Project SUPPORT’s Transition Times

Project SUPPORT & Parole Services—Notes from the State Managers

John Pendergrass, ODE & Cindy Booth, OYA--State Co-Managers

This issue highlights the collaboration between the transition specialist and parole services in Project SUPPORT. The project was initiated to enhance service delivery to youth offenders with disabilities, conditions that may present additional barriers to youth gaining competitive employment. This multi-agency collaboration is essential to ensure a seamless service delivery system for project participants. OYA parole officers provide case planning and coordination throughout the youth’s OYA commitment. They are responsible for (a) developing and implementing the youth’s reformation plan, (b) supervising and monitoring compliance with court-ordered parole conditions, (c) coordinating purchased resources which address youth-specific needs, (d) providing communication between the youth and the family while the youth is committed to the OYA, (d) and assisting the youth to be accountable to victims and community. The transition specialist provides additional transition support for the youth by (a) assessing the youth’s disability awareness and transition needs, (b) serving as liaison with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors regarding the youth’s eligibility status, and (c) coordinating education and employment access.

In Project SUPPORT, the project’s transition plan and modifications to the reformation plan are developed collaboratively while the youth reside in the youth correctional facility. The project’s transition plan documents the types of services the youth will need upon leaving close custody ensuring that the services are based on the youth’s interests, needs, strengths, and life goals. The transition specialist works closely with the parole officer to organize access to community services immediately upon exit from close custody. This collaboration is a cornerstone for the success of this project.

In the next issue, we will focus on the collaborative process of providing employment services for Project SUPPORT participants. Access to Vocational Rehabilitation services for project participants provides a stepping-stone to long-term competitive employment in a career interest area of the youth. ♦

Project SUPPORT Engagement Outcomes

Youth who are actively “engaged” in both employment and/or education soon after exiting close custody are more than 2 times less likely to return to a correctional setting (Bullis, Yovanoff, Havel, & Mueller, 2001*).

Rate of Engagement for Project SUPPORT Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>% Engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>61%</td>
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Engagement = Employed and/or Enrolled in school & NOT incarcerated

These rates indicate that Project SUPPORT services are assisting project participants to gain employment or become enrolled in school.

*Transition Research on formerly incarcerated Adolescents in Community Settings (TRACS)—A study of 531 Oregon young offenders leaving youth correctional facilities.
Collaboration is the Key to Success

Two Transition Specialist Share their Experiences with Parole and Project SUPPORT collaboration

Randy Yoshida, Rogue Valley Transition Specialist & Molly Edwards, Multnomah County Transition Specialist

One of the primary goals of transition specialists in Project SUPPORT is to assist a parole youth with disabilities to find and utilize various social and support services based on the youth’s unique needs. This set of activities is similar to the job of the Parole Officer, but there are some important differences. Although the Parole Officer may require that the youth secure a job as a condition of parole, it is the transition specialist who works with the youth to accomplish this goal. A transition specialist is also able to work more closely with a youth to help with the process of enrolling with Vocational Rehabilitation, a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) agency, social services, or in appropriate educational placements. With Parole Officers carrying high caseload numbers, youth with disabilities may need additional services to support his or her transition. A transition specialist is this “extra link” to the Parole Officer to support these youth. Another benefit is that because the transition specialists are not Parole Officers whose role is to monitor a youth’s reformation plan and progress on parole, the relationship we build with a youth can be much like a mentor.

Randy Yoshida on Collaboration in rural areas. In a rural area a transition specialist may work in several counties in a region covering a vast geographic region. This distance presents additional dimensions to providing services. When working with several counties, I first learned that each parole office is operated slightly differently and it was necessary to learn the small “idiosyncrasies” of each office. Although the different offices have the same mission each office performs differently based on the needs of the local community. As in urban settings it is necessary to develop relationships with the various Parole Officers located across all the counties in my region. This was difficult because much of a Parole Officer’s time is spent “on the road” seeing his or her clients. A strategy that can be used to get to know a Parole Officer is to actually ride along with them when seeing a client, a pairing which also conserves mileage resources with the many miles that both of us drive in our area.

Molly Edwards on Collaboration in an urban area. Project SUPPORT in Multnomah County has a close-knit partnership with the OYA Parole Office. My office is actually housed in the Parole Office suites that allows for a lot of contact between the Parole Officers and myself. Many of the Project SUPPORT participants stop in the parole office for a weekly check-in with their Parole Officer. Often I am requested to be present at these meetings by either the youth or the Parole Officer. This partnership allows important information to be shared, concerns to be voiced, and group problem solving to occur when needed. Through the close partnership that has been developed between parole officers and myself, I have become a community resource for many of the Parole Officers. Parole Officers often request

Chad’s Next Steps

Molly Edwards, Multnomah Transition Specialist

Last Issue: Chad was identified through Project SUPPORT’s screening & referral process as eligible for project services. This issue describes Project SUPPORT services Chad receives, as he gets ready to leave the youth correctional facility.

