



CONCEPT PAPER

ROTARY “WOMEN EX-OFFENDER” MENTOR PROGRAM: Vocational Service in Action

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1.0 OVERVIEW

Within Rotary, Vocational Service is one of five (5) key avenues of service along with community, international, club and youth services. The information to follow describes what is believed to be a significant opportunity for Rotary Clubs throughout Washington State to make a profound impact on the lives of others through the avenue of Vocational Service.

Recidivism rates among incarcerated women appear to vary considerably, depending on the period of time since release (3 years, 5 years, or longer) and other considerations such as 1) prison only or prison plus jail time, 2) type of crime committed and 3) age of offender-- but a range of 20% to as high as 65% percent has been noted. It is generally recognized by those in the field that mentor programs in support of former prison inmates can have a **significant impact on inmate recidivism**. It is estimated that 72% of those who do return to prison do so within the **first year** following release, and 43% of those within the **first 3 months**. Accordingly, assisting ex-offenders to get on the right track **immediately** is crucial.

The cost of incarceration and recidivism to society is huge—both in human terms and in terms of hard tax dollars. In Washington State, as of December 2013, the total prison population of all facilities combined was 16,539, including some 1,212 women housed in 2 facilities, including

the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) in Purdy where 901 were incarcerated. (with a design capacity of 764, upwards of 940 have been housed at one time— with some sleeping on the floor). The WCCW estimates its annual cost to house one female offender (at a daily rate of \$123) is approximately \$45,000+ and if she has children (and upwards of 50-60% do) the cost can increase to around \$55,000+. **Perhaps most importantly, the social impact on the children, the family and society of an incarcerated mother is incalculable.** For example, the child of an incarcerated woman is 7 times more likely to offend.

The intent of the Rotary Ex-offender Mentor Program is **to have a direct impact** on the rate of recidivism by coming alongside offenders immediately upon release. Successful offender mentor programs have a number of characteristics in common, including at least the following:

- The mentor relationship between former offender and mentor is ideally established while the offender is still in prison, and continues following release from prison.
- In its simplest terms, the Mentor relationship is intended to provide an immediate bridge between prison life and life on the outside via a trusted Mentor who comes alongside to offer support, useful information re life on the outside and encouragement;
- Mentors can offer support in a variety of areas, including assistance with transportation arrangements, assistance with housing, reconnection with family/friends, assistance with admission into institutions of higher learning (colleges, trade schools, etc.), assistance with finding employment and many other areas—including active listening.
- The Mentor process involves periodic check-in and accountability between Mentor-Mentee typically weekly, with monthly face-to-face meetings;
- Both Mentees and Mentor's receive specific training and information on how to be effective Mentees and Mentors and what to expect/not expect from the relationship;
- Clear boundaries are established in the Mentor-Mentee relationship in order to protect both parties, both Mentor and Mentee;
- The duration of the Mentor-Mentee relationship depends on the parties, and is flexible, but generally around 12-24 months following release;
- Mentor's are themselves mature, well-adjusted, and compassionate-- and able to set clear boundaries; they are able to guide and suggest alternatives and options—while encouraging the Mentee to take full responsibility for their actions and decisions;
- The Mentor relationship is part of an organized mentoring program operating under specific guidelines, with accountability, transparency and oversight.

The State of Washington is comprised of several Rotary Districts including 5020, 5030, 5050, 5060, 5080 and 5100. Each District contains a number of clubs, varying from around 50 to as many as 88. Total number of clubs statewide is estimated at 300+. Most communities in Washington State of any size have at least one Rotary Club, with multiple Rotary Clubs found in virtually all of the larger cities. All total, current Washington State Rotary membership is estimated at roughly 20,000, with about 20% of this consisting of professional women. While the Rotary mentor program is targeted at Washington clubs because offenders are released only to Washington Counties, Canadian clubs in District 5020 and other Districts can be of tremendous help by contributing to the Women's Prison Scholarship Endowment Fund—

targeted at those offenders who want to continue their educations following release (some 75% have only a GED/high school diploma and will only qualify for minimum wage jobs unless they pursue higher education in some form).

