



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

ADMINISTRATION

3200 East Highway 34
c/o 500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501-5070
Phone: (605) 773-3478
Fax: (605) 773-3194

September 24, 2003
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Michael Winder
(605) 773-3478

State Prepares to Launch Juvenile Offender Re-Entry Program

(Pierre) – The State of South Dakota will launch a program next month designed to help juvenile offenders transition back into the community following completion of a correctional program.

The South Dakota Department of Corrections was awarded nearly \$2 million in a federal grant program to develop the program.

The "Going Home" Initiative is being modeled as an intensive aftercare program to meet the needs of the youth returning to three distinctly different target sites: Rapid City/Spearfish, Sioux Falls and Sisseton.

The program is designed to focus on the individual needs of the youth and to provide "wrap-around" services to the youth and their families through intensive transition and aftercare programming and planning.

"These programs have shown a high rate of success when it comes to recidivism and re-incarceration and have become best practices in national studies", says Tim O'Daniel, project director. "The cost savings have been significant when compared to rising prison and re-incarceration rates."

South Dakota's program will target 200 incarcerated youth ages 15 to 19 over the next two and a half years for participation in the program.

The challenges of each target site require several models within the overall intensive aftercare model. Native American youth represent a high percentage of the juvenile caseload in the targeted communities, including 61% in Rapid City, 58% in Sioux Falls and 91% in Sisseton.

"This high disparity and the lack of success of Native American youthful offenders in traditional treatment programs requires a new way of doing business to meet their needs", says O'Daniel. "Partnerships with culturally specific providers and addressing this population needs with Native American Tribal governments in South Dakota is essential to the success of these youth."

School districts and public agencies are also being called upon to address the needs of mainstreaming these young men and women. Structure is the key element to this program and

education and employment are vital. The success of the programs depends upon the people and providers of these communities. The communities must be part of the solution in making these youth successful in their reentry and not part of the part of the problem. All these youth will be returning home at some point and we must make the effort to ensure they become productive members of our communities.

The grant has provided funding for thirteen positions: 1 Project Director, 3 Transition Specialists (one each to work with DOC facilities / private in-state facilities / private out-of-state facilities), and 9 Intensive Aftercare Specialists (IAS), including 4 in RC/Spearfish, 4 in Sioux Falls, and 1 in Sisseton.

As part of the program, partnerships and collaborations are being formed with community based and faith based organizations to enhance the services available to these youth and their families. The positions funded in this project are not DOC staff, but have been hired through various community agencies. These agencies include Wellspring Inc. and Black Hills Special Services Cooperative in RC and the Black Hills, Lutheran Social Services in Sisseton, Volunteers of America in Sioux Falls and Youth Services International, Inc. (Chamberlain Academy). These agencies have a significant history of providing services to at-risk youth within their communities.

A selection criteria has been designed to identify the most at-risk youth for participation in the program. The youth will be identified within 30 days of placement at a facility. Intensive aftercare program staff will work with the Juvenile Corrections Agent and the Facility Treatment staff in identifying transition and aftercare needs for each youth.

The IAS will work in the community with the family, school, employers, and providers in developing resources for the youth. Monies have been allocated from the grant to provide for these wrap-around services. A comprehensive Transition and Aftercare Plan will be completed 30 days prior to the youth's release, outlining the structure and goals of the youth. The IAS will be the primary agent when the youth is released from the treatment facility. While the IAS will be an advocate for the youth, public safety will be addressed with intense supervision and reportability.

The youth will remain on Intensive Aftercare up to nine months depending upon his or her progress at which time primary supervision would then return to the Juvenile Corrections Agent. The Intensive Aftercare Agents will carry a caseload of no more than 10 offenders in the community at any given time.