

**Common Council of Milwaukee  
Report to the Committee on Judiciary and Legislation**

**Justice 2000, Inc.  
Center for Driver's License Recovery and Employability**

**2008 Program Objectives**

The program's mission is to increase the number of low-income residents who possess valid drivers' licenses in Milwaukee County. Its measurable objectives are to:

- (1) Provide direct service case management and legal services to low-income Milwaukee County residents seeking to restore their drivers' licenses (see Table 1, below);
- (2) Restore free driver's education for low-income students statewide;
- (3) Identify and advocate for system changes that limit license suspension and revocation to unsafe driving and increase use of alternatives to suspension and revocation for failure to pay fines (i.e. community service and payment plans); and
- (4) Increase education in the community about the issue of drivers' license suspensions and revocations among low-income residents.

**2008 Program Outcomes to Date**

**Direct Service**

The City of Milwaukee's support has helped the program to more than double its direct service staff, from four full-time case managers and 1.5 full time equivalent (FTE) attorneys in 2007 to eight full-time case managers and 2.5 FTE attorneys in 2008. The program further increased its direct service capacity in September 2008 by adding a full-time paralegal. This adjustment was necessary, as **a far greater number of cases need legal attention than originally anticipated: where the program once simply advised clients with damage judgments and drug suspensions due to the restrictions that come with these matters, a staff attorney now examines each case for potential action.**

***Table 1: 2008 Direct Service Outcomes by Indicator***

---

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Projected</b>	<b>Actual (as of September 30, 2008)</b>
Screenings	3,000	2,191
Advice clients*	900	554
Case management	1,300	1,062
Case closures	1,100	666
Licenses obtained	605	382
Recovery Rate	55 percent	57.4 percent
Cost per license**	\$1,262 (\$763,381/605)	\$1,516 (\$579,265/382)

\*It is assessed that "Advice" cases will not benefit from direct service due to unchangeable circumstances or those that require actions beyond the program's capability, e.g. Habitual Traffic Offender status, out of state suspensions, etc.

**Common Council of Milwaukee**  
**Report to the Committee on Judiciary and Legislation**

\*\*Compared to \$1,966 (\$454,167/231) in 2007.

---

**Impact**

The program saves the city, county, and state hundreds of thousands of dollars each year by relieving the courts, prosecutors, and the State Public Defender's Office of the comparatively higher cost of continued prosecution versus driver's license restoration. Among the project's strongest supporters are Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm; The Honorable Kitty Brennan, Former Chief Judge of Milwaukee County; and The Honorable Derek C. Mosley, Presiding Judge of the Municipal Court of Milwaukee.

Because a valid driver's license has become a better predictor of sustained employment than even a GED, the program is a cornerstone service for both public and private workforce development organizations in the Milwaukee Area<sup>1</sup>. The program holds contracts with the welfare to work agencies funded by the State of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. Without this niche service, job placement agencies would have to develop internal resources, which would cost much more, or not provide the services at all. Because of the strong connection between possession of a valid license and employment, the program is working with Manpower International on a project that transitions its successful clients into employment opportunities.

**Public Policy**

The program was successful in advancing two major policy changes at the state level, both of which passed in the Wisconsin State Senate in 2008, and will re-engage the process in the coming session. **One key change would result in over 13,000 revoked Wisconsin residents, mostly low-income who live in Milwaukee County, being re-classified as suspended, which comes with lesser sanctions than revocation and a greater chance of success in court<sup>2</sup>.**

In addition, the program works directly with courts in and around the City of Milwaukee to expand the use of alternatives to full fine payments for low-income defendants with suspended or revoked licenses, including supervised community service, payment plans, and tax intercept. This outreach has expanded to include the attorneys who represent major insurers in our area and negotiate damage judgment payment plans.

**Problems and Obstacles**

1. Extreme Poverty of Client Population

Seventy-eight percent of the Center's clients make less than \$1,000 a month and many have dependents. According to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, failure to pay a fine (FPF) is the single most significant reason for drivers' license suspensions and revocations at

---

<sup>1</sup> Pawasarat, J. and Quinn, L. (2007). Early Assessment and Retention Network (EARN) Model for Effectively Targeting WIA and TANF Resources to Participants. *Employment and Training Institute, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee*.

<sup>2</sup> Repeal of the requirement set forth at Sec. 343.31(1)(hm) that driving privileges be revoked after a 4<sup>th</sup> conviction for Operating While Suspended or Operating After Revocation.

**Common Council of Milwaukee**  
**Report to the Committee on Judiciary and Legislation**

41.9 percent.<sup>3</sup> Persons who cannot afford to pay traffic fines with few to no other alternatives are unable to get out from under license suspension or revocation.

**2. System Barriers, i.e. Court, Legislative, and Administrative Policies**

The process for license reinstatement is complicated and confusing for many low-income individuals, especially in cases where multiple steps are needed in multiple courts where there is little consistency because of judicial independence. Milwaukee and Waukesha counties combined have two separate circuit courts and 37 municipal courts, for a total of over 50 judges. In addition, onerous laws connect the privilege to drive to the ability to pay rather than to ensuring public safety.

Two such barriers are 1) the statutory requirement for expensive SR22 insurance for many revocations that do not result from unsafe driving; and 2) clients' ability to pass the knowledge test once their records are clean without having had formal driver's education. In response to these barriers, 1) the legal staff works to reopen cases in order to remove the SR22 requirement for clients with safe driving records; and 2) the Center sponsors adult driver's education classes for clients who are applying for their license for the first time.

**Innovative Strategies**

The program recently launched an innovative demonstration project that will examine the effectiveness of an alternative license recovery model that will grant no-interest loans to clients who have \$250 or less in fines to recover their licenses. The alternative model will test whether some individuals need only short-term financial assistance to restore their driving privileges rather than the navigational support of a case manager. The program will issue three reports on this project that will compare the license retention rate of an experiment (loan) and control (case-managed) group.

The program received the *2008 Good Grant Award* from the Donors Forum of Wisconsin for its ability to leverage public and private funding to produce a unique solution to a widespread community need.

<b>2008 Program Funding Sources</b>	<b>Amount Committed</b>	<b>Amount Pending</b>
City of Milwaukee	\$200,000 (22 percent)	0
JARC	\$129,130	0
Carry over of grant funds	\$81,480	0
Wisconsin Works Agencies	\$75,000	0
Wisconsin Department of Corrections	\$75,000	0
Annie E. Casey Foundation	\$62,500	0
Milwaukee Area Technical College*	\$60,000	0
Helen Bader Foundation	\$50,000	0
Greater Milwaukee Foundation	\$50,000	0

---

<sup>3</sup> Wisconsin Department of Transportation (2006). Revocations or Suspensions by Reason of Conviction: January-December 2006. [www.wisdot.gov](http://www.wisdot.gov); retrieved on 12/14/07.

**Common Council of Milwaukee  
Report to the Committee on Judiciary and Legislation**

James A. Gramling*	\$41,000	0
Wisconsin Department of Transportation	\$40,000	0
Jane Bradley Pettit Foundation	\$25,000	0
Wisconsin Community Services (WCS)	\$10,000	0
Miller Coors Brewing Corporation	\$7,500	0
Donors Forum of Wisconsin	\$5,000	0
Wisconsin Energy Foundation	\$2,000	0
Potawatomi Community Foundation	0	\$50,000
Patrick and Anna M. Cudahy Fund	0	\$25,000
<u>Catholic Community Foundation</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>
Total	\$913,610	\$85,000

\*In-kind contribution