

Summary Debriefing

October 23, 2009



Access to Services:

- A new county prosecutor, and prosecution staff changes, created transition mid 2009 that may have temporarily interfered with expedient filing of juvenile petitions.¹
- This is a system where it appears that juveniles may be denied the services of the Fremont County Juvenile Treatment Court (hereafter referred to court supervised treatment program) and other programs, and even possible protection of juvenile court due to a very full court docket.
- Private property minor under the influence cases (MUI) can now be charged into circuit court and juvenile court so that the court supervised treatment program may be able to become involved and provide services sooner for the juvenile and family.
- The SYNC review found that this **court supervised treatment program does a great job**, once the system delivers a client to the program. Unfortunately, this delivery can sometimes be lengthy.



Quality of Services including support for recovery:

- Level I court supervised treatment program:
 - Shorter program:
 - Cases where there are limits of probation to six (6) months and treatment recommendations indicate outpatient treatment. New drug/alcohol uses set in motion potential to file new charges, increasing probation and re-evaluation of treatment needs. In this way, client behavior drives lengthening the program. Due to the lengthy time required to file a juvenile petition, this level of drug court is rarely used.
- Level II court supervised treatment program:
 - 8-12 month program.
 - All clients come from juvenile court.

¹ In a conversation on February 1, 2010, the program coordinator reported that this matter has resolved itself.

- Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) is used by the court supervised treatment program and all clients use it while in treatment.² Several people interviewed site the effectiveness of this program.
- A probation officer for Fremont County Youth Services is recognized as giving a client every chance to work their program before moving to refer or revoke a client.
- This court supervised treatment program is perceived as being very individualized for the client while following a core set of values and principles.
- Case management is provided through a contractual agreement with Fremont Counseling; this arrangement seems to be providing quality services for youth.
- Parents report having a clear understanding of the expectations of the court supervised treatment program for their child.



Collaboration:

- Critical agencies in Fremont County report good communications with the court supervised treatment program and that they received needed information from the program.
- A monthly joint meeting helps coordinate with the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Tribes. Additionally, weekly school wide disciplinary meetings promote good communication and collaboration among the court supervised treatment program and others.
- A client who needed inpatient treatment was able to obtain it through the collaborative efforts of Fremont Counseling and the client’s attorney.
- A client who is in Copper Hills and receiving educational services will be able to transfer those credits to St. Stephens and St. Stephens seems to be helpful in accommodating that transfer. According to a parent interviewed, St. Stephens has not always been helpful in the past with credit transfers.
- This review found many, many different agencies and personnel who meet regularly to share information to the extent possible and coordinate services for the best interest of children and families.

² More information about MRT can be obtained at: <http://moral-reconciliation-therapy.com/>.

Fremont County Juvenile Treatment Court

Lander and Riverton, Wyoming

October 2009

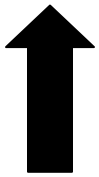


Overarching principals as reported from review participants and others:

- Generally, juvenile cases are managed by stipulated agreement after being advised by an attorney at an initial hearing before the juvenile court judge.
- The Fremont County Attorney, which operates as the single point of entry, uses Fremont County Youth Services to help screen juvenile issues. This seems to be a great way of managing juvenile cases with regards to information collection to determine how best to proceed with the case in court.
- There appears to be a great emphasis placed on early intervention in this community. However several clients interviewed stated this court supervised treatment program was always the place where something “really” happened for the participants through assessments and treatment services.
- Municipal court cases are moved up to circuit court; however, this process can slow down services. In one case, it took four months for a juvenile to begin to receive court supervised treatment program services:
 - Three months for an initial hearing;
 - six weeks for a multi disciplinary team meeting (MDT) to occur and make recommendations, then
 - the private attorney took two to three weeks to finalize arrangements.
- In an interview with two separate parents, they reported trying to obtain services from the Northern Arapaho and Riverton DFS offices prior to entering the court supervised treatment program but did not receive a call back.
- Statutes that allow court supervised treatment programs are seen by many as being disjointed and hard to function effectively under; many people interviewed see the need for a juvenile court system.³ Generally through this review process, local communities are creating and managing some very effective systems in a very disjointed larger system.
- The juvenile process needs to be streamlined significantly.

³ Among those supporting a true juvenile court system is the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel.

- Wait periods are extreme for juvenile court docket time.
- Since 2007, Fremont County has utilized a decision tree set out by the county attorney in an attempt to guide and coordinate the process for juvenile cases from municipal, circuit and juvenile court. In addition to these courts, juveniles offending on the Wind River Reservation are charged in tribal courts. Multiple entry points in the legal system, along with multiple agencies operating in multiple jurisdictions unique to Fremont County can contribute to confusion.
- There are four different agencies providing probation services in this area. Juveniles in district court who are also Northern Arapaho juveniles are supervised by Northern Arapaho Department of Family Services (DFS); Eastern Shoshone juveniles are supervised by Eastern Shoshone DFS, non-native juveniles are supervised by Riverton and Lander DFS. Juveniles cited in circuit and municipal court are supervised by Youth Services of Fremont County. Juveniles must be supervised by the appropriate agency to access services and funding streams associated with these agencies as well as include cultural sensitivity in supervision.



