



**SAFER COMMUNITIES STRONGER FAMILIES**

**Mid-Year Report**

**October 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020**

**Project Funded by**

**Michigan Department of Corrections**

## **I. Executive Summary**

The overall objective of the Safer Communities Stronger Families (SCSF) project is to promote offender success and reduce recidivism, by providing various programming and supports to justice involved offenders who are considered “moderate to high risk” of committing another crime. This collaborative effort between Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit (Goodwill Detroit), the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), and the Wayne County 3rd Circuit Court provides Wayne County Courts (and other sentencing courts mutually agreed to by Goodwill Detroit and the MDOC) with a viable alternative sentencing option for moderate to high risk offenders. The success of the program reduces the number of offenders who commit new crimes and are ultimately incarcerated in state prisons, reducing the corrections expense borne by taxpayers across the state.

In fiscal year 2020, the SCSF project continues to deliver solid outcomes for participants, and as a result, a large cost-savings to the taxpayers of the State of Michigan. These outcomes continue to be delivered in the face of overwhelming odds, working with participants whose barriers to employment are among the most challenging in the entire state.

Adult education outcomes for the initial six (6) months contract period were strong. Financial literacy and management outcomes are also noteworthy. Employment outcomes for male participants are trending just below the quantitative goals for FY 2020, but we are encouraged and optimistic that we will conclude the year favorable. Results for women participants, however, continue to lag behind the FY 2020 metric/goals, and will need to be improved.

The MDOC and Goodwill Detroit agreed upon revised set of program metrics and offender eligibility (December 2019) for the remainder of the contract year will result in enhanced programming, increased participant positive impact and outcomes, and improved data sharing by contract end September 2020.

## **II. SCSF Participants and Their Challenges/Barriers**

Participants in SCSF are referred directly by the, the MDOC’s Probation Department, and the Wayne County Third Circuit Court Judicial Branch.

As one would expect, SCSF participants in the City of Detroit, and Wayne County overall, have a variety of barriers to employment and, more importantly, life success.

While the list of barriers may be similar to the list one could put together for offender populations across the state, the intensity of the challenges for SCSF participants is likely much more acute (mirroring other aspects of Wayne County population data as compared to state population data).

Overall, many trainees are not prepared for life success. Housing or food insecurity, and some of the immediate challenges that most face. They are remarkably disconnected from the educational, financial, health, and employment systems that could offer a positive path forward. Most do not have a State ID or Driver's License, have no personal/dependable transportation, and have limited, to no work experience.

Their educational attainment levels are significantly low, and many struggle with identified and unidentified learning disabilities. While many can identify words, most have low reading abilities, and have difficulty expressing their thoughts on paper in writing, and cannot adequately or legibly complete employment application on paper or online.

The need for child care is a profound barrier. When combined with the transportation, food, and housing challenges, the resulting aggregation of barriers is challenging.

A significant number of the women served are traumatized as a result of prior sexual abuse, and many have experienced sexual assault and/or domestic violence. Many are also dealing with family court issues including the potential removal of children from their care, while being underemployed and/or unemployed.

Compounding these challenges, most SCSF participants were reared in environments where criminal behavior was acceptable. Their social networks are of little help in transcending these barriers and in most cases those networks are actually an obstacle in and of themselves. In particular, many of the men are members of formal or informal street gangs that are engaged in regular criminal activity. Those that aren't members of such gangs were generally "raised by the streets" and, as a result, were either socialized in a similar manner or learned to avoid all social support systems as a survival tactic.

Finally, there are aspects of the criminal justice system that create barriers to employment and life success for SCSF participants. Probationers often communicate that they are required to visit their probation officer during the day—a requirement that is inconsistent with the expectation that they gain and maintain employment, especially in cases where they are expected to work an 8 or 10-hour shift.

Participant impact results frequently require 18, 24 or 30 months, and participant referrals occur throughout the fiscal year, meaning that results frequently are not available at the end of the fiscal year.

