting his/her decision and for following up cases and monitoring the results, providing substantive program evaluation.
- ! Police-administered programs may also receive somewhat better supervision and monitoring from the courts because of the familiar lines of communication.

DISADVANTAGES 👎

- ! Decreased likelihood that the services will be used by youth in trouble who generally go out of their way to avoid the police department.
- ! A program run by the police must be organizationally attached to one particular town or city. This restricts its ability to serve a region, unless the towns in the region might be willing to share in the funding of a juvenile officer.

The two most popular models in New Hampshire are private non-profits and county/town based programs. Skewed population densities, municipal governments with strong histories of providing social services, and the culture of the state explain in part the preponderance of these two models. In Vermont, diversion programs are administered through the court system and the communities.

While doing your research, contact some of the diversion programs that already operate in communities like yours. Find out how they are structured and how they operate. Information on existing programs is found in chapter 5. Use that information when talking with your sounding board. Remember, even though everyone may agree on the best structure for the organization, this next step will determine if you can implement the vision.



Step 3. Identifying Funding

Approaches to financing diversion programs are as varied as the approaches to organizing them. The question of who pays is closely linked to the question of who administers and controls. One needs to keep in mind the individuality of New Hampshire communities. Administrative organizations that work well in Nashua may not work in Conway.

After the project objectives have been defined, the question of funding is the one that needs the most attention. Before determining the source of funding for the program, you need to determine your sources of income. Possible sources include grants, fees for service, fundraising campaigns and events, in-kind services, United Way and like charities, and individual charitable donations. You need to assess both your community and your project to determine the percentage that each source will be in your overall income stream. For private non-profit diversion programs, government and private grants constitute the bulk of all income. However, there are disadvantages to being solely funded by grants. Government spending priorities can change, economies falter, grant guidelines be rewritten, and foundations close or scale back. In addition, no grant writer consistently has every grant accepted and funded, no matter how well written.

Before approaching any agency for funding you will need a clearly defined program plan and budget. In this respect, starting a non-profit agency is no different than starting a small business and looking for capital. All funding sources want to see a sound business plan that defines and addresses a real need and has a clear plan for short and long term sustainability. Appendix III has sources for samples of non-profit plans.

The first place to look for funding of a new diversion project is within the community itself. With New Hampshire's long tradition of local rule, the best way to solve a community problem is within that community. A strong steering committee that represents many aspects of the community will have contacts with different local funding sources. Churches, civic groups, United Way, private and local foundations and/or interested patrons can form the nucleus of a strong community based financial support group. Additional financial support may be gained through the court and business channels.



Interested in knowing more about grant research?
There are many good grant writing and grant researching sites on the Internet. The state attorney general's page has a listing of all of the funding institutions registered with the state. More sites are referenced in appendix III.

When approaching funding sources outside the community, it is important to remember that these agencies generally define their areas of giving very narrowly. The first task is to identify donors whose giving philosophy is consistent with your project objectives. Your program plan is the basis for your funding proposal. *Do not fall into the trap of developing programs and objectives based on a possible source of funds.* This practice inevitably leads to future problems of chasing after funding while sacrificing the mission of the organization and continuity of services.

Funding agencies not only differ in areas of interest, but they also differ in the types of funding they provide. If the project is in the development stage, organizers will generally be looking for seed or demonstration funding that covers program and operating expenses. This could come from one agency or be shared by a number of agencies. Keep in mind that this type of funding is usually for a prescribed period of time, and other sources will eventually be needed. These sources of funding may be adequate for the starting up your program, but *you must be prepared to seek future funding from a variety of sources.* In general, funds are provided for specific services or programs and not general operations. Municipal governments may give ongoing funding to projects that have demonstrated strong community support and effective services. In-kind support may also be available in the form of office space, office equipment, counseling services, recreational facilities, transportation, etc. When researching funding, speak with other non-profit agencies in your community to find out their experiences in raising funds. Try to attend seminars on grantwriting and fundraising in order to familiarize yourself with the tasks.



