



Circles of Support and Accountability
Gathering Report

Calgary, Alberta • January 14-17, 2008

Funded by Public Safety Canada and
Correctional Service of Canada – Chaplaincy




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History of Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA)

—Dr. Robin Wilson, Former Psychologist for the Correctional Service of Canada, currently member of The GEO Group, Florida Civil Commitment Centre and Andrew McWhinnie, CoSA Regional Coordinator (Western Canada)

Sexual offenders are unwelcome in virtually every community. The mere thought that such a person might possibly move to one's community inflames negative public sentiment beyond seemingly every other contemporary social issue. Until recently, some released sexual offenders in Florida were living under bridges. Now, they have been evicted from even those locations. In other jurisdictions, there is virtually no place within city limits that is not within 1000 feet of a park, school, daycare, or community centre. As a society, we are slowly but surely banning known sexual offenders from our midst. We are forcing sexual offenders into lives of secrecy. However, given that secrecy is a hallmark of sexual offending, are we, in our haste to rid ourselves of these people, potentially making the situation worse?

The Good Lives Model (Ward & Stewart, 2003) suggests that we must see offenders as whole persons if we hope to achieve maximal reductions in recidivism. Balanced, self-determined lifestyles (Curtiss & Warren, 1973) are, by definition, free of criminal behaviour. This is a necessary goal for offenders who seek to change their future and gain some balance and perspective in their lives. For the community-at-large, we need to remember that offenders were once members of the community and that, with appropriate rehabilitation and monitoring, many of them can likely reclaim some aspect of their former lives. Instead of pigeonholing offenders as Bob-the-sexual-offender, we need to consider that a more realistic appraisal of the individual requires acknowledgement of Bob-the-son, Bob-the-mechanic, and Bob-the-father, among others. It has become increasingly clear that the community's failure to appreciate the wholeness of offenders has perpetuated the sort of marginal, disaffected anomie that likely contributed to Bob's offending in the first place.

While many legislators, law enforcement personnel, and members of the community have worked to increase monitoring and decrease access for sexual offenders, others have attempted to build bridges to this population in the hope that engagement will assist in increasing safety. Many in this latter group come from faith communities or other groups steeped in restorative justice traditions.

The Birth of CoSA

In the summer of 1994, a man named Charlie was about to be released from an Ontario prison. Convicted of multiple sexual offences involving young boys, this was not good news for the residents of Hamilton, Ontario, where Charlie was planning to reside. Moreover, some of Charlie's friends and congregants of a local Mennonite community church, had no idea that they were about to change the way people considered "high risk" were received in Canadian communities and internationally.

Dr. Bill Palmer, a clinical psychologist with the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) was Charlie's therapist in prison. No one knew the risks Charlie posed better than he. And Dr. Palmer also knew that once Charlie was released, both he and the CSC would be powerless to do anything about the risks Charlie posed. Dr. Palmer contacted Dr. Robin Wilson, his counterpart working in community corrections in Toronto, Ontario. He wanted to know, was there anything that could be done? Without appropriate supports and supervision, the probability that Charlie would harm another child was high. Dr. Wilson's response was less than heartening. In essence, the criminal justice system had more or less run out of options in Charlie's case. His release was imminent, there were no services for him and apart from police surveillance, there was little the community could offer Charlie. To Palmer and Wilson, something—anything—that would help Charlie stay safe in the community was needed. But what? To whom could they turn?

The answer came from a circle of friends that had come around Charlie during the last time he had been out, and from the Rev. Harry Nigh and his congregants at the Mennonite church. Harry Nigh knew Charlie from the time when he headed a person-to-person outreach to prisoners, called "M2 W2 (Man to Man, Woman to Woman)." Further, some of the people who had known Charlie the last time he had been released had been exploring ways of supporting Charlie this time, and had also been in contact with Reverend Nigh. Bill Palmer contacted Harry Nigh and these friends and facilitated a meeting at the penitentiary to plan for Charlie's

release. It was there that the idea of the “circle of on-going support” was brought up—“a Charlie’s Angels group” as Harry referred to it in his minutes. The idea was drawn from other work these friends had been experimenting with in supporting other ex-prisoners to live offence-free, and from an even earlier initiative which had proved successful in supporting people with disabilities to live independently in the community.

In hindsight, Reverend Nigh recalls a sense of foreboding, and he knew he could also have simply said there was nothing he or his church community could do, and that Charlie, in fact, posed too great a risk for their small community to take on. But that did not happen. Instead, Harry gathered several from his Hamilton congregation, and together they fashioned a response of “circling” people like Charlie to provide support for them as they worked at re-establishing themselves in community. Members of this faith community responded by welcoming Charlie in their midst. Charlie presented many challenges to this first circle, and soon they realized that the circle needed to have an accountability component to go along with its supportive work. With that realization, the first of what has now become, “Circles of Support and Accountability” (CoSA) came into being. The roots of CoSA run deep within the community of the faithful, and among the community of restorative justice in south-central Ontario.

A second circle followed quickly on the heels of this first innovative response on behalf of community members to a serious threat to their collective safety. It soon became apparent to those involved and to many who were observing that they were witnessing a break-through in the reintegration of sex offenders [or, individuals who had offended sexually]. These observations were made known to the Commissioner of Corrections, who agreed to fund a pilot project in the cities of Hamilton and Toronto. As part of that pilot, organizers were required to collect the necessary empirical evidence to show that these “CoSA” actually functioned in the interest of public safety.

The current project recognizes the growth of CoSA in Canada and abroad. It also recognizes the quality of the research that has been done with respect to the South-Central Ontario pilot project, and the apparent success of that project in working with high risk sex offenders (individuals who are at high risk to offend sexually). Further, this project also recognizes that an effort to generalize the earlier research finding was made by looking at other sites in Canada, and that similar outcomes were also

observed. However, no comprehensive evaluation of CoSA across multiple sites in Canada has been undertaken to date. Further, results obtained from previous research pertain only to high risk sex offenders released at the end of their sentence. The application of CoSA with other offender cohorts has not thus far been attempted. Within defined parameters and using a unique research methodology, this project examines CoSA across multiple sites of operation in Canada, and with other segments of the sex offender and non-sex-offender populations.

Research Related to CoSA and International Developments

—Prepared by Otto Driedger

One of the questions that inevitably arises is “Does Circles of Support and Accountability reduce recidivism”. In response to this important question, substantial research has been done by Dr. Robin Wilson and his colleagues. The first major research project was done in Southern-Central Ontario where there is the greatest number of Circles. A second project was Canada-wide. To quote Dr. Wilson:

In 2005 the first of two outcome studies providing reoffense data was published by the Correctional Service of Canada (see Wilson et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2007b, c, d). In this study, we compared 60 men who had been involved with COSA in the South-Central Ontario Region to 60 matched controls. The matching protocol was intended to ensure that the two groups would be different only in that one group had been involved in a COSA and the other had not. In looking at the comparative rates of reoffending, there were striking differences. In terms of sexual reoffending, the men who had been (or still were) in COSAs reoffended at a rate 70% less, while rates of violent reoffending (57% less) and general offending (35% less) were also strongly encouraging.In the second studyin other centres in Canada ...the results were equally encouraging.”

Other studies have been initiated to look at the effect COSA has, not only on the core member, but on Circle volunteers and professionals in the justice systems. A major Canada-wide research initiative is being formulated that would provide a much more exhaustive study of COSA and its impact. The British initiated a variation of the COSA approach in 2002 and are having equally encouraging results. A circle of Support and Accountability is a specific application of the values and principles of Restorative Justice. “Restorative Justice is a movement gaining momentum” as expressed in an article by



Otto Driedger. Major developments are in process in the U.S., U.K., Western continental European countries, Australia, New Zealand and are also developing in Eastern European countries. Direct service programs, alternatives to the criminal justice system, university programs school initiatives (e.g. anti-bullying) and many other initiatives form part of the movement.