The following data reflects the FY 2020 SCSF participants enrolled during this reporting period:

- Just over 90% of participants enrolled during this period are on probation, and 30% are repeat felony offenders, and therefore are in need of a diversionary strategy in order to avoid long-term incarceration
- Over 85% of men, and over 70% of women lacked a high school diploma or equivalency degree. The majority of both the male and female participants, consistent with past years, initially scored below the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level in math, and at or below the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level in reading
- Less than 55% of men have even held a traditional job, or has been previously employed
- Over 70% of participant's report being challenged with both transportation and housing, which usually means that there is no permanent residence in place after program completion

### **III. Services, Strategies, Activities and Progress Toward Goals**

Goodwill Detroit's Flip the Script program, which operates SCSF, has successfully responded to these challenges for nearly two decades. The program has its roots in service to parolees, but over the last 10 years has increasingly focused its attention on alternative sentencing efforts and reducing the likelihood of recidivism among probationers participating in them.

Flip the Script's holistic and personalized approach is designed to successfully divert probationers from costly state confinement, while continuing to produce measurable outcomes. SCSF participants are expected to focus on personal growth, educational attainment and skills acquisition. Probationers must face and confront the same pressures that sent them to court in the first place. In addition to building this lifestyle resolve, participants must learn accountability for life's demands, such as childcare, work, and schooling. The investment the probationer is required to make in their own success is critical.

Supporting SCSF probationers and ensuring their success is a total community effort. The continued validation from our community partners, including the Detroit Police Department (DPD), the Office of Detroit Mayor Michael Duggan, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, and the United States Attorney’s Office ensures that our reach in supporting SCSF participants extends beyond Flip the Script’s facility.

Rookie officers from DPD join their veteran deputy police chiefs in immersion sessions with SCSF cohorts, building bridges that will assist in fostering healthy relationships between police and community residents.

The Flip the Script program has been lauded by national thought leaders in reentry services. It is recognized as a leading program internationally, so much so that it periodically hosts visits from international audiences seeking to learn best practices in reentry and community reintegration work. In addition to national and international experts who acknowledge the success and importance of Flip the Script, SCSF participants consistently report high customer satisfaction results when surveyed on their experience. For example, 97% of respondents agreed SCSF had a positive direct impact on their lives.

SCSF individualized and group programming includes a variety of services designed to meet the needs of participants:

- Intense counseling, coaching, and mentorship
- Assistance obtaining legal identification, including state ID, birth certificates, and driver’s licenses
- Financial literacy and related services, including basic budgeting, debt avoidance, credit counseling and repair, assistance with recovery from identity theft, money management, assistance opening their first bank account, and exposure to other financial tools
- Remedial education services, basic literacy, and digital literacy
- An intense ‘Rites of Passage’ program that focuses on social skill building and personal accountability
- Work readiness counseling and coaching
- Wraparound services and supports to meet basic needs

**A. Community -Based Male Alternative Sentencing Program**

SCSF programming continued to deliver strong outcomes for male participants.

	<b>FY 2020 Goals</b> <b>10/1/19 – 9/30/20</b>	<b>FY 2020 Actual</b> <b>10/1/19 – 3/31/20</b>
Target Number of Enrollees	185	111 (60%)
Number of program completers (80% of total enrollees)	148	64 (43%)
Number of Job Placements (70% - Percentage of participants placed in competitive employment with 90 calendar days of completion)	130	27 (20%)
Number achieving 30 day retention (80% - Percentage of employed participants achieving 30-day employment retention)	104	20 (19%)
Number achieving 90 day retention (80% - Percentage of employed participants achieving 90-day employment retention)	104	8 (6%)

At MDOC’s request, we are also reporting this data in a new manner. Many program participants require two or more job placements before achieving employment sustainability. They frequently fail to maintain their first placement due to the accumulation of years of poor interpersonal and social skills, household distractions, and negative peer pressure.