Your program scope, organizational structure, and funding sources are all fundamental building blocks. However, you can't do the work in a vacuum. The next step provides some valuable insights on staffing.

Step 4. Determining Staffing Needs

Staff requirements are dependent on the program objectives and the available resources of the community. The program objectives determine the quantity of services you are going to deliver over a given period of time. For example, if you plan to work with 100 youth, you will need a larger staff than if you plan on only 50. Therefore, knowing the projected client base as accurately as possible is crucial for sound planning. Another factor to take into consideration is the type of services being offered. The more intense the case management, the more staff time and therefore more staff per client. Thirdly, determine the job content. Will staff be expected to perform all tasks, or do you need specific professionals such as counselors, and dedicated community service and employment specialists?

The Community Kit from Canada¹ suggests the following calculations for general staff whose functions are: mediation (diversion committee), assessment of social situation (intake), coordination, case supervision, and follow-up.

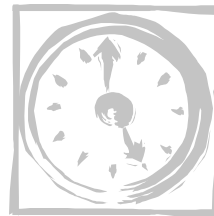
This model makes the following real-world assumptions:

1. A full-time staff works 40 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year.
2. Average time spent by a client in the program is 90 days.
3. The follow-up period after leaving the program is 6 months.
4. The work is covered by at least one staff person, eight hours a day, five days a week.
5. Average staff time required for a diversion board is one hour.
6. Average staff time for an intake is three hours.
7. Average staff time to make a referral to another resource is 3/4 of an hour. On average, one third of the cases processed require outside referrals.
8. Average time required for supervision of the diversion contract is 1 1/2 hours.
9. Average time required for follow-up after a client has left the program is 2 hours.
10. Average administrative and travel time for each case is 14 hours.

This example is based on 100 clients per year using the following Planning Calculations:

Time required to process one case is:

Diversion committee	= 1.00 hr.
Intake	= 3.00 hrs.
referral	= 0.25 hrs.
supervision of agreement	= 1.50 hrs.
follow-up	= 2.00 hrs.
administration and travel	= 14.00 hrs.
TOTAL	21.75 hrs.



Projected time required for 100 cases:

$$100 \times 21.75 = 2,175 \text{ hrs.}$$

Time available from one full-time staff:

8 hrs. x 5 days x 48 wks. = 1,920 hrs.

Staff required to process projected intake:

2,175 hrs./1,920 hrs. = 1.1 staff persons

Therefore, staff requirements for 100 cases is:

1 full-time staff plus 1 part-time staff working 4 hours per week

You can use this formula as a starting point for determining your current and longer-term staff needs.

Note: You may gain needed flexibility by hiring two part-time employees to work a full-time equivalency. If you are hiring new graduates or people new to the field, factor in time for a learning curve.

The next factor is to determine how best to deliver these services with available resources. This can include borrowing personnel from cooperating community or juvenile justice agencies, student placement from colleges or universities, community volunteers, paid staffing, or some combination of these sources. At start-up, many programs choose to maintain a small program, utilizing already existing resources. This is certainly a most cost-effective approach and also the most beneficial in fulfilling your long-term goal of community involvement.

Along with staff, the program will need a board and volunteers. The following steps provide guidance on these two critical groups.



Step 5. Selecting a Board of Directors

Once the project plan has been revised, engage the steering group in creating a permanent board. Nominations often include members of the steering group. This group may take the role of an advisory committee to a court-based program or a board of directors of a non-profit organization. The selection of this body should be made with an eye to the implementation and operation of the project and as such should have representation from juvenile justice agencies, social service agencies and the general public. Keep in mind some of the roles of the board when recruiting members. You will need someone knowledgeable about finance for the treasurer role, marketing for the marketing and PR role, etc. Always try to include someone with non-profit experience to help with the inevitable bumps and questions that will arise along the way.