Background for the CoSA Gathering in Calgary

In June of 2004, James Loewen from the Mennonite Central Committee of Canada was approached by two coordinators of CoSA programs to provide support for the meeting together of MCC-related CoSA program coordinators in conference calls. The rationale for this request included the strong feeling of isolation that each program felt, as well as the need to share challenges, learnings, and successes with each other.

The first call occurred in September of 2004 which included seven participants. It was determined by those on the call that a quarterly conference call would be a good way to start building relationships and agenda for the conversations. It soon became apparent that a key feature of this call was the opportunity to experience support, encouragement and belonging.

Not long after the conference calls began, Correctional Service Canada (CSC)—Chaplaincy's person in charge of the CoSA portfolio, David Mohlzan, expressed interest in having all CoSA programs across Canada participate in the calls. In support of this, he assumed financial responsibility for the facility of the conference calls and participated when possible.

The rationale for all to participate was strong, and with the agreement of the current members of the calls, it was agreed to open participation to any program doing CoSA work. These broader invitations lead to several energetic calls with as many as 17 participants. While this was a challenge to facilitate, the basic need to connect, support and belong was still being met.

During the calls, many different agenda items were identified. These included discussions around insurance, staff care, volunteer training, funding, accountability, support mechanisms, housing, model variance, and other topics associated with ongoing program delivery. At times, the agenda was shelved to provide guidance or assistance with a crisis that presented, or to give encouragement to new ideas.

Despite the skilled facilitation of the calls, many needs could not be met in the context of a phone call. Face-to-face conversations were very much needed. For the MCC-affiliated programs, this need was partially met during the yearly Restorative Justice Network Gatherings of MCC Canada. At these times, focused dialogues moved issues forward and provided concrete support and relationship building. Unfortunately, only a few of the CoSA programs in Canada could take advantage of this yearly event.

In 2004, Andrew McWhinnie pursued a dialogue with Public Safety Canada (then known as the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness) with the idea of mounting a national evaluation for CoSA projects in Canada. This evaluation would examine the CoSA model, its structures in various settings, and attempt to close in on what variables within the model gave CoSA its apparent successes. Also discussed were ways in which instances of where CoSA was not successful could be examined.

After nearly a year of dialogue, a Public Safety researcher contacted Andrew to indicate the department's willingness to move on this idea. In the fall of 2005, work began in earnest to mount the evaluation project. At the same time, the research department of the Correctional Service of Canada indicated their eagerness to evaluate the model as well. A partnership between PSC Corrections Research and the CSC Research Department was considered. The Chaplaincy Directorate offered \$25,000 towards the project, over and above what the Regional Chaplains were already contributing to individual CoSA programs in their jurisdictions. As part of the evaluation process, it was agreed that a national conference of CoSA providers should be held to discuss the idea of an evaluation, and as a way of gauging support among CoSA providers for such an undertaking. Conference planning was begun in the spring of 2006, and, as a result of a conference call with the Providers; it was decided to approach the Church Council on Justice and Corrections to see if they would be willing to act as the Contributions Agreement holder. This was necessary since CoSA did not (and still does not)

have a national organization of its own. James Loewen is a Board Member with CCJC, and he obtained their willingness to participate.

James also wrote the proposal on behalf of CCJC to hold a national CoSA Conference, and it was submitted to PSC. The proposal was accepted and it was launched into the committee process of PSC and forwarded to the Department's finance committee. However, at about the same time, a national election was held and the government changed hands. The proposal landed on the Minister's desk and went no further as the new government sorted through its priorities. The evaluation project was essentially shelved until further notice.

In the summer of 2007, several CoSA managers noted that the criterion for inclusion in NCPC-funded evaluations was amended in a way that cleared the way for groups like CoSA to apply. In August of that summer a small gathering was held in Winnipeg, hosted by Joan Carolyn of the Winnipeg CoSA, primarily to discuss an upcoming, unrelated project. This gathering proved, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that there was a definite and profound need for CoSA staff and volunteers to get together. With this sentiment, another national conference call was held with all CoSA groups nationally. This group appointed Andrew McWhinnie, Susan Love (CoSA coordinator in Ottawa) and James Loewen to make official enquiries with NCPC's Executive Director, Robert Cormier, to see if a national evaluation plan was feasible. The results were encouraging. It was nevertheless felt that a national conference was still needed to gauge support for the idea. The conference would also act as the opportunity for CoSA groups to meet nationally for networking and support.

The CSC's Chaplaincy Division, along with the Corrections Research and Policy Division of Public Safety Canada, were approached to sponsor the event with the acknowledgement that two outcomes would be produced: 1) that is approved by the CoSA providers in attendance, a formal proposal for a National Demonstration Project under NCPC's Research and Knowledge Development Fund would be prepared for submission to NCPC; 2) that a formal report of the gathering would be prepared.

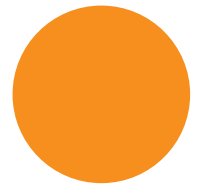
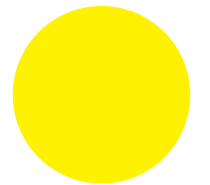
In-kind contributions were solicited from MCC Canada. Lacking a national organization of its own, the CoSA provider's group still needed a community partner organization to take charge of the conference and act as the administrator of a funding contributions agreement with Public Safety and the CSC. Again, the Church Council on Justice

and Corrections was approached through James Loewen's contacts to see if they were still interested in partnering with CoSA for this undertaking. With CCJC's decision to proceed with CoSA, a new and significant chapter in the history of CoSA was born.

An amended application for a funding agreement with which to sponsor the conference was submitted to Public Safety Canada, listing the CSC Chaplaincy, CCJC and MCC Canada as co-sponsors, was prepared and submitted to PSC in the fall of 2007. It then followed the same torturous path up the chain of approvals, this time finding fulfillment as a Christmas present. Cliff Yumanski of PSC made a heroic last stand on the last working day before Christmas Eve 2007 and delivered the good news as most of us were beginning to contemplate turkeys, trees, and tinsel.

While the application was making its way through the various levels of approval, the conference committee was busy making preparatory arrangements in the hopes that we would be successful. This committee was made up of various CoSA coordinators, and other interested parties, such as CSC Chaplaincy, MCC Canada, and Andrew McWhinnie. Various sub-committees took on the planning of the agenda, inviting keynote speakers, planning logistics, selecting hospitality gifts, and coordinating calls.

After the funding was received, a mere four weeks before the date of the conference, the committee went into a frenzy of activity, resulting in a powerful, productive and passionate conference which left all participants with a sense of having participated in something historic and profound. Indeed, in the history of CoSA in Canada, the Calgary Conference resulted in an historic unanimous vote to forge ahead with plans to submit a proposal to NCPC for a national demonstration project of CoSA in Canada. This conference was the culmination of four years of relationship-building, dialogue, and coordinated effort requiring the efforts and cooperation of many. Everyone is extremely grateful for the opportunity to have come together and optimistic that the relationships will flourish and the good work being done in the community will continue for decades to come.