The primary facility in Washington State for the incarceration of women is the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) located at Purdy, Washington, near Gig Harbor. WCCW offenders are released back to their county of origin—the county where their crimes were adjudicated and typically also their place of residence. The total offender population of the WCCW at any given time approximates 900-940, with some 30-45 typically released each month to counties all over the state--- or some 500/year. A summary of all released offenders by county of release, both male and female, for the period 2006-2013 is seen in **Attachment A**.

At the same time, as noted above, in virtually all counties within Washington State an extensive network of Rotary Clubs exists, which could potentially facilitate the assignment of Rotary Mentors to work with released women ex-offenders. In 2013 the 3 Gig Harbor Rotary Clubs initiated a Re-entry Employment Training (RET) program intended to better prepare WCCW offenders to successfully locate employment, further their education and otherwise successfully adjust to life on the outside after release. These Rotary clubs propose to offer some 4-6 RET courses each year, with an approximate graduation rate of up to 20-25 offenders per course or a potential of from 100-120 graduates per year depending on the number of courses offered and number of offenders per course. **It is anticipated a significant number of RET course graduates will want to participate in a Mentor program if one is offered by Rotary.**

Accordingly, in order to further strengthen the RET program and more fully prepare offenders for life on the outside and in the job market after release, formation of a Rotary Statewide Mentor Program is believed to be a logical step in making a significant impact on recidivism. In creating such a Mentor program, the following general parameters are offered for consideration:

1. Initially, only WCCW Offenders successfully completing the Rotary Reentry Employment Training (RET) Course and within 12 months of release would be eligible to participate;
2. Over time, a statewide pool of trained Rotary Mentors (and friends of Rotary—the program is intended to be open to other persons and organizations as well) would be created, ideally with Mentors available in all or most cities and counties within the state; Accordingly, mentors could include both Rotarians and non Rotarians, however, all subject to the guidelines and monitoring established by Rotary. Mentor participation would be strictly voluntary, without compensation, as is typical of Rotary volunteers. Creation of the mentor pool would require promotion of the Mentor concept at the various Rotary District Conferences and District Leadership Training Assemblies held throughout the state, in cooperation with each District's governor and council. It is envisioned that once established the Mentor program would be coordinated with the WCCW out of a single statewide office working in concert with each Rotary District and participating clubs within each District. The concept would first be piloted with District 5020, and selected Rotary clubs within District 5020 on a trial basis in order to refine the

concepts, protocols, policies, etc., with possible expansion to then include clubs in Pierce and King Counties, followed with the addition of other counties over time. Development of a full statewide mentor program could take several years.

3. Offenders desiring to participate would communicate this to Rotary and the WCCW via the RET course (all Mentees **must** have completed the Rotary RET course in order to participate). The Rotary-WCCW Statewide Mentor Coordinator would then notify the receiving Rotary District and participating Rotary Club located in the receiving community of the offender would be notified. A suitable Mentor would be identified and the Mentor-Mentee relationship established, followed by requisite training for both Mentee and Mentor.
4. Female Mentees would be matched with female Rotarians (or friends of Rotary) or Rotary couples consisting of husband/wife teams (and significant other teams); female Mentees would not be assigned to male-only Rotarians (friends of Rotary)—only to Rotary couples where both husband/wife are participants together in the Mentor relationship.
5. Clear guidelines and protocols would be established for the Mentor-Mentee relationship based on the experience of other similar mentor programs, in order to best serve and safeguard the needs of all parties; various other mentor programs exist hence models and information already exist. It is not the intent of the program to reinvent the wheel but rather to draw upon information already available from other sources.
6. The duration of the Mentor-Mentee relationship is subject to mutual agreement between the Mentor and Mentee, but generally 12-24 months following release.
7. This Statewide Rotary mentoring program may hopefully benefit from the current IF Project mentoring Pilot now underway with the WCCW under the sponsorship of the Seattle Police Foundation. In cooperation with Seattle University as the monitoring/evaluation entity, this 2-year pilot project will hopefully test the efficacy of post release mentoring. The pilot now includes some 26 former offenders in a targeted and controlled mentoring project involving volunteer mentors from both King and Pierce Counties.