Although the eventual role and form this group takes will depend upon the resources of the people within the individual communities as well as program and funding requirements, the following general functions are true for all boards:

- ☞ Prepare the diversion project for implementation:
 - Identify specific tasks for the board;
 - Agree on individual responsibilities;
 - Maintain contact with funding sources;
 - Establish guidelines for program components;
 - Formulate the mission and vision for the project;

- Approve the budget and expenditure of funds; and
 - Maintain public relations with juvenile justice system members and community at large.
- ☞ Prepare a job description, selection and recruitment process, as well as a system of reporting between the board and the Executive Director.

The directing board should include people who have access to resources needed for the project. The key is the early identification and involvement of these resources by project organizers, followed by their continued assistance on either a voluntary or permanent basis to meet project needs. Community involvement will be enhanced if the community's resources are actively sought out during the project's developmental stage.



Step 6. Recruiting the Diversion Board and Other Volunteers

All of the organizational models usually include a diversion board that is supervised by a staff member. The board is generally a group of 3 to 12 members. They may be recruited by the program, appointed by a judge or the towns being served, or a combination. It can include in various mixtures, police officers, probation officers, school representatives, community mental health representatives, clergy members, members of other professions serving children and lay citizens. Training must be provided to new members. You can also pair new members with more experienced committee members to act as mentors.

The board can meet regularly, or at the call of diversion staff, to review individual cases and make recommendations as to the substance of diversion contracts. Some boards operate in a formal manner by interviewing the youth and the parents, withdrawing to deliberate, and returning to present decisions that the youths and parents must then accept or reject (the consequence of rejection usually being the filing of the petition). Alternatively, the board may operate more informally, offering contract suggestions to the diversion staff and serving as consultants to help locate needed resources. Sometimes members of the board are given the responsibility of supervising the completion of the contracts and reporting the outcomes to the court.



NEWSWORTHY!

Another form of diversion board is a Family Conferencing Circle or Circle Process. Based on indigenous native models used throughout the world, the aim is to provide a forum for the accused juvenile, his/her family, the victim(s), the community, and justice representatives to meet in a deliberative session where all parties are given the opportunity to explain the impact of the crime on them. The parties then come together to create a diversion type contract that meets the needs of all parties involved. Part mediation, part victim impact, part negotiation, part community reparation, these forums have the potential of significantly reducing recidivism by reintegrating the offender back into the community and identifying barriers to successful completion. It also immediately weeds out those offenders who are not willing to accept responsibility for their actions and, thus, are not appropriate for diversion type programs. These models are being used in Vermont, Minnesota, and Canada.

The diversion board is a powerful vehicle through which members of the community learn about the problems of their youth and have the opportunity to come to their support. It empowers the community to help solve its own problems and helps reintegrate the youth back into the community. By meeting with the board the young person can more easily learn how his/her actions victimized the community on the whole and through the diversion experience can make amends for these wrongdoings. This approach also conveys a message of community authority to youths and their parents. The process of being called in and questioned by a group can be an instructive one. Parents, as well as their child, can better understand the strength of the community fabric and be given help in re-integrating into the community.

The remaining steps cover some of the more pressing administrative issues you will need to address as the program gets closer to becoming reality.

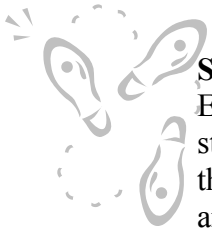
Step 7. Determining Insurance Needs

There are some basic types of insurance every organization should consider. The first is *general liability insurance*, which covers you if clients or visitors trip on the stairs or a bookcase falls on them. It would be advisable to add employees and board members as additional insured under this type of coverage. Secondly, an organization should consider *Non-Owned Auto Coverage*, which protects the organization when an employee is driving a family car for business reasons and also can also cover rental cars. It is usually contained in the general liability policy.

Workers compensation insurance, which can be costly, can be very beneficial because one of its coverages protects against employee lawsuits. Any organizations employing professional who see clients should ensure that these staff are covered under professional liability insurance, either individually or as provided by the agency, and that the agency is named as an additional insured.