CoSA Gathering - A Personal Reflection



—*Megan Backus (placement student who was responsible for documenting the goings-on at the Gathering)*

From January 13-17, I was fortunate enough to attend the 2008 CoSA Gathering in Calgary, Alberta. Needless to say, this was an experience that I will not soon forget. For five days I was surrounded by individuals who, through their empathy and open-mindedness, have been able to bring about real, positive change in the lives of those commonly rejected by society for their crimes. I can honestly say I came back from Calgary a better person. This conference really shed light on the true meaning of community and the benefits that can be derived from building relationships with core members, as well as among ourselves.

The most memorable aspect of the conference for me was hearing the personal stories of program representatives and guests through their involvement in the CoSA program, especially through the question and answer session with Bobby Oatway. I felt that these sessions aided my understanding of the concepts that had been discussed in the previous days and really allowed me to see the human side of this program. Moreover, I found it extremely interesting to listen to the volunteers from CoSA Calgary speak during the second Bobby Oatway session. During this time, one volunteer in particular talked about her own struggles having family members incarcerated and the support she gained from her fellow circle volunteers. This, in particular, was very enlightening for me because it suggested that this program offers individuals the opportunity to engage in relationships that they have been deprived of in their everyday lives. Through this example, I concluded that the CoSA mandate and ideals are very much applicable to everyday life and can most definitely be extended to dealing with offenders who commit a vast array of crimes.

I feel that it is important to note that I have a great deal of respect and admiration for the coordinators, volunteers, and professionals affiliated with the CoSA program. Their hard work and dedication to this program has had measurable positive effects on the lives of core members, as well as all those involved. I understand that working with sexual offenders is not for everyone, and that it takes an extremely special person to take part in a CoSA circle. I feel that we can all learn a lot from these individuals and this program, including how to

support offenders who are our fellow human beings with needs that are too often overlooked.

CoSA Gathering Summary Circling Together - Core Conversations

Monday, January 14: Arrival Day

- Welcome by Rick Burk, introduction of guests and speakers by Andrew McWhinnie
- Introduction of each project/program represented (max 5 minutes each – approx. 2 hours)

Tuesday, January 15: Day 1

- Presentation by Bob Cormier, Executive Director for the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC)
- Presentation of national opportunity for CoSA projects to participate in the Research and Knowledge Development Fund (RKDF) as a Demonstration Project to test/examine interventions with high-risk sex offenders.

Open discussion with Bob Cormier, Andrew McWhinnie, and Robin Wilson on Contribution Agreement Proposal for Project Evaluation

—*Facilitated by James Loewen*

Concerns of program representatives on the evaluation of individual sites included: time and financial constraints; trust and confidentiality issues of core members; loss of autonomy of individual sites (e.g. to determine eligibility of core members and structure of programming); and possible repercussions should a site choose not to participate.

Bob Cormier addressed the issue of financial constraints by stating that funding from the RKDF will aid individual sites in sustaining the activity that would be evaluated (namely CoSA circles), as well as to commence the evaluation process; financial support would be available over a 3 year period (possibly 5).

Bob Cormier suggested that the Demonstration Project should focus on core members who have reached warrant expiry and are therefore no longer under correctional jurisdiction. There is some concern over this among program representatives who do not believe that a client's jurisdiction should determine his eligibility for the CoSA program (a CM could be released at Warrant Expiry Date [WED] - or held to sentence completion, then reoffend and be released on an LTSO); it was argued that CoSA

is a program that focuses on the client, not his/her bureaucratic arrangement.

All sites are asked to participate in evaluation; however, it was noted that there will be no repercussions for those sites unable to commit to an evaluation at this time. The importance of conducting evaluation that includes all sites and the need for more inclusive information regarding CoSA projects including structure, model and recidivism, is highlighted by Robin Wilson. However, Bob Cormier explained that sites not participating in the evaluation would not be eligible to receive funds.

The importance of developing a national body to represent multi-site CoSA projects was discussed as a requirement of eligibility for the RKDF. It was agreed that the creation of a national identity will be discussed in further detail in near future with the target being one year's time.

Program representatives were asked to vote on whether conversations surrounding the RKDF Demonstration Project should continue. All present representatives voted in favor of continuing conversations.

The group agreed to create a Steering Committee of trusted individuals to develop a draft proposal, to be submitted to NCPC by March 31, 2008.

Coalition and Alternatives Presentation by Monica Patten and Paula Speevak Sladowski

Monica Patten, President and Chief Executive Officer of Community Foundations of Canada, spoke to the struggles faced by her organization in its path towards the creation of a national identity.

Monica highlighted the importance of various single sites in maintaining autonomy should the representatives decide to develop a national identity. Monica also discussed the significance of building trust and relationships among members of the organization. Paula Speevak Sladowski, Managing Director of the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development, lead the discussion on the importance of a name for groups, such as CoSA, in developing a national identity. Paula also introduced to the group the 3-C Model of Cohesion, Connection, and Capacity while exploring levels of cooperation among different projects.

The question and answer period following this presentation centered mainly on the appropriate name

for CoSA should the projects decide to form a national identity. There was also discussion about concerns of individual projects in maintaining flexibility within their own programs, as well as the possibility of a formal, national structure creating power struggles and possibly corruption.

“Hunting Bobby Oatway”, documentary with discussion with Bobby Oatway

This documentary focused on Bobby Oatway's release from prison and subsequent struggles attempting to reintegrate into communities that were not welcoming to the idea of having a sex offender living among them. Also featured in the documentary were comments from Bobby's victims.

In speaking to the group, Bobby expressed gratitude towards CoSA and all those involved with the program. Bobby briefly discussed his own victimization during childhood. He explained that he had come to believe all of the negative things that have been said about him over the years because it was repeated by relatives, community members and the media. Only through his participation in CoSA and with professional help was he able to address these issues. When asked if he believed if his own victimization caused him to offend, Bobby disagreed – instead, the realization of his own victimization helped him see his victims in a new light. Bobby stated that he accepts speaking engagements to talk to different groups and organizations in an attempt to give back to the community for what he has done, and to show appreciation for the support he received from his Circle.

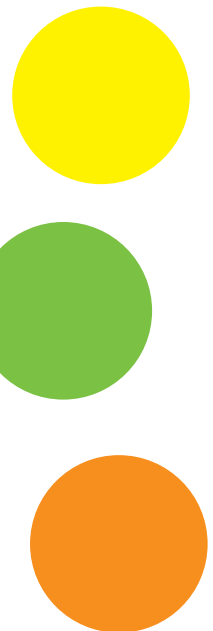
Wednesday, January 16: Day 2

- Stories for our Journey: “I’m Sorry”, by Jean-Jacques Goulet

Mental Health Presentation by Dr. Patrick Baillie, Forensic Psychologist



Dr. Baillie's presentation mainly focused on the identification and management of problem behav-





our, including the challenges and strategies for volunteers and others. Dr. Baillie reviewed common mental illnesses that could be experienced by core members, as well as highlighted strategies for dealing with the behaviour associated with these illnesses.

Following his presentation, Dr. Baillie addressed several questions/concerns of CoSA representatives. One of these was the concern of psychopaths participating in the program; the issue with these individuals is that they are incapable of being cured and participation in programs, such as CoSA, carries the risk of the development of a dependency relationship among the core member and volunteers or professionals. Dr. Baillie suggested that these individuals should not be admitted to the CoSA program as core members. Furthermore, when asked about the treatment of pedophiles in the CoSA program, Dr. Baillie distinguished between pedophiles and those individuals who commit sexual crimes against children in the absence of comparable adult relationships. Dr. Baillie suggested, although genuine pedophiles cannot be cured, that they can be prevented from re-offending through risk management strategies. Dr. Baillie was also asked about FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) and why this wasn't included in his presentation. He explained that FASD is not included in the clinical diagnostic assessment and the notion is to address the behavior associated with the condition and not dwell on its cause.