Twenty-four (24) participants entered the SCSF program employed from July 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020. Their 90-day employment retention measure will occur post June 30, 2020. The Flip the Script team continues its emphasis on supporting participants to retain employment beyond their initial 30 days.

**B. Education Recovery for All Adult Populations**

Ninety-four (94) probationers have enrolled in remedial educational programming as of March 31, 2020. Participant services included classroom activities in reading and math, as well as one-on-one tutorial sessions. Plans for fiscal year 2020 include the full implementation of the Online GED Academy activity, along with the high school completion alternative, HiSET high school equivalency.

	<b>Program Goals</b> <b>10/1/19 – 9/30/20</b>	<b>FY 2020 Actual</b> <b>10/1/19 – 3/31/20</b>
Number of Enrollees	175	94 (54%)
Number of participants achieving grade level increase (80% of Total enrollees)	140	84 (60%)

Twenty-two (22) participants were actively engaged in remedial education services as of March 31, 2020. These individuals will carry-on through the FY20 to ensure continuation of their educational goals. More than half of these individuals are pursuing their final test to completing their GED.

The following tables reflect the reading and math grade levels improvement for all enrolled Educational Recovery participants.

	<b>Entry (TABE)</b> <b>Reading Level</b>	<b>Reading</b> <b>1 Level Grade Increase</b>	<b>Reading</b> <b>2 Level Grade Increase</b>
Grade (9th -12th)	25	13	5
Grade (7th – 8th)	21	17	6
Grade (5th – 6th)	34	18	9
Grade (4th – 1st)	33	17	7
	<b>Entry (TABE)</b> <b>Math Level</b>	<b>Math</b> <b>1 Level Grade Increase</b>	<b>Math</b> <b>2 Level Grade Increase</b>
Grade (9th -12th)	15	9	5
Grade (7th – 8th)	26	11	6
Grade (5th – 6th)	43	18	10
Grade (4th – 1st)	32	13	7

Twelve (12) participants achieved their GED during this reporting period.

Additionally, 39 FY2019 probationers continued their educational goals beyond September 30, 2019.

The table below reflects FY 2019 probationers’ carry-over educational progress in FY 2020.

FY19 SCSF Carryover	Entry (TABE)	Reading	
	Reading Level	1 Level Grade Increase	2 Level Grade Increase
Grade (9th -12th)	12	12	12
Grade (7th – 8th)	8	8	8
Grade (5th – 6th)	12	12	10
Grade (4th – 1st)	6	6	5

FY19 SCSF Carryover	Entry (TABE)	Math	
	Math Level	1 Level Grade Increase	2 Level Grade Increase
Grade (9th -12th)	12	12	12
Grade (7th – 8th)	8	6	6
Grade (5th – 6th)	12	9	4
Grade (4th – 1st)	6	4	4

### C. Beyond Jobs Women’s Empowerment Services

This service component offers gender and cultural specific career development and continuing education for women 16 -39 years of age. It provides ongoing supportive services that focus on workforce development and workplace readiness for eligible women facing critical issues including poverty, homelessness, and domestic abuse.

During this period, the women’s program continues to experience referral challenges from the MDOC and Wayne County Circuit Courts due to life and COMPAS score challenges. As made clear by the data in the table below, those challenges were continually exacerbated by the COMPAS score requirements, resulting in fewer referrals for services before the eligibility revision in December 2019. The revised program metrics for women will facilitate recruitment and enrollment of broader women referrals from MDOC and Wayne County Circuit Courts.

As an outcome of the revised local marketing and recruitment messaging implemented in mid-January 2020, we project a significant increase in women’s referrals during the next six (6) months, which will have a significant impact to the contract goals achievement.