2.0 STRUCTURE

The Rotary Mentoring Program is envisioned to entail 3 development stages, Pilot, District, and Statewide, as follows:

2.1 Pilot Phase

During the pilot phase a single Rotary District (District 5020) and selected Rotary Clubs within District 5020 would participate. A District 5020 Vocational Service Sub-Committee would be established to oversee the Mentor Pilot; each club participating in the pilot will also establish a small Mentor Pilot subcommittee of 2-4 persons within Vocational Service, responsible for coordinating the Mentor Pilot in their club; the pilot would run for

approximately 2 years. Given its proximity to the WCCW, it is envisioned the Gig Harbor Rotary Vocational Service Committee would play a coordinating role between the WCCW, the District 5020 Sub Committee and the participating Club Vocational Service Committees.

- During this phase operating policies and procedures would be developed and codified by the **District Vocational Service Sub Committee**; this committee would play a role in designing, implementing and monitoring the pilot phase of the program;
- During this phase the **Participating Clubs Vocational Service Sub committees** would play a role in coordinating the implementation of the program in their respective clubs, including selection and training of mentors, assignment of mentees and ongoing monitoring of the program; a limited number of clubs throughout District 5020 would be selected to participate, perhaps numbering 6-8 total; **Attachment A** provides an approximate profile of the relative distribution of released mentees by county; the total number of mentors/mentees may approximate from 30-50 during this phase; graduates from the Rotary RET course will number some 100-120/year and all mentees must have graduated from the RET course; of these, perhaps 35% would be released to counties within District 5020, or perhaps some 35-40/year, with some 16% released to Pierce County alone. Indications are that a high number of RET course graduates would like to have a Rotary mentor based on previous conversations with many RET students.
- At the end of this phase an evaluation of the program would be conducted and the results utilized to make adjustments in the program;

2.2 District Phase

During the District Phase an effort would be made to expand the program to other clubs within District 5020, ideally with clubs in most of the major cities of the District on the Washington side participating—perhaps numbering up to 40+ clubs, with a combined mentor population of some 100-200 Rotarians/Friends of Rotary throughout the Washington side of District 5020;

- During this phase the goal will be to recruit additional participating clubs, train these clubs in the program, and successfully place mentees with mentors in each club; the duration of this phase will likely run 2 years or more;
- Monitoring of the district-wide program will be especially important as additional clubs and Rotary mentors become involved;
- An evaluation of the program will be conducted at the conclusion of the 2-year District pilot to encompass all aspects of the program.

2.3 Statewide Phase

During the statewide phase, it is envisioned the District 5020 program will be taken to the other 5 Rotary Districts on a district-by-district basis, given that offenders are released all over the State of Washington. Again, the total number of RET graduates in any given year is currently estimated at up to 120, meaning the upper limit on mentee placement will be 120/year to Rotary Districts throughout the state.

- During this phase of the program, it is logical the program would be expanded to those Districts corresponding to the largest numbers of released offenders, i.e. District 5030 Seattle/King County, District 5050 Bellingham, District 5060 Yakima, District 5080 Spokane and District 5100 along the Oregon border;
- Total annual mentor/mentee placements would be limited to the number of RET course graduates or roughly 120/year throughout the state—or roughly 24% of the total 500 women offenders released in any given year; to this extent, the number of placements is limited solely by the number of RET graduates and the availability of Rotary mentors.
- Vancouver Island contains at least 3 correctional facilities, the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Center and William Head Institution in Victoria, and the Nanaimo Correctional Centre. Discussion of the Washington State strategy as a model for adaptation should be explored by District 5020, possibly leading to an eventual British Columbia strategy incorporating Rotary vocational service as well.