Open Space Workshops

Vicarious Trauma

Defined as 'when the darkness touches you' and the long term effects of working with individuals who commit sexual offences on frontline workers and volunteers. This group discussed the difficulty faced by workers and volunteers in acknowledging that they are being affected by their work. Additionally, it was suggested that there is a lack of support for staff and coordinators of CoSA programs, especially for those who are situated in remote locations. In terms of coping strategies, this group suggested debriefing sessions following circle meetings, finding reliable people to talk to, setting up support systems

ahead of time to be utilized at a time of crisis, as well as engaging in daily self-care that requires an awareness of one's own body. Finally, this group suggested that the concept of vicarious trauma be incorporated into Best Practices and the creation of a buddy system for coordinators who may have a lack of peer support.

Training

Participants in this workshop shared their own experiences of what has and hasn't worked for each of their programs in regards to training. They emphasized the importance of individualizing training to be specific to the needs of the core member, as well as the significance of ongoing and 'refresher' training. Moreover, although this group felt that training guidelines are important, they do not believe that training can be standardized; guidelines should therefore be adaptable to need and situation. Finally, this group recognized the lack of availability of shared resources and stated that training resources should be posted on a website to be shared among all CoSA groups.

Housing

This group discussed the difficulties faced by many CoSA groups in aiding core members to acquire suitable housing, especially in dealing with high-profile core members. A few sites have attempted to solve this problem by leasing housing and subsequently renting rooms or apartments to their core members. This was considered to be a possible solution to housing issues surrounding those individuals who could not live on their own. This group also felt that networking was important to finding adequate housing within the community and that it is essential to build relationships with other individuals and organizations within the community who will help support the core members by providing them with a place to live.

Best Practices

To begin, this group emphasized the importance of keeping a 'low profile' for core members, especially during the first week of his arrival in the community; for this reason, this group was opposed to public notifications. Additionally, it was determined that it is extremely important for coordinators to ask and determine what volunteers consider their 'best gifts'; these skills can be later utilized to ensure the core member derives the most benefit from his/her circle. It was also noted that the selection process for core members should begin at least four months prior to the individual's release from the institution. Finally, this group highlighted the importance of screening core members and rejecting those who are not

agreeing to the covenant and those who are denying guilt.

Second Discussion Session with Bobby Oatway and members of CoSA Calgary

Bobby stated that what he did not like about his circle was the fact that he was required to disclose his life story, including the history of his victimization and offending, during the first session with virtual strangers. Bobby also expressed disliking the fact that when he shared an aspect of his life with one volunteer, the volunteer would subsequently share this information with the rest of the circle. Bobby stated that this made him feel uncomfortable as he would not feel comfortable speaking to all the volunteers about the same things.

It was interesting during this session to listen to the volunteers from CoSA Calgary. In particular, one woman shared her story of being the wife and mother of men who had been or were presently incarcerated. This woman described her relationship with her fellow volunteers as being essential to her survival during this difficult time as not many people could understand or sympathize with her life circumstances. This is an excellent example of how CoSA circles aid in the rebuilding of communities and relationships that have been severed due to crime. Perhaps Moira and Melanie can elaborate on a few points made by some of their core members.

Movie and Discussion “The Woodsman”

Following the screening of this film, discussion surrounded the possible implications of using this film in volunteer training sessions and/or in the context of a circle with a core member. In regards to volunteer training, one coordinator stated that he feels this film is useful for volunteers as it demonstrates the cycle of reoffending and how to recognize this progression. However, it was also stated that elements of this film are highly improbable, which should also be conveyed to new volunteers. Another coordinator shared the story of viewing this film during a circle session with a core member who felt that this film was a clear representation of his own life. It was believed that watching this movie as a group strengthened and deepened the relationship between the core member and his circle. Nonetheless, others stated that they would not show this film to core members, as some scenes are highly unrealistic and may give the individual an inaccurate perception of his own limitations in terms of reoffending. The movie might wrongly encourage core members to put themselves in a risk situation

to test their ability to control their impulse to reoffend.

Thursday, January 17: Day 3

- Stories for our Journey: “Healing, a Ritual” by Jean-Jacques Goulet

Next Steps Conversation

—Facilitated by James Loewen

Demonstration Project Steering Committee

- Time frame for RKDF proposal set for 90 days – aim for submission on March 31/08.
- Need to acquire application form from NCPC to determine the shape of the proposal (Andrew will access this)
- Draft of proposal will be sent to members of the Steering Committee for comments and revision during a conference call on January 22, 2008.
- Following these revisions, feedback will be requested from all CoSA representatives before the final submission.

Pan-Canadian Framework Consultation

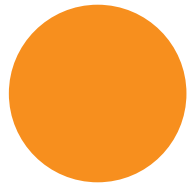
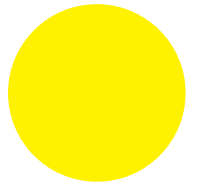
- Framework to meet national needs.
- Time frame set for one year; possibly begin discussion following submission of draft proposal to NCPC.
- Suggestion for Steering Committee to discuss national identity, take on project following completion of draft proposal; however, it will be the responsibility of all representatives to ensure that the Steering Committee moves to that discussion after working on the evaluation project.

Evaluation

Everyone will be asked to participate in an evaluation of the conference via email.

Future Gatherings

- The general consensus was that representatives would like to see CoSA gatherings occur on a yearly basis.
- Issues regarding funding, future gatherings will not be funded through RKDF; must be discussed in further detail in near future.
- Bob Cormier suggests focusing on victim’s issues during the next gathering to be able to apply for funding from CSC Victims Services.





Communication

- Tyler Soon will look into creating a web-based forum to promote communication and information sharing.

- Representatives expressed the desire of creating a website where training materials can be collated and accessed by all coordinators.

Comments from the event evaluation:

Did the Gathering create opportunities for interaction and relationship building among attendants?

The relationship-building was worth the whole time and cost - the rest was gravy.

It was a great opportunity to develop relationships and share stories. Having met people and had the opportunity to get to know them will make communication through impersonal means, such as e-mail and telephone, much more effective. It gives one hope and inspiration to know that others are doing the same work, facing similar issues and obstacles but also having successes.

I got to know B.O. a bit and he offered to contribute his 'story' to the project that I'm currently working on that looks at the need for treatment for victims who are also offenders of sexual abuse. I really enjoyed the evening with the Calgary volunteers and core members - it's what we do! But perhaps the group was a bit too large to achieve the intimacy needed for real discussion. It was a great opportunity to meet and communicate with all of the project coordinators and to learn more about the similarities and differences in the way we conduct our programs.

It gave me an opportunity to meet with others involved in COSA and also to learn about their programs and how they are operating. I was not aware of some of the different applications of the program across Canada. It was a pleasure to meet so many dedicated individuals who care about our communities and the challenges it holds to keep them safe—the majority of participants are just ordinary people doing extraordinary work.

The opportunity to meet the other coordinators as well as guiding/stake-holding parties from across the country was immensely valuable. I can now put faces to names, but more importantly, understand everyone's roles, personalities, and styles.

It was a powerful and important part of my time at the gathering.

I met a lot of great people at the gathering. I feel that it was a great opportunity for coordinators to communicate with one another and develop a support network, especially for those individuals who are in isolated areas.

