

2018
Missouri State Employee Award of Distinction

Kim Mills

Category: Innovation

Nominated by: Lori Burk

Department of Corrections



Kim Mills

Probation Officer II

Parolee Re-Entry Skills Building Program: Recognizing an opportunity for the Department of Corrections to serve clients more effectively, Officer Mills developed a program that supports just released parolees attempting to navigate numerous challenges so they can move forward with their lives. On her own initiative, she researched best practices and networked with providers to create this innovative program.

Immediately upon their release, parolees are enrolled in counseling. Once engaged in treatment, their needs can be quickly assessed. Working with local treatment providers, Officer Mills locates counselors who come to the Clinton Probation office and provide either individual or group treatment sessions to clients. The average time it takes a parolee to normally access outpatient counseling or mental health treatment is 30 days. In Officer Mill's program, that time is shrunk to just 24 hours.

Participants are given a life goal sheet and forms for getting organized and identifying possible barriers. Information parolees provide is used to determine what services they need to enhance their ability to overcome challenges, obtain a job, and become productive citizens.

Officer Mills works with a Citizens Advisory Board to obtain funds to help clients purchase forms of identification, such as a birth certificate, which is necessary to obtain a driver's license. She finds resources to help participants create a resume and identify employment opportunities they can then utilize to gain employment.

A six month analysis comparing participants in this program to those who didn't participate was remarkable. Only 18% of the Henry County parolees who participated in the reentry program had technical violations of their parole compared with 83 % of the Henry County parolees who did not participate in the reentry program.

While this program is completely voluntary (there are no penalties for participants failing to miss counseling), they rarely miss appointments. This program has a much higher attendance rate than other programs with mandated participation.

Recovery Graduates providing Pathways to Change Training: Another innovative idea Officer Mills developed was to have Recovery Graduates complete the cognitive restructuring *Pathways to Change* facilitator training. This program is designed to foster substantive behavioral change, reduce recidivism, and strengthen relationships. Special arrangements were made to send two ex-offenders through the Pathways to Change facilitator training. After graduation, they became the first ex-offenders in the State to work with probation officers to deliver Pathways sessions to clients. The clients were very receptive to having someone who has walked in their path deliver the classes.

Officer Mills on her own initiative developed an innovative parolee re-entry program that bundles a broad array of support services in a timely manner designed to maximize the chance parolees can move forward with their lives and become productive members of society.