One of the more complex coverages is *directors and officers insurance*, or D&O. The larger the organization and the wealthier the board members, the greater the need for D&O, since it protects the board from malpractice suits. This coverage can be prohibitively expensive for small organizations. On the other hand, there are many areas that D&O insurance does not cover. The best advice here is to seek the advice of an insurance professional as to what coverage would be prudent for your organization.

No discussion of insurance is complete without a discussion of *health insurance* for staff members. Medical insurance is one of the most costly and difficult insurances for any organization to obtain. Buying groups, like the Granite State Association of Non-profits, are able to provide small employers with group rates they may not be able to get else where. It is necessary to shop around and get quotes. You may be put in a position where the organization cannot afford insurance but provides staff members with a stipend to use to purchase insurance on their own.



Step 8. Determining Reporting Requirements

Every organization will have a different set of reporting requirements. Basically, every stakeholder in the organization will require some kind of accounting of the activities of the organization. Funding sources require periodic reports on how their money was used and taxpayers require reports from government-run organizations. All organizations are required to report to the IRS, even if they are exempt from paying taxes. Referral sources will require updates on the status of their referrals. And, of course, the organization will need its own data collection and evaluation system, an issue that is covered in more detail in the next step.

You will need, at a minimum, a way of tracking finances and cases. Finances can be tracked on everything from ledger paper to full grant accounting and budgeting software. Your major financial concerns will be budgeting, payroll, accounts receivable and payable activity, and grant accounting. Many programs use a combination of spreadsheets and accounting software like Quickbooks™. Others outsource all of the financial work. You will also need to track your clients and volunteers. Sophisticated case management software is available from many sources, including the NHJCDN. If available resources do not allow for a comprehensive tracking system, paper files can be used. If that is the case, for reporting purposes, simple spreadsheets of crucial indicators such as age, sex, race, offense, referral source, and completion status should be maintained to avoid last-minute data collection nightmares.



Step 9. Evaluating the Program

A very important step in the overall program development is the establishment of an evaluation component. One of the major criticisms of social service organizations in the past has been the lack of internal monitoring, resulting in an inability to evaluate outcomes. In fact, diversion programs overall have yielded very little data from which an accurate evaluation can be made. As a result, there are few long-term studies to measure the effectiveness of programs. Without program outcome data, there is no way to know which services are most or least effective. As more and more funding sources are requiring evaluation data, showing a positive impact on your clients is necessary for initial or ongoing funding.

In order to know what it is your program has accomplished, both for your own information, your stakeholders, and your funding sources, a strong evaluation component is mandatory. For the information gathering and monitoring process to be effective, it must be directly tied to your program objectives. There is little point in gathering information and monitoring project activities if the data is not measuring your stated objectives.

A method for evaluating progress in achieving program objectives should be implemented in the program planning stage when concise and attainable objectives are being written. Over time, data will help you make future decisions about redesigning or modifying your program to attain improved results. The information can also be used to promote a broader understanding of the benefits that are derived from your diversion

project. The initial resistance to project monitoring and evaluation by some is a dread of increased paperwork. Developing standard case management procedures that include data collection in the beginning will minimize paperwork later on.

Note: Confidentiality is of major concern when working with youth in the juvenile justice system. Record keeping procedures should ensure that confidentiality is maintained both in terms of information collected and its dissemination.

The benefits of an effective monitoring process are:

- ! Documentation of project operations, the number of clients, sources of referrals, decisions made, and the outcome of those decisions provide accountability.
- ! Consistency between project operations and objectives. Are you are doing what you intended to do?
- ! Future planning and program improvement. With an accurate record of operations, it is much easier to recognize shifts in client flow or decision-making and effectively adapt to it. Consistent record keeping practices can validate the methods by which you provide services.
- ! Measuring cost effectiveness by using your data to compare your average cost with costs that might have been spent in providing services in the traditional juvenile justice model.
- ! Following-up on what happens to the youth you serve by showing how diversion helps them in their future dealings with the community at large. For example, you can track recidivism rates, graduation rates, or employment rates.