Closing Circle

A cleansing ritual was held on the final morning of the Gathering. This ritual allowed us to recognize the dirt that we carry as a result of the work that we do, and to realize that we can be cleansed of that taint by the care and support of others, and by the power of God in our lives. While the ritual was ongoing we sang "O' Healing River". The closing circle which happened at the end of the morning was an opportunity for the participants to share their thoughts about our time together and to say farewell and thanks.

Outcomes Generated During CoSA Gathering

Reached consensus to:

- Begin discussions to form a national coalition (or similar representative body) and
- Submit a joint proposal for funding to PS's NCPC to do a national demonstration project
- Improve communications Canada wide by developing a joint website (watch for a dedicated website for CoSA), frequent similar gatherings (possibly annually or every two years)

All benefited from general sense of belonging, opportunity to network and share experiences, best practices and lessons learned

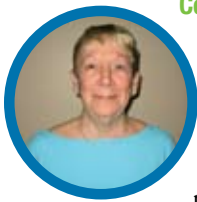
CoSA Program Profiles

British Columbia

Location: Fraser Valley

Program Name: CoSA Fraser Valley, BC

Program Began: 2004



Contact Information:

Program Coordinator:
Maureen Donegan
#208, 2825 Clearbrook Rd.
Abbotsford, BC V2T 6S3
(604) 791-1864
maureendonegan@shaw.ca

Number of Circles currently operating: 5

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 26

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 3 members

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: CSC Chaplaincy

Other Funder(s): M2/W2 Association (in-kind office space and resources)

Program Highlights

The Circles meet regularly with generally all volunteers and Core Members attending. All three Coordinators meet with some of the Circles. There are also training sessions for new volunteers.

New initiatives planned are upgrading training sessions for our current volunteers, one in April, and another in September, with Andrew McWhinnie, Regional Coordinator (Western Canada). We also plan to begin work with LTSO's, and other sex offenders in the community. We also plan to conduct at least one Volunteer/Core Member appreciation meeting annually.

Recent events:

- October 2007 Core Member and Volunteer Recognition Evening
- February 2008 Dinner for all CoSA volunteers and CMs

Location: Vancouver

Program Name: CoSA Vancouver, BC

Program Began: 2004



Contact Information:

Program Coordinator: Tyler Soon
(604) 708-4416
Suite 280 – 1125 Howe St.
Vancouver BC, V6Z 2K8
Fax: (604) 708-4418
cosacontact@rhodescollege.ca
www.rhodescollege.ca/cosa

Number of Circles currently operating: 2

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 6

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: CSC Chaplaincy (Pacific)

Program Highlights

CoSA Vancouver is working on rebuilding the volunteer base and infrastructure to support new circles in 2008. Volunteers typically come from word-of-mouth, volunteer associations, and counseling and criminology students. Training sessions are held on an as-needed basis.

The operation has highly functional relationships with the area probation officer, Vancouver Police Department, and the Coordinated High-Risk Offender Management Team (CHROME), a BC Corrections program which overlaps with CoSA in working with WED sex offenders.

Institutions in the Fraser Valley area are regularly visited to inform staff and inmates about CoSA services, and when possible, to interview core member prior to their release.

CoSA Vancouver brings significant technical resources to the national-level operations, and is leading technology-based initiatives such as a new online CoSA forum for inter-project communication.

Alberta

Location: Calgary

Program Name: CoSA Calgary, AB

Program Began: 2002



Contact Information:

Program Co-coordinators: Moira Brownlee and Melanie Weaver
MCCA, #210, 2946 – 32 Street NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7
(403) 275-6935 cell: (403) 829-1952 & (403) 807-8678

Fax: (403) 275-3711
moirabrownlee@mccab.org
melanieweaver@mccab.org
www.mcc.org



Number of Circles currently operating: 5

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 25

Governance/Committees:

Steering Committee: 7 members

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: CSC Chaplaincy (Prairie) and Anonymous Donor (equal amounts)
Other Funders: MCCA
Major fundraising activities: MCCA functions

Program Highlights

Our CoSA program has been in effect for the past 6 years. Over these years we have and are serving approximately 25 ex-offenders in S. Alberta.

A number of these men are in preparation for release into our community. We begin by forming relationship with these men while they are still incarcerated. We visit with these men on a monthly basis and if all goes well we arrange for volunteers to visit with them before their release.

Upon release formal circles are created with our new core members. Weekly meetings plus daily one on one visits, phone calls etc. are the norm. As the year moves on we tend to have less frequent meetings and daily contact becomes less and less. Often though, within the first year a crisis arises and we then revert back to weekly meetings and daily contact.

If our core member starts to become well integrated in the community, we move to a more informal relationship. This can take various different formats or a combination thereof. Examples include: maintain-

ing a primary relationship with one or more volunteers who remain connected with CoSA, attending social functions of Calgary CoSA, phoning coordinators to just “keep in touch” on a irregular basis, helping us with new core members. Social functions include: celebrating birthdays, holidays, picnicking, camping, etc.

A new initiative involves a number of our CoSA community: staff, volunteers and core members past and present attend a local Recovery service on Sunday evenings. We then go to a local coffee shop and socialize. These get-togethers are not required and no business is done, just a time to get together. I personally like the way volunteers interact with core members who are not part of their own circles.

Our hope for the future includes building on our Calgary CoSA community initiatives so our core members can further experience a safe healthy environment in which to reintegrate.

Recent events: Christmas, Thanksgiving, weekly gatherings on Sunday evenings - Recovery service followed by socializing at local coffee shop

Saskatchewan

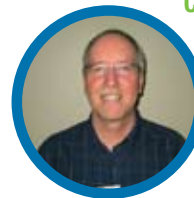
Location: Prince Albert

Program Name: Person To Person (P2P)

Program Began: 1997

Contact Information:

Program Coordinator: Dale Schiele
(306) 763-6224
998-12th St. W.
Prince Albert, SK S6V 3C7
Fax: (306) 763-6224
dschiele@sasktel.net



Number of Circles currently operating: 1
(with 6 core members)

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 8

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 10 members (elected)
Steering Committee: 5 members

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: Mennonite Church Saskatchewan
Other Funders: Correctional Services Canada

Program Highlights

Prince Albert CoSA started in 1997 with 2 compatible high-risk released child sex offenders released at WED (Warrant Expiry Date), into our single CoSA.

In the ensuing years, our single CoSA has always had multiple core members. Currently we have 4 core members supported by 8 support members. Since 1997 we have supported 5 core members with 16 support members. The 5 core members have all been high-risk child sexual offenders, while one is also serving a life sentence for murder.

All five core members were previously visited (two for twenty years) within our Person to Person (P2P) prisoner visitation program. Almost all the CoSA support members are also prisoner visitation volunteers, and so a unique advantage of this is that we are known to the core members prior to their release.

The P.A. CoSA is known for the strong sense of community that exists within. We balance the more serious side of CoSA and work with humor and light heartedness, and a good mixture of social events. We do a great deal of public presentations on CoSA with the use of support members and core members, being careful not to invite negative media attention. I would describe our CoSA as a very spiritual place, with faith as a common thread among core members and support members alike.

All bi-monthly meetings take place in those support members homes where there are no children. The core members tell us that meeting in our homes speaks volumes to them about the support members trust and acceptance of them. There is good interaction with core members between meetings and almost all of us meet for lunch one day a week.

We are currently attempting to start a second CoSA, which will hinge on a grant I have applied for from P.A. Community Foundation, and anticipated funds from NCPC (RKDF). In recent months we have been working toward the development of a local P2P Steering Committee, which will provide a broader regionalized ownership of P2P Prince Albert and its programs of visitation and CoSA.

