



Benedict Center

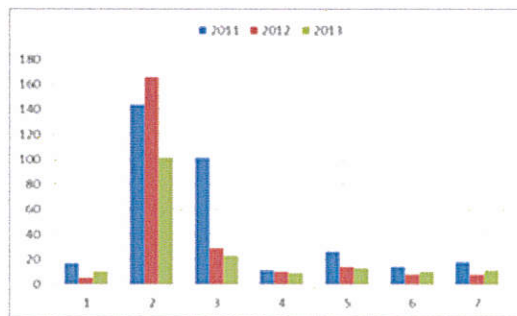
Compassion • Justice • Action • Transformation

The Sisters Program

The Issue: Street Prostitution

Street prostitution is a complex issue affecting residents and businesses as well as women involved in the sex trade. Women engaged in street prostitution (hereafter “women”) face high levels of violence, drug addiction, trauma, sexually transmitted diseases, and extremely high rates of victimization on the streets including sex trafficking and homicide. In the Washington Park Partners Sustainable Community Plan, and in the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program survey, residents identified prostitution as a top priority. However, traditional law-enforcement strategies of arrest and incarceration do not offer long-term solutions. Furthermore, these strategies are resource-intensive and costly to tax payers. The Sisters Diversion Project is an innovative community-police partnership so that women engaged in prostitution are given the opportunity to engage in treatment instead of the revolving door of arrest and incarceration. This project also engaged and coordinated with other community development efforts to decrease the negative impact of street prostitution on the quality of life and economic development of the neighborhood.

“We cannot arrest our way out of this problem”



Number of Women Arrested for Prostitution by District (2011-2013):

- 75% of women arrested in MPD-2, 3
- 749 women were arrested 2804 times

The Solution: A Community-Police Partnership

In April 2011, the Milwaukee Police Department – District 3 (MPD-3), the District Attorney’s Community Liaison Unit and the Benedict Center launched an innovative approach to street prostitution. Instead of costly undercover police operations to arrest women for prostitution, the police would conduct more visible operations or “sweeps” where they would arrest women and bring them to the Sisters Program for a treatment alternative to a ticket, fines or incarceration. Participants have the opportunity to have their charges dropped if they successfully complete a six-month program with the Sisters Program. By attending programming and agreeing to be monitored, women access counseling and other resources that will help them build safer and healthier lives instead of trading sex for survival. This partnership was awarded two consecutive grants from the Medical College of Wisconsin to expand and study the impact of this innovative partnership. Key to this project is the support and involvement of a multidisciplinary team of residents, business owners, faith leaders, and community development organizations. This project is now part of the strategic community development plan.

The Model:

Sisters “Drop-In” Center



Programming includes:

- Respite
- Safety Plans
- Support Groups
- Case Management
- Outreach

Underlying Principles & Best Practices:

- Harm Reduction
- Gender Responsive
- Trauma Informed
- Evidence Based

Results, Recognition, Replication

Program partners understand that women engaged in prostitution do not typically change overnight. Several studies, confirmed by our experience, demonstrate that a woman's ability to exit the streets may take a minimum of two years. Access to basic needs like safe housing is a key factor. This means that we meet women where they are and work with them to create a plan to reduce their risk and increase their health and safety for at least two years.

From 2011-2014:

- From 2011 to 2014, 71% of women who accepted the diversion (45 women) completed the diversion program and stayed engaged beyond the minimum 6 months.
- Only 18% of women incurred a new prostitution charge in the year following enrolment.

In 2015:

- Street Outreach Workers connected with 131 women a total of 849 times.
- 84 women were served in the Drop-In Center, including 41 new participants.
- 31% of women in the program reported quitting the sex trade
- 55% of women achieved at least one case management goal within 6 months of the program.