The following are some specific suggestions to aid in the design of an evaluation component:



1. Keep good records. All staff members must maintain consistent records of their activities. A program policy concerning record keeping is helpful. Often one runs into questions that could be answered by going through old records. Having good systematic information to go back to may be very useful later on.
2. Make use of generally accepted measures where possible. A local program would be wise to make use of the same categories of information as used by other agencies and build on them. Learn what measures are generally required by your funding and referral sources as well.
3. Collect opinions of the participants. A standard interview form can be the basis for data sampling. Participants can also keep diaries and other records to support the interviews. Rating forms (stating opinion on a scale from 1-10) may be useful in systemizing and summarizing information from those interviewed. Before this kind of information is collected, there should be agreements and guidelines for confidentiality.
4. Start the collection of some evaluative information immediately during the early stages of planning. This may make it possible to see needed changes as the

program begins. Formulating evaluation questions in the initial planning stage will also help clarify program objectives.

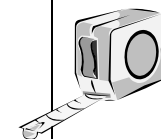
5. Develop a regular procedure of compiling monthly summaries. This will make the job of collecting yearly totals a manageable task. Discuss and generate ideas from the information collected each month. This will keep the program growing and make it easier to develop overall summaries for annual reports.
6. Review your information with a variety of audiences. Semi-annual or annual reports to the same groups of people who helped to design and support the project are important ways to maintain interest and collect reactions and new ideas.



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Depending on the type of diversion program you design, the information you might want to monitor will vary. A restitution program would be interested in knowing the types of offenses; the degree of client interaction with the victims of crimes; the *success* rate, perhaps as measured by victim satisfaction; the number of successful restitution projects completed by youth; and the total number of dollars restored to victims of juvenile crime. A counseling program, on the other hand, might want to monitor information based more on the progress of the youth and his or her social interaction with the community, i.e., progress at school, progress in interacting with his or her family, or continued contacts with the law (recidivism), etc. The following are examples of common evaluation processes.

Evaluation Purpose	Indicators
Did clients change their behavior?	Police or court contacts before, during, and after participation School attendance before, during and after participation School behavior: fights, suspensions, etc. Work attendance if applicable Family relationships (parental, sibling) Self-reporting of moods, emotions, and coping behaviors
Were expectations of the youth, parents, and referral source met?	Time lapse between referral and initial contact with youth by diversion staff Self-reporting to program by youth and/or parents Whether youth and parents were clearly told of program's purpose Whether responsibility of youth, parent and program were clearly explained Feedback from referral source Victim feedback
Is the program cost effective?	Number of youth served Amount of time with each youth Resources expended per youth Volunteer contact hours per youth Community service hours provided to community



Care should be taken not to limit your data collection to any single piece of information. All too often evaluative information on diversion has relied solely on recidivism rates to determine the success of a program. Recidivism rates should be a one part of an evaluation, but should not serve as the only criterion by which success is measured. One reason for this is that a diversion program or the referral sources may be selecting only low-risk candidates, without considering less sure candidates who may need the program's services more than those who may have succeeded without the diversion alternative. Additionally, until there is a method of getting statewide data, you can only measure recidivism in your court district.

Closing Words

It may seem like launching a diversion program is a huge task with many obstacles. Well, yes and no. Planning and preparedness are keys to success for any endeavor. However, when you have the support and resources of members of the community, the tasks become a lot more do-able. Remember, there are a number of successful programs in the state that started from one dedicated person with an idea to provide youth with an alternative and impact crime in their communities. We have tried to distill their experience and wisdom to help others with a similar desire. The Network wishes you luck and success.

Checklist for Success

- Conduct a Needs Assessment
- Determine the Structure of the Organization
- Identify Funding
- Determine Staffing Needs
- Select a Board of Directors
- Recruit the Diversion Board and Other Volunteers
- Determine Insurance Needs
- Determine Reporting Requirements
- Evaluate the Program

ⁱ Office of the Solicitor General, Community Kit for the Development of a Juvenile Diversion Project, Ottawa, Canada, (1979).