Location: Regina

Program Name: CoSA Regina, SK

Program Began: 2001



Contact Information:

Program Coordinator:
Chris Penner-Mayoh
(306) 537-2672
Box 33053 Cathedral PO
Regina, SK S4T 7X2
cosaregina@sasktel.net

Number of Circles currently operating: 6

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 17

Governance/Committees:

Steering Committee: 15 members

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: CSC Chaplaincy

Other Funders: Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and Mennonite Central Committee

Program Highlights

CoSA Regina has been operating since 2001 and now provides circles for 6 core members. Our steering committee is made up of representatives from Police, Probation, Parole, Mental Health, the University of Regina, various faith communities and the lead volunteer from each circle. We were able to hire a part time coordinator in 2007 starting at 2 days per week, which has since been expanded to 4 days per week. We have recently written a mission statement and published a brochure and a quarterly newsletter. We are currently developing policies around volunteer recruitment and screening. We are also developing ongoing training sessions for our volunteers.

Location: Saskatoon

Program Name: CoSA Saskatoon, SK

Program Began: 2000

Contact Information:

Program Coordinator: Helmut Isaac (*no photo*)
(306) 242-4190
121 – 20th Street West Saskatoon, SK S7M 0W7
Fax: (306) 242-4190
p2p@sasktel.net

Number of Circles currently operating: 2

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 9

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 10 members (elected)

Steering Committee: 5 members (appointed)

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

Other Funders: Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, United Church Saskatchewan

Program Highlights

The primary focus of Person to Person Saskatoon is prisoner visitation, with a significant component of community integration. The CoSA work in Saskatoon began in 2000. CoSA was something we grew into because of the prisoner visitation and

community integration work we do. Many of the inmates who had been visited for years while inside were now being released into a strange community with no supports, and no friends at the end of their sentences. Circles of Support and Accountability were a model that made a lot of sense in helping these fellows with community integration.

All of the CoSA that have been run in Saskatoon have been Warrant Expiry child sex offenders. Many others have asked for a CoSA but we have not been able to accommodate, because of lack of time for recruitment and training. Several of the core members are back inside. One is doing time on a new offense, another awaiting trial. Several have moved to a position where only a few of the circle members still connect with the core members on a regular basis. Some volunteers whose core member is inside would be willing to pick it up again should the core members be released.

Visions for the future include:

We want to increasingly engage the church particularly but not exclusively, as denominations, congregations and individuals in hands-on and effective responses to crime such as CoSA.

We want to develop our capacity for public education in the understanding and ownership of restorative justice and particularly the needs of former offenders attempting to become healthy members of society.

We want to work at improved liaison and information sharing with the public and various levels of relevant government agencies.

Manitoba

Location: Winnipeg

Program Name: CoSA Winnipeg, MB

Program Began: 1998



Contact Information:

Program Director: Joan Carolyn
(204) 925-1915
cell: (204) 330-1836
302- 1200 Portage Ave.,
Winnipeg, MB R3G 0T5
Fax: (204) 925- 3414

cosawpg@mennonitecc.ca

mcc.org/manitoba/programs/circle_support02.html

Number of Circles currently operating: 4
(2 with 2 core members)

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 16

Governance/Committees:

Advisory Committee: 6 members

Funding Source(s):

Major Funders: Correctional Services Canada, Chaplaincy; Provincial Special Needs Programs & Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba
Other Funders: The Winnipeg Foundation (funded us for three years as a pilot project and then we were able to bring on PSNP); Individual private donors to provide emergency funds for client needs.

Program Highlights

Winnipeg: Community education to break down stereotypes and myths, open doors for better understanding in order to assist communities in healing and gain prospective volunteers. We hold weekly meetings and group activities every six weeks for four circles with six core members and 16 support volunteers. Regular trainings, consultations and support meetings to assist with circle operation.

Thompson: New Implementation: There have been requests in the past for us to provide circles for released offenders in Northern Manitoba. Prior to this we have not been able to spread our thin resources that far. Currently, Nelson House Medicine Lodge has been discussing the need to respond to sex offenders within their midst and RCMP have been looking for community supports for high risk individuals being released into the community. We also have connections within Thompson with educational centres, DENIM and community centre as well as some connections with outlying communities and their healing and sentencing circles.

Hope for the future

Gain more stable support for Winnipeg office to operate well. Increase number of support volunteers. Gain foothold for program to be implemented in response to interest within the Thompson area. Expand vision of CoSA to respond better to communities who are attempting to address the violence within their midst (both offenders/friends/family and victims/friends/family in same area).

Location: Just outside Steinbach

Program Name: El'dad

Program Began: We began gathering information and training for a modified version of CoSA in mid-2006. We have just run a few pilot sessions which will utilize some aspects of CoSA.

Contact Information:

Program Coordinator:
Rosemarie Friesen (*no photo*)
(204) 326 1050 ext. 3
Box 9 RR1 Grp 3
Fax: (204) 346-9602
eldad@mts.net

Number of Circles currently operating: 0—worked with 3 for a short time

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 0

Governance/Committees:

(please see Program Highlights below)

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: Crime Prevention for pilot project.

Program Highlights

El'dad is a residential and day program for men with demonstrable intellectual disabilities. These men have been in conflict with the law and because of various issues including their intellectual disability are at high risk of conflict with the law again. However they are also different from the typical CoSA core member. El'dad has developed over the past two years a small and highly modified program which was based around the CoSA model. This was to be part of the exit program to help provide some support after they left the main program. The indicators, experiences and input from the evaluators of the pilot program has led to the conclusion that a while the Support element of CoSA is effective the accountability element was driving our clients away from the program. Therefore the program is being modified to include more peer support and less confrontation with accountability. For this reason in the spring of 2008 El'dad choose not to participate in the larger CoSA project as we realize the track we are on is not in keeping with the normal CoSA programs and the program would not be relevant to a CoSA research project.

Ontario

Location: Kingston

Program Name: CoSA Kingston, ON

Program Began: 2002



Contact Information:

Program Coordinator:
Bill Richardson
(613) 549-2676
cell: (613) 329-9703
472 Division St.
Kingston, ON K7K 4B1
Fax: (613) 549-2676

wjr@freedomministries.ca

Number of Circles currently operating: 5

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 18

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 7 members

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: Salvation Army
Other Funders: CSC-Chaplaincy, Private Donor

Program Highlights

- Weekly Circle meetings held – circle members contact core members several times during the week for interaction, social, etc.
- Regular training sessions (9 per year) – held for volunteers using professionals
- Former circle members get together with core members for encouragement
- Coordinator makes presentations to 8 institutions (POs & inmates on request)
- Coordinator speaks to ministries, etc., for volunteer recruitment and to assist with integration of core member or released inmate into their congregation

Location: Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener

Program Name: Circles of Support and Accountability: Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO) in Toronto, Hamilton and Kitchener

Program Began: 1994

Contact Information:

Program Coordinators:



Eileen Henderson, Regional Coordinator (70% time, *pictured*)

Ed Vandenberg, Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (80%)

Leatrice Chan, GTA (70%)

David Blow, GTA (70%)

To be named, Kitchener (70%)

Rick Pauw, Hamilton (70%, *pictured*)



Phone for all via the Toronto office: (416) 596-9341

#6 Trinity Square, 3rd Floor, Toronto, M5G 1B1

Number of Circles currently operating: 57

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 150

Governance:

Board of Directors: MCCO - 21 volunteer members appointed from the MCC constituency. This board is responsible for policy and governance at MCCO. Advisory Group: 7 volunteer members who reflect faith community, corrections, policing and mental health.