3.0 RECRUITMENT OF MENTEES AND MENTORS

It is envisioned recruitment would entail a number of strategies and approaches, as follows:

- The recruitment of women **mentees** will be done within the Rotary RET courses, where students will be offered the opportunity to work with a Rotary mentor following release; all students will complete a mentee application and will be screened for acceptance into the program; not all who apply will be accepted based on screening criteria to be adopted (see sample Mentee application, **Attachment B**);
- The recruitment of Rotary/Friends of Rotary/Community mentors will utilize a variety of approaches, to include at least the following:
 1. A video featuring the Rotary RET program/need for mentors titled ...("Another Chance"...will be sent to all Rotary Clubs at the appropriate time depending on the 3 phases noted above; funding for copying and distributing 500 copies of the video has been awarded via the Seattle Police Foundation; Links to a 2 minute trailer and 11-minute "Another Chance"...video on the Rotary Women's Prison Programs are seen at: <http://vimeo.com/seatofthepantsproduction/review/74315818/e5bd0cc265> <http://vimeo.com/seatofthepantsproduction/review/86751073/5689dbab43>
 2. Presentations to Rotary clubs, other service clubs, faith-based and community organizations of all types where Rotary is invited to share the concept; it is envisioned both Rotary and non Rotarians will volunteer as mentors;
 3. Presentations to Rotary Clubs at DLTA, annual district conferences, sub-groups of clubs within districts and other similar formats;
 4. Launch of a Rotary Women's Prison website with the capacity to enable clubs and individuals to sign up and to donate directly to the women's prison scholarship fund; a website is being created at www.rotarywomensprison.com and an Email address assigned at: rotarywomensprison@gmail.com
 5. The development of Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and related forms of electronic communication will be considered.

- All mentors will be requested to complete a mentor application (see **Attachment C**) and complete a background check; other mentor recruitment strategies as may be identified and adopted will be implemented.

4.0 TRAINING

Training will involve both mentees and Rotary mentors, as follows:

- As a component of Rotary Reentry Employment Training classes taught by Rotarians in the WCCW (roughly 5 classes of 25 students/year plus offender taught classes, for a total graduation rate of approximately 125/year) offender students are invited to apply to participate in the Rotary mentoring program. Those selected must generally be within 12 months of release and meet other criteria as noted in the application. A large number of offender students are anticipated to apply for a mentor.
- Offenders selected for mentors will participate in training programs before release specifically designed for them; components of this training will include 1) the development of a training manual for mentees, 2) use of the JPay offender Email system that permits communication by mentors with their assigned mentees, 3) meet and greet opportunities for mentors/mentees to meet at the WCCW prior to the mentee's release, and 4) other forms of training as may be determined.
- Mentors selected for the program will be trained using a variety of means including 1) development of a manual for mentors (various model documents and materials already exist and will be adapted to the Rotary mentor program), 2) training programs for mentors will be held in strategic locations to include video conferencing/telecasts, 3) training manuals, videos and other materials will all be posted online at the www.womenprisonprogram.com website, and 4) periodic group check in opportunities will be structured and 5) other means adopted as appropriate.

5.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation will be especially important to the success of the program given the diverse environments/communities in which it is being implemented. Preliminary concepts are as follows:

- Ongoing **monitoring** will include 1) monthly reporting (written) by each mentor to an oversight entity, 2) periodic meetings/conference calls with mentors to obtain regular feedback on the program and 3) periodic meetings with groups of mentors to receive group feedback on the execution of the mentoring process.
- **Evaluation** of the program will be undertaken at the conclusion of each phase, i.e. pilot phase, district phase and statewide phase; the services of persons qualified to conduct these evaluations will be obtained, either on a donated or contracted basis, and if contracted, funded by Rotary through specific grant sources for that purpose.
- It is anticipated that technical expertise via the criminal justice programs at University of Puget Sound/UPS/Tacoma, St. Martin's University/Lacey or Seattle University will be utilized in the conduct of program evaluations.