

# Assessment of 2007 Client Outcomes for the Center for Driver's License Recovery & Employability

## Executive Summary

In April 2007 the Center for Driver's License Recovery & Employability (CDLRE) began providing assistance on a referral basis to Milwaukee County residents with suspended and revoked driver's licenses. Partners in the Center program include Justice 2000, Legal Action of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), the Milwaukee Bar Association, Milwaukee County Circuit Court, and the City of Milwaukee Municipal Court. The Center operates out of the MATC downtown campus, with residents referred to the CDLRE by a network of over 25 community agencies, courts, and government offices. The Center for Driver's License Recovery & Employability contracted with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute to provide an independent assessment of the client outcomes for the period from April through December 2007.

## Findings

1. **The Center for Driver's License Recovery & Employability successfully targeted a very high-risk population.** All 454 clients completing service in 2007 had incomes below 200% of poverty, 93% were minorities, two-thirds were males, a fourth had not completed high school, and 16% had been incarcerated in state correctional facilities.
2. **The clients served faced multiple challenges toward obtaining their driving privileges:** 96% faced financial costs (court files, filing and reinstatement fees, and other costs), 50% faced 3 or more categories of legal barriers, 38% lacked a driver's license (and needed to take their written and/or road test), and 35% were required to obtain SR-22 proof of liability insurance (an expensive hurdle for low-income drivers).
3. **Success rates for the first group of 454 clients completing service in the program in 2007 were very high, with 51% of clients obtaining their driving privileges.** The license recovery success rates were very high compared to the experience of other programs, both local and national, serving high-risk low-income clients. **Typically, employment and training programs serving these types of clients have success rates of 4% to 9%, or lower.**
4. **The emphasis of the CDLRE services model is on personal responsibility with clients empowered to redress their licensing problems.** Clients are provided advice on the steps required to restore or obtain their driving privileges and offered tools needed to maintain a clear license in the future. Case managers and legal staff provide training to clients on how to work through the court systems, identify deadlines and action steps required, and monitor each client's progress. A triage approach is used to accept and assign clients for the program.
5. **Success rates were notable for subpopulations considered most difficult-to-serve.** African American males, the largest single group served, showed a 47% recovery success rate, as did 45% of Hispanic males. African American females had recovery success rates of 61% and Hispanic females had recovery success rates of 62%.
6. **Nearly half of the clients served were in their twenties.** This age group showed a 42% recovery success rate. The best recovery success rates were seen in older clients ages 50 and above who showed license recovery rates of 84%.
7. **Clients with a history of incarceration in state correctional facilities showed a 44% driver's license recovery success rate,** with many of these clients seeking out the program on their own. This

44% recovery rate is notable given the level of problems faced, including the potential for drug convictions and damage judgments to limit any access to immediate license recovery. In Milwaukee County ex-offenders show extremely low rates of licensed drivers. (In Milwaukee County the percentage of adults who have been released from state correctional facilities and who hold a valid driver's license without recent suspensions and revocations is 7%.)

8. **Income impediments continue to be major barriers** for drivers in Milwaukee County facing fines for traffic infractions, parking violations (meter and overnight), and escalating charges for unpaid tickets and civil forfeitures. **Clients completing service in 2007 owed over \$100,000 in fines and additional monies in reinstatement and court fees.**

One important feature of the CDLRE program is developing community service alternatives for clients unable to meet the financial cost of outstanding fines and fees. The **clients completing services in 2007 performed 3,340 hours of community service** in 2007 (or an average of 16 hours of service per client seeking work credits as an alternative to meeting financial obligations). In all, 137 of the clients successfully recovering their licenses participated in community service work, as did 73 of the clients who left the program without yet obtaining their driving privileges.

9. In part as a result of the community service option, **the program was notably successful with clients with extremely low income levels**, where clients showed a 50% driver's license recovery success rate. (These "extremely low" income levels, as defined by HUD, are established by household size, i.e., annual income of less than \$13,350 for a single person, income of less than \$19,050 for a household of 4, income of less than \$23,000 income for a household of 7).
10. **Complicating the delivery of services and the ability of clients to redress their licensing problems were the number of different municipal and county courts involved** where CDLRE clients had court cases. The largest number of individual court cases (760 out of a 1,069 court case total) were in the City of Milwaukee Municipal Court. Another 154 court cases were in Milwaukee County Circuit Court. At the same time, clients had 155 other cases in 20 different municipal courts and 14 other county circuit courts.
11. **In addition to clients receiving case management services, another 727 Milwaukee County residents were provided "advice only" services, that is, an assessment of their current driver's license status along with an individual recovery plan they could follow for restoring their license.** These included 459 residents whose license problems were deemed too severe for service under the program's present structure and funding levels (including individuals with legal prohibitions or time limits preventing license restoration) and 268 participants who received advice and individual recovery plans developed for them during the Fatherhood Summit in October 2007.

Future evaluation research will (1) track clients to gauge the extent to which clients who completed services in 2007 continue to maintain their driving privileges and identify impediments to maintaining driving privileges, (2) examine the employment experience of clients completing the CDLRE program and compare this employment experience to that of unserved populations and to Milwaukee County resident populations with similar demographics, and (3) utilize qualitative methodologies to describe in greater detail barriers most problematic for license restoration and maintenance of driving privileges for clients after leaving the program.

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