Funding Sources:

Major Funder: Correctional Service of Canada

Other Funders: MCCO and private donations

Program Highlights

Our project is housed by MCCO and is spread over a fairly wide geographic area which includes the greater GTA.

In addition to our focus on weekly circles, we work at building community for and with the men that we walk with through larger group activities, a yearly retreat and participation in a Friday night fellowship group.

Circle work is supported by a wonderful and gifted group of volunteers who are committed to “safer” communities. Many, but not all of our volunteers come from the faith community. On going training activities and participation in larger group events are opportunities for volunteers to connect with each other and to meet other core members.

We are committed to long term, consistent rela-

tionships with the core members who are part of the circle community, recognizing that the road to integration is long and often with many setbacks. We have found that a consistent staffing presence is vital for both the volunteers and core members.

Social Activities: We hold regular social events, games/movie nights, Dismas Fellowship in conjunction with community chaplaincy and local churches in both Toronto and Hamilton on alternate Friday nights, yearly retreat and an annual celebration day.

Location: Peterborough

Program Name: CoSA Peterborough, ON

Program began: 1995

Contact Information:



Program Coordinator: Dan Haley (705) 741-4172

cell: (705) 750-5942

PO Box 235

Peterborough, ON K9J 6Y8

Fax: (705) 741-4833

danhaley@bellnet.ca

www.ptbochaplaincy.org

Number of Circles currently operating: 13

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 45

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 7 members (elected)

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: CSC Chaplaincy

Other Funders: Donors; United Way (potential)

Major fundraising events:

Golf Tournament, United Way Drive, Raffles, Municipal Grant Application

Program Highlights

Our Circles Project/Plan is integrated into the activities of Peterborough Community Chaplaincy (PCC) to serve the special clientele (WED Sex Offenders) Circles is designed for. The focus of our activities is a transition house (New Beginnings) that we operate—it has an 8-bed capacity. A number of our Circles clients live in the house—a house that provides safe, affordable housing, especially for special-needs clients that find it hard to survive in the community. Our programs at PCC are designed to support and assist all of our clients. These programs model pro-social behaviour and provide practical support in the form of teaching life skills, finding work, obtaining financial means, receiving medical service, ensuring adequate diet

etc. Our dedicated and trained Circles volunteers also provide emotional, practical, social, spiritual support and guidance. A new initiative operating as an unfunded pilot project is palliative care for current clients and men dying in prison. We have one client in our house in that category.

We have a number of hopes for the future; an initiative to provide work and income for our clients; supportive housing for special needs clients and seniors; a funded palliative Care initiative; and sustainable funding for all of our programs.

Recent social events: Sunday church service, Saturday morning breakfast gathering, potluck dinners at Transition House, scheduled monthly field trips, scheduled sporting events (golfing, fishing, bowling)

Location: Ottawa

Program Name: CoSA Ottawa, ON

Program began: 2002

Contact Information:



Program Coordinator: Susan Love
(613) 232-4500
cell: (613) 266-6309
154 Somerset St. W.
Ottawa, ON K2P 0H8
Fax: (613) 232-4533
love@magma.ca

www.stjohnsottawa.ca/pages/cosa.html

Number of Circles currently operating: 9

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 37

Governance/Committees:

Steering Committee: 6 members

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: CSC Chaplaincy

Other Funders: Community Foundation of Ottawa (2005), Anglican Diocese (2007)

Major fundraising events:

Silent Auction held by St John's Parish Council (2006), Benefit Concert (May 24, 2008)

Program Highlights

- We work only with sex offenders released at WED with or without an LTSO
- Most of our circles meet weekly or bi-monthly with one-on-one get-togethers occurring on a frequent basis
- In addition to our 20-hour training program,

we hold infrequent movie and discussion nights open to new recruits and current and former volunteers and core members (The Woodsman, Little Children, Mysterious Skin, etc.) – very effective learning tool

- Recently completed a study to look at the need for treatment and services for people who have committed sex offences who were also victims of childhood sexual abuse—funded by the Cornwall Public Inquiry (report available at www.cornwallinquiry.ca or in a .pdf version from love@magma.ca)

Hope for the future:

- to secure adequate funding (for the position of coordinator (FTE) and assistant's positions (start PTE)—managing program should be done collaboratively) to better support the core members and volunteers and to better promote the program
- to eventually have the resources to collaborate on suitable housing or to acquire assets to operate a transition home for our core members
- to begin holding regular gatherings for all volunteers and core members (current and past) and their loved ones that would include a potluck meal, music, discussions about selected topics and a cleansing ceremony (summer or fall 2008)
- to offer a mediation/yoga program to core members and volunteers (summer or fall 2008)
- to start an Acute Needs program (household items, clothing, etc.) esp. for core members when first released

Recent presentations include:

- June 2007 – Ottawa Police Service (executive staff including new-to-job Chief Vernon White)
- November 2007 - Joint Committee on Community Corrections including Federation of Canadian Municipalities / Correctional Services Canada (including NPB), Public Safety
- January 2008 – AGM of The Centre for Treatment of Sexual Abuse and Childhood Trauma
- February 2008 - The National Associations Active in Criminal Justice
- March 21, 2008 - Royal Ottawa Mental Health

Centre, conference for psychiatrists from New York state to look at practical applications of assessment & treatment of sexual offenders

Recent events: Christmas dinner, fall walk in Gatineau Park, bowling, BBQ

Quebec

Location: Montreal and Greater Quebec Region

Program Name: CoSA Montreal and Greater Quebec Region, QC
Program began: 2005



Contact Information:

Program Coordinator:
Jean Jacques Goulet
(514) 999-9610
202-4305 Iberville,
Montreal, QC H2H 2L5
csr@csjr.org

Number of Circles currently operating: 14
Number of volunteers active in Circles: 15

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 9 members (elected)

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: Montreal Community Chaplaincy

Program Highlights

The first francophone CoSA in Montreal began barely three years ago. With 14 Circles at various stages of formation, a community is being formed as volunteers and core members get to know each other. Group celebrations for Christmas & twice yearly visit to the Laurentian Mountains have become highlights for the group.

On December 22, our party became their family Christmas. We ate, had fun and sang. The Dollarama gifts were exchanged and stolen as each had the opportunity, when their name was drawn, to pick a gift either from the table or from someone else who had already had one. The laughs were testimonies to the successful re integration of these men into society.

The gatherings at the Laurentian residence of a religious order of nuns, from which come two of the volunteers, give the core members opportunity to get out of the city and experience the country. It was a shock when two of the core members were very anxious about getting in a row boat till we realized

that they had never been in a boat. The setting lends itself to storytelling around the fireplace, hiking, Easter egg hunts, and snowman competitions. Core members become part of a community where they are accepted and can have fun.

Recent events: Christmas party, day in the Laurentians in the fall, one winter activity. (There are no committees, but one very involved volunteer is like a social convener for all the Circles)

Location: MSCM (Montreal)

Program Name: CoSA MSCM, QC
Program began: 2000



Contact Information:

Program Coordinator: Peter Huish
1444 Union Avenue,
Montreal, QC H3A 2B8
(514) 812-4863
Fax: (514) 284-5070
huishp@cooptel.qc.ca

Number of Circles currently operating: 5
Number of volunteers active in Circles: 11

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 10 members
Steering Committee: 3 members

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: CSC Chaplaincy
Other Funders: Anglican Diocese of Montreal, private donors

Program Highlights

Montreal-Southwest Community Ministries (MSCM) began its work in 1999. We have started nearly 30 circles, running at a peak seven circles at a time. Currently there are five circles in operation. We are committed to provide CoSA to English-speaking beneficiaries in the Greater Montreal area as we have done since 2000. We collaborate with CoSA providers on the Francophone side, under the regional coordination of Jean-Jacques Goulet.