Strength Findings:

- Travel assistance exists from the tribal programs for parents who want to go visit their children in treatment; however confusion existed on how to access the service.
- Fremont Counseling provided a client a gas card upon request so the parent could visit a child in treatment.
- A tribal representative has a great deal of confidence in the court supervised treatment program as it holds clients very accountable in the treatment of clients.
- The court supervised treatment program “Staffing” is acknowledged as being extremely productive; professionals involved feel that they have very good input.
- Case management is provided by Fremont Counseling; it is reported that the case managers are effective and are respected by the clients and their families.
- The court supervised treatment program judge is recognized as being sensitive to the client’s needs; such as a Native American client being able to talk to a tribal elder instead of a counselor.
- One parent found the court supervised treatment program graduations to be inspirational and a good support structure; it gave the parent encouragement to support her child going through the program.
- Client’s parent reports that the court supervised treatment program did a very good job of explaining the program’s requirements and expectations.

- A recovering methamphetamine parent realized the need to hold her child accountable and to contact law enforcement and other officials when needed; the parent reported that the court supervised treatment program had been very supportive.
- *Parents with Loving Limits Program* is seen as being a very useful program, but individual scheduling and numbers of sessions per year seems to limit participation.
- Fremont County Youth Services coordinates well with the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS) on “back grounding” juvenile issues.
 - Often times DFS will provide a letter of recommendation to the County Attorney on juvenile issues.
- Potential clients of the court supervised treatment program need an assessment that indicates a substance abuse problem; the probation officer will then use the evaluation to recommend drug court.
 - It may be that clients will be able to enter the court supervised treatment program in the future on a charge such as property destruction; and if the evaluation then shows a substance abuse or dependency issue they may be recommended to the court supervised treatment program sooner.
- Clients and their parents are free to choose who conducts an evaluation; however if Fremont Counseling conducts the assessment it is provided free to the client and their parent(s).
- Efforts of the case managers for this court supervised treatment program may have "saved a client's life," according to one parent.



Opportunities for Improvement:⁴

- A client reports that the entire family could have used support services while the one child was in the system. The parent is recovering from methamphetamine usage and all three children have substance abuse problems.
- A youth was released from Wyoming Behavioral Institute (WBI) in less than a week with no follow-up by the treating doctor or WBI staff. The Parent had called DFS about filing a Child In Need of Supervision (CHIN), but never received a return call from DFS after being promised one.
- An intensive outpatient therapy session at Fremont Counseling was cited by one client's parent as being ineffective.

⁴ Not all opportunities for improvement are specific to Fremont County Juvenile Court Supervised Treatment Program.

- A parent felt that the Northern Arapaho probation officer was not as effective or consistent as they had hoped they might be, or as helpful as others in the program had been.⁵
- It appears that there is a constant “turnover” of counselors both at Indian Health Services and Fremont Counseling that directly affects clients and the stability of the programs.
- A Northern Arapaho probation officer does not have monthly contact with a client who is in residential treatment. It was also quite clear that a Northern Arapaho probation officer had not established a working relationship with the client and had not made any preparations for the juvenile coming back to the community once released from treatment.
- In two cases a parent reported actively trying to get their children into services prior to entering the court supervised treatment program but could never “really make the connections.”
- It is interesting to note that there exists a great deal of confusion among professionals interviewed in the community as to how exactly a juvenile can be referred or admitted to the court supervised treatment program.
- A Northern Arapaho case worker has had to place four juveniles out of state due to few local residential treatment options.
- When juveniles first start to act out, it appears that maybe the education system and others are slow to recognize and recommend services. Several people interviewed felt that until the court becomes involved, there are not many early services to assist children and families in this area. This is interesting as some people interviewed feel there are early services and some do not. What this may be is a very confusing system being driven by a disjointed state system of statutes, rules and regulations along with the difficult issues unique to Fremont County and the Wind River Indian Reservation jurisdictions and corresponding agencies.
- It appears that a very full court docket may prevent timely services and some juveniles from entering the court supervised treatment program.
- Coordination with a non-Fremont Counseling psychiatrist and the monitoring of medications was reported to be a problem in one case.
- Basketball on the Wind River Indian Reservation is important to juveniles and can be classified almost as a cultural issue. However, intensive outpatient treatment for adolescents (IOTA) makes it very difficult to honor that tradition.

⁵ During this time frame the Northern Arapaho Department of Family Services was undergoing multiple staff turnover and management changes.



General Findings:

- Due to the limited docket time and intense needs of current clientele only the most criminogenic clients, with entrenched maladaptive behavior may be getting into the court supervised treatment program.
- If clients are evaluated on a “medical model” while in treatment rather than a more appropriate “mental health” model, it may cause the release of a client from residential treatment prematurely.
- The system that "gets a client into treatment" is the same system that "gets a client out of treatment."
- Probation officers are provided by Northern Arapahoe DFS, Eastern Shoshone DFS, Riverton and Lander DFS and Youth Services of Fremont County for the court supervised treatment program.
- Clients have met with an attorney prior to their initial hearing. At the initial hearing, clients are advised of their rights; admit or deny guilt to the charges, then, if the juvenile admits guilt to the charges, a stipulated agreement is entered into for admission into the court supervised treatment program.
- Instability of changing administration and staff within the Northern Arapaho makes it hard for others to collaborate with them.
- It appears that cases on the Wind River Indian Reservation and within Fremont County are becoming more severe and difficult cases prior to entering the court supervised treatment program based on this SYNC review.
- The Community Juvenile Services Board (CJSB) initiative needs assessment should focus on timely access to services for juveniles; the court supervised treatment program needs to be involved in this community assessment. Possible questions that need to be answered in this assessment include:
 - What is the capacity of the courts to deal with problems?
 - What exactly is the real problem in this community?
 - Is a true juvenile justice system needed in Wyoming?
- Court supervised treatment program services are prompt; the process of getting into the program can be cumbersome.
- Often parents don't know what to ask for to obtain services for their children before the matter rises to the level of charges being filed. Not specific to this treatment court, but the community in general should ensure that programs for youth and families are well known in the community.