Recognition and Expansion:

- Sisters Program received 2 MANDI Awards- the PNC Trailblazer Award and the Wells Fargo People's Choice Award
- This project has been presented to the Cook County CJC and the Rockford Police Department; it was also presented at NAPSA, a national pre-trial conference.
- Efforts are underway to expand this project in Milwaukee Police Department- District 2 with funding support from the Medical College of Wisconsin and the Open Society Fund.

Innovative, Effective and Cost-Saving:

Our partnership catalyzes the collective power of community: community policing, community prosecution, community development and community based treatment. All stakeholders, despite various disciplinary perspectives and practices, are committed to the common goal of making the neighborhood a safer and healthier place.

The Sisters Program represents Milwaukee's commitment to problem oriented policing: "Problem-oriented policing places a high value on new responses that are preventive in nature, that are not dependent on the use of the criminal justice system, and that engage other public agencies, the community and the private sector when their involvement has the potential for significantly contributing to the reduction of the problem."

The Sisters Diversion Project is an innovative and cost-saving solution to street prostitution rather than the revolving door of arrest and incarceration. It addresses the root causes of the women's problems and in doing so, offers relief to the community that has been besieged with street prostitution. This project is ready to expand and make significant difference in Milwaukee.



GO BLUE: Grassroots Organizing Building Leadership, Unity & Engagement

Factsheet on WI Driver's Cards Program Campaign & Monthly Forum for Immigrant and Undocumented Community

- **As many as 65,000¹ Wisconsin laborers may be driving on our roads with expired WI Driver licenses which cannot be renewed under State driver license application and renewal laws enacted in 2007.**

Unos 65,000 trabajadores de Wisconsin pudieran estar conduciendo en nuestras carreteras con licencias caducadas por no poder renovar sus licencias bajo las nuevas leyes del 2007.

- **Consequently, at least as many as 65,000 Wisconsin workers in our state are driving without auto insurance, raising the risk level of all Wisconsin drivers of being involved in motor vehicle accidents with uninsured drivers.**

En consecuencia, al menos 65,000 trabajadores de Wisconsin están conduciendo sin seguro de auto, elevando el nivel de riesgo de todos los conductores de Wisconsin de estar involucrados en accidentes con conductores sin seguro.

- **The State of Wisconsin is forgoing \$2,275,000 by not allowing license renewals to 65,000 working residents previously licensed in the State prior to 2007.**

El estado de Wisconsin está renunciando \$ 2,275 millones al no permitir la renovación de licencias a 65,000 residentes que trabajan con licencia previamente en el Estado desde el 2007.

- **Eleven states and the District of Colombia have established two-tiered licensing system that requires of age laborers without social security numbers to be identified, tested and insured in order to gain state authorization to drive (Colorado, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington).²**

Once estados y el Distrito de Colombia han establecido sistemas de licencias para los trabajadores sin seguro social siempre y cuando puedan ser identificados con el fin de obtener la autorización del estado para conducir y tener seguro de auto. (Colorado, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New México, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington).

- **Since New Mexico adopted a Driver Card option in 2003, its rate of uninsured motorists dropped from 33% to 9%.³**

Desde que Nuevo México aprobó una opción de tarjeta de conductor (licencia) en el 2003, su tasa de conductores sin seguro se redujo de 33% a 9%.

- **Prominent Wisconsin law enforcement leaders and officers on the ground have endorsed a Wisconsin Driver Card proposal including the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association and the Wisconsin State Troopers Association. ⁴**

Prominentes líderes policiales de Wisconsin han respaldado una propuesta de Tarjetas de Conducir (Card Driver) incluyendo oficiales que patrullan las calles, los Jefes de la Asociación de policía de Wisconsin y la Asociación de Policías Estatales de Wisconsin.

¹ Wisconsinwatch.org reported one year 38,000 drop in Spanish language Driver test takers after WI changed law. Pew Research, 2011 estimate of 65,000 undocumented laborers in WI work force.

² Associated Press, August 1, 2014

³ www.icirr.org Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

⁴ WI 8th Assembly District legislative district packet

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