On average, 70% of our circles conform to the standard CoSA model, i.e. for WED sex offenders. From time to time we employ the circle model for other cases, principally sex offenders but sometimes S.R. cases. These and any other high risk, high need cases we refer to as Reintegration Circles.

We use 3 different premises for CoSA meetings, provided by Anglican churches in Montreal. It is our hope that our project might develop in such a way that we might have our own premises to

simplify scheduling, access, security and privacy concerns.

For recruitment we maintain good, strategic connections with the Federal institutions in the region where sex-offenders are incarcerated, where sex-offender programming is given, in particular with program professionals and chaplains, both institutional and in the community. From time to time we receive CoSA core members from other parts of the country who choose to settle in Montreal.

We refer for training to the guidelines published by CSC-Chaplaincy's CoSA focus. Our training has been in two major thrust following volunteer recruitment drives in the past. We work diligently to ensure that we provide ongoing opportunities for refreshment, support, sharing, training and accountability in regular peer support meetings.

Location: Ste-Rose Laval

Program Name: Corporation Jean-Paul Morin
Program began: 2000

Contact Information:

Program Coordinator: Alain Ferron (*no photo*)
Program Assistants: Christine Sauvageau and Solange Blanchard
(819) 275-2315, cell: (450)712-0847
367, boul. Ste-Rose Laval, QC H7P 5S1
Fax: (819) 275-3079
ferronal@csc-scc.gc.ca

Number of Circles currently operating: 8
Number of volunteers active in Circles: 19

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 5 members (elected)

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: Community Chaplaincy of Montreal
Other Funders: Short-term of three foundations, religious communities and particular donations

Program Highlights

The Corporation Jean-Paul Morin offers the following services:

- The Arc-en-ciel (Rainbow) Project in restorative justice is an educational program meant to help the offender become aware of the consequences of his crime.
- The Tremplin (Trampoline) Project is based on a restorative justice program called Resilience. This

self-affirming and empowering program is for the secondary victims of the crime, the offender's family.

- DIORAO is a sharing group for inmates, ex-offenders and volunteers from the community.
- Circles of accompaniment are for offenders on parole, or released at their statutory release date or at the end of their mandate.
- Personal growth workshops: forgiveness, grief, self-esteem, personal relationships, etc.

New Brunswick

Location: Moncton

Program Name: CoSA Moncton, NB
Program began: 2003



Contact Information:

Program Coordinator:
Debbie Barriault
(506) 851-6384
cell: (506) 871-1075
75 Gordon Street, PO Box 342
Moncton, NB E1C 8L4
Fax: (506) 851-2836
debbieb202@rogers.com
www.monctonchaplaincy.com

Number of Circles currently operating: 2
Number of volunteers active in Circles: 3

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 9 members (elected)

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: MCCA
Other Funders: CSC Chaplaincy

Program Highlights

Circles of Support and Accountability will be growing in leaps with an interest for circles from 6 – 8 offenders being released in the next year to 18 months, with the development of a Circles of Support program in Halifax over the summer, the development of a type of Circles program for female ex-offenders in the community and developing a recruiting strategy and training for volunteers to accommodate the upcoming circles.

Searching for funding for the female circles will also be a part of getting the circles for women up and running as there are additional costs for materials,

as the needs of women are very different than the needs of men being released from an institution.

Recent events: Upcoming 2 year celebration

Newfoundland

Location: St John's

Program Name: Turnings (Metro Community Chaplaincy Inc.)

Program Began: 1994

Contact Information:



Program Coordinator:

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Number of Circles currently operating: 10

Number of volunteers active in Circles: 15

Governance/Committees:

Board of Directors: 5 members (elected)

Funding Source(s):

Major Funder: Public Safety Canada (Pilot Project)

Other Funders: CSC-Chaplaincy, Misc. Donors

Major fundraising events:

This is achieved by approaching corporate sponsors for potential funding as well as seeking government funds for services.

Program Highlights

Turnings is a non-profit, registered charitable organization that provides an outreach service to individuals who are struggling with a life of criminal activity. We serve all who seek our help. Our aim is to create safer communities in which to work and live. As the majority of our clients are offenders and ex-offenders, our motto is: no more victims, no more re-offending. Turnings fulfills its mandate with a vision to serve the needs of the community in a proactive manner, including, but not limited to addictions, mental health, spirituality,

homelessness and persons in need. Turnings seeks to fulfill its mission by offering support, friendship and hospitality in: fostering the human and spiritual growth of individuals, facilitating dialogue and collaboration, providing mentoring and personal support, providing linkages to the faith community, nurturing an environment where human diversity is respected, fostering mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, listening, mentoring, and referral service and offering programs of personal growth and development.

St. John's Metro Community Chaplaincy has changed its name to Turnings on August 24, 2005 and has expanded its clientele to include ex-offenders and offenders struggling with addictions issues. These members also have Circles of Support and Accountability around them in order to support and assist their transition back into society. In addition to the Circles of Support and Accountability, Turnings is actively involved in trying to raise awareness among youth, educating them to the dangers and consequences of drug use and abuse. While the primary goal of Turnings is creating safer communities by working with ex-offenders, we very much understand the importance of prevention as well. For that reason, we present realistic and current resources to explain the consequences of destructive decisions early in life. Turnings also have been providing emergency aid to those in desperate need of housing, food, clothing, and phone services, while desperately lacking financial resources to carry out such work. It is due to the tremendous support of our networking partners such as Salvation Army, Addictions Services, Human Resources Labor and Employment, Law Enforcement and Eastern Health, that Turnings is able to assist individuals in these unfortunate situations.

New Initiative

To further enhance the Circles of Support and Accountability program in an effort to reduce recidivism thereby creating safer communities. Also, to better serve the frequent daily drop in clientele who are requesting support in terms of housing, finances, basic daily living tasks, emotional support, etc. These individuals are often in crisis situations and need assistance in making healthy positive choices.

Conclusion

The collaborative effort by the partners to this project has achieved the stated goals of the project. The goal of Communication/Information Exchange has been met as seen in the results of the workshops and small group dialogues. A major step forward in commitment and direction was attained for the Research and Evaluation goal. At the printing of this report a draft of the CoSA national demonstration project is in discussion by the steering committee that was chosen at the CoSA Gathering. Ideas for Innovation and Implementation were shared, and a greater recognition of our diversity in programming, as well as of key similarities, allows for the implementation of successful innovations.

As feedback from the event indicates, the key goal of relationship and trust building was met in important ways, and a framework to continue working on these important elements of the national CoSA movement was indicated. In the words of a number of the participants, this was an historic gathering that will have positive implications for the development and sustaining of CoSA programs throughout Canada. Challenges remain in many areas, including sustainability, community support, systemic barriers, and resource limits. Before the gathering, our response to these issues was primarily localized, now we can begin to approach them with a broader strategy and with the knowledge that we are not alone.

The partners and participants of the CoSA Gathering 2008 are thankful for the financial and in kind support that made it possible. We are also thankful for the hospitality shown by the Community Justice Ministry of MCC Alberta, its CoSA staff, volunteers and core members. We recognize the support and commitment of Dr. Robert Cormier, who participated fully in the Gathering, and of Cliff Yumanski who made an important contribution to our time together. Finally, we are grateful for the presence of the Paraclete in our Gathering.



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