	<b>FY 2020 Goals</b> <b>10/01/19 – 9/30/20</b>	<b>FY 2020 Actual</b> <b>10/01/19 – 3/31/20</b>
Number of Enrollees	75	15 (20%)
Number of Completers (80% of Total enrollees)	60	1 (1%)
Number of Job Placements (70% of Total enrollees)	53	4 (8%)

Although there were referral challenges, there were also some successes to celebrate. Three (3) women achieved their GED and eight (8) women successfully completed 3 of the 4 parts of their GED exams. Four (4) women secured jobs at an average starting wage earnings of \$10 - \$12 per hour.

**D. Other Program Services—Financial Literacy and Coaching and Transitional Work Experience**

All SCSF participants are provided the opportunity to access Goodwill’s Center for Working Families services for support with financial literacy, financial planning, and income supports services. This service supports low-to-moderate income individuals and families in achieving greater economic prosperity and the means to pursue their life goals.

During this fiscal year, eighty (80) SCSF participants have benefitted from individualized financial services. Seventy-seven (77) probationers accessed their credit report for credit counseling and developed a personal budget. Twenty-eight (28) individuals started building savings, with an increased net worth. Twenty-three (23) probationers reduced their non-asset related debt.

Thirteen (13) participants engaged in Goodwill Industries’ paid work transitional work experience activities earning wages while developing soft skills for future sustainable employment.

#### **IV. Lessons Learned and Future Plans – Next Six Months**

Since delivering the SCSF program model for five years, and delivering reentry programming for nearly 20 years, the Goodwill Flip the Script team continues to establish collaborative and trusting relationships with participants to support their life quality improvement.

We have learned that when a SCSF trainees' physical needs have been adequately addressed, attendance improves moderately, participation drastically improves, and transformation begins. Participants are provided with a variety of personal hygiene products, including toothbrushes and toothpaste, mouthwash, soap, deodorant and underclothing. Work clothing and boots are also provided.

A partnership relationship between Flip the Script staff and probation officers is a significant determinant of a person's long-term success. When SCSF participants realize that the teams are working together to resolve their challenges, participants become more accountable to the court's orders. As a result, Flip the Script staff have continued to encourage all agents who have trainees enrolled to take advantage of our site/space to engage probationers, and to designate times after 3:00 p.m. at Flip the Script facility to conduct their interviews, which improves probationer compliance and attendance.

The likelihood of participants completing the program improves dramatically if they remain engaged through 12 weeks. More importantly, the odds of a dramatic transformation in the life of the participant also improve after that same period of time. It takes consistency, continuity and frequency for SCSF participants to develop a trusting relationship with the role model staff at Flip the Script and to begin to accept how deep-seated trauma has affected their lives.

The Flip the Script team is continuing to implement improvements to SCSF programming for participants. These improvements include:

- New GED and academic testing tools and resources (e.g., GED Online Academy) inclusive of Singapore Math Strategies, and Trauma Informed Teaching
- Improved strategic alliances with local businesses (especially those located on 24-hour bus lines) and other human service agencies in order to ensure competitive placements and job retention
- Enhanced outreach to Wayne County Circuit Court and to Probation Officers

- Partnerships with local mental health professionals and childcare providers
- Usage of a career development scorecard early in the ‘Rites of Passage’ curriculum
- A new partnership with Generation to deliver Customer Care training to interested participants— graduates will be placed at DTE Energy, Henry Ford Health Systems, OmniCare, and other local employers
- Advocacy for the use of restricted driver’s licenses to allow employed participants to drive during work hours; and
- Pairing all SCSF participants with a financial coach prior to employment as opposed to post employment

## **V. Conclusion**

In conclusion, Flip the Script’s SCSF services are a critical component of the alternative sentencing structure in Wayne County, and is a reliable path out of criminality for those participants with felony convictions seeking an oasis of hope and life transformation.

Participants view SCSF as a viable alternative to gang life and criminality. The project also commands a high level of respect, and engagement with local law enforcement agencies. Goodwill Detroit’s Flip the Script SCSF project has achieved sustained success, and provides a proven, cost-effective community-based resource for reintegration of offenders and the reduction of recidivism.