Chad’s parole date to return to the community is in several months. Until his release, he will participate in a parole transition screening to help identify educational placement and his mental health needs, and establish his parole agreement. Chad’s Project SUPPORT transition specialist, parole officer, and facility education and treatment staff all participate in this process.

Chad currently meets weekly with his transition specialist to help him clarify his transition goals. Chad’s Parole Officer has identified his Aunt’s house as his aftercare placement. Chad had lived with this Aunt prior to incarceration and had been successful in this placement. His Aunt has been involved in his treatment at MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility and is committed to helping Chad transition. She would like Chad to pay her $100 per month for rent.

Chad’s goals include furthering his education and also earning money. The transition specialist researched various community programs, job training programs, and educational programs aligned with his career interests of construction or music. Chad reviewed the information with the transition specialist. He reiterated that he did not feel comfortable attending traditional high school. He explained that work was often too difficult making him feel hopeless and he ends up just giving up. Chad also decided that his interest in the military or Job Corps had waned because he wanted a break from such a rigid structure. The transition specialist gave Chad information on 2 programs a week to read about. He would then meet with the transition specialist to discuss the options. One of the options he had read about was a high school completion program at a local community college close to his Aunt’s house. The community college also provided certification programs in his current areas of interest.

The transition specialist and Chad completed the necessary financial aid paperwork to enroll in the construction job-training program along with the high school completion program. This way upon release he will be earning money and working towards his GED at the same time. The transition specialist provided Chad with a schedule for AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings in his aunt’s neighborhood. They also found a guitar class that fits into his school, work, and treatment schedule. Chad wants to make sure that his schedule is busy, yet interesting, and feels these things will be supportive once he leaves the youth correctional facility.

Next Issue: Chad travels the difficult path from the youth correctional facility into the community.
information or ask about various community resources that change quickly in an urban setting. I also serve as a member of the parole transition team that provides me additional contact with other community professionals such as county mental health, school districts, treatment centers, and foster parents—all needed contacts for Project SUPPORT.

Project SUPPORT is a Winner!
LuAnn Dallison, Linn County Parole Officer

As a Parole/Probation Officer I can’t say enough about how great it has to have a program like Project SUPPORT. Many of our clients leave the close custody system with very few positive “real life” experiences in the community. Transition into the community is often very difficult for all youth, in particular for youth with disabilities.

With caseload numbers on the rise, it is often not possible for a Parole Officer to provide effective, comprehensive individual transition services for youth with disabilities who present challenges to community reintegration. Project SUPPORT has become a wonderful asset and a welcome service.

Having a transition specialist provide a youth with additional guidance and support with daily tasks they are unfamiliar with is priceless. Assistance with (a) organization, (b) time management, (c) job search, (d) finding and accessing available community services, and (d) transportation provides these youth with a much higher potential for success within the community. Project SUPPORT provides all this and more.

I have had the pleasure of working collaboratively for over two years with a transition specialist serving Linn County OYA Parole/Probation office. The transition specialist has done a terrific job of working with some challenging young women on my caseload. She is great at keeping me up to date on progress clients are making that often include various work experience opportunities, jobs, or training classes. She also keeps me informed of some of the challenges or problems a particular youth may be experiencing in the community. Project SUPPORT has transition specialists representing all regions in the state. When one of my clients was transferred to new foster care placement, I had the opportunity to transfer my client to another transition specialist in the region where the youth was placed. The next region’s transition specialist was able to assist the youth with the needed local resources in the new community the youth was placed.

In my conversations with youth involved in Project SUPPORT, the youth have been appreciative of the services they have been provided. Overall, Project SUPPORT is an integral part of a comprehensive transition plan and I am thankful this service is available to the youth on my caseload. Congratulations to the transition specialists on a job well done.

Project SUPPORT Regions & Contact Information

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Molly Edwards: 503.793.2399

North Coast:
Verna Houle: 541.861.7388 X 271

Ochoco Region:
Jay Zwicker: 541.447.6768 X 222

Rogue Valley Region:
Randy Yoshida: 541.471.2862 X 269

Union/Baker:
Toby Koehn: 541.663.8801 X 333
Kristen Donivan: 541.663.8801 X 227

I will need help making my own food and like just going outside, being in public, job applications . . . just the simple things. They’re going to be hard like even doing my own clothes; it’s going to be hard because I haven’t done it in a long time. (OYA incarcerated male reflecting on leaving close custody)