

Creating Options Aimed at Reducing Sexual Exploitation (COARSE)

**A resource for communities
exploring innovative Court Diversion
options for prostitution-related
offenses**



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Executive Summary

In 2002, the Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton (PAAFE) initiated the “Creating Options Aimed at Reducing Sexual Exploitation” (COARSE) Project. The intent of the two-year pilot project was to create a personalized case plan court diversion process for individuals over the age of 18 charged with prostitution-related charges. This is a Court Diversion program that provides a continuum of support for residents of Edmonton who want to leave or who have already left prostitution.

COARSE began as a pilot project that explored new ways of building capacity and addressing needs of a highly marginalized population – individuals involved in street prostitution – and of the communities affected by street prostitution. The secondary goals of the project are:

- 1) To develop new relationships and strengthen existing working relationships among the three levels of government and the voluntary sector,
- 2) To ensure that those with past and present involvement in street prostitution are actively involved in designing the diversion process, and,
- 3) To provide substantive input into any policies and programs which affect those with past or present involvement in street prostitution.

The pilot phase has ended, and the COARSE program continues to operate in Edmonton.

Who is this for?

This is a resource for communities wanting to set up similar Court Diversion options for prostitution-related offenses. This resource will be of interest to civic officials, the justice community, the human services sector, community action groups, and groups and individuals interested in finding meaningful ways to assist individuals charged with prostitution related charges not to re-offend – and more importantly to leave street prostitution altogether.

Resource Highlights

This resource maps out how the COARSE program was created, describes the learning and growth that occurred during the pilot implementation, and describes future plans. Sample case plans illustrate the program. Some highlights of this resource are:

- **The Critical Role of Federal and Provincial Crown Prosecutors and the Police Service.** Describes how the Federal and Provincial Crown Prosecutors provided the mechanisms and oversight of reducing criminal sanctions for participants who completed the individual case plans. The Edmonton Police Service was instrumental in referring participants to the program.
- **How the COARSE Court Diversion works.** Describes the goals of court diversion, program eligibility and the court diversion process from arrest to referral to case planning to final legal resolution.
- **Building Capacity through Community Partnerships.** COARSE enjoys the support of dozens of partners: government departments and services, community based human service organizations and survivors of street prostitution. These partners participate in two important advisory/working committees: the

Leadership Advisory Committee and the Resource Circle. Their involvement and contributions are described in detail.

- **Peer & Community Supporter program.** This was originally designed as a way of including individuals who are no longer active in street prostitution to support participants in the Diversion program by providing Peer Mentor training. This program evolved to include community members who do not have prior street involvement by matching these supporters with peer mentors. Over time, this opportunity was extended beyond Diversion participants, to include women in transition who were living either in transition houses or independently. The Individual Development Account program - a matching savings program - was another way to address the poverty issues faced by individuals who have left the streets.
- **COARSE Sharing Forum – October 2003.** Proceedings of the evaluation conference that was held in Edmonton on October 16 and 17, 2003. The COARSE Sharing Forum brought together over 160 people from Edmonton and across Canada at an interactive forum to share the outcomes and future direction of Court Diversion relative to prostitution-related offenses and the Peer and Community Supporter program.
- **COARSE Evaluation.** An evaluation was essential to determine: the benefits of this capacity building approach; what policies at which levels were revised or developed; the impact of the individualized case plan process for the individuals and the community; and; whether or not to continue this process and what changes are needed to meet its objectives. A longitudinal study of the **Social Return on Investment** looks at how diverting individuals away from involvement in the court system could, in addition to improving the lives of women and their families, also save the taxpayers money.
- **Considerations for developing a court diversion program for S. 213 C.C. offences:** a list of considerations that can help guide other communities as they explore similar Court Diversion options for prostitution-related offenses.

Although a national court diversion option is sorely needed in Canada, locally implemented program models are – and should be – as unique as the strengths, resources and assets that are found in local communities. We hope that other communities can learn from the COARSE experience – and from the experiences of other Canadian court diversion program models.

“There is an alternative, rather than going to jail, this program gives a positive alternative. There is help out there, and we don’t have to be on the corner and be someone’s piece of meat for money. This has taught me that I am worth more than that.”

COARSE Participant

Why create a Community Resource?

In 2002, the Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton (PAAFE) initiated the “Creating Options Aimed at Reducing Sexual Exploitation” (COARSE) Project to provide a continuum of support for residents of Edmonton who want to leave or who have already left prostitution. COARSE began as a pilot project that explored new ways of building capacity and addressing needs of a highly marginalized population – individuals involved in street prostitution – and of the communities affected by street prostitution. The pilot phase has ended, and the COARSE program continues to operate in Edmonton.

The pilot phase concluded with an evaluation of the projects activities, which included recommendations for the future. Recommendation 6.1. is:

“The COARSE Project made a significant contribution to the services that assist women to leave street prostitution in Edmonton. It is important that the momentum of this contribution be maintained. It appears to be not only an effective way to support women to leave prostitution but also one that results in long-term economic benefit. However, there is much yet to be learned before Canada wide court diversion programs can be instituted”

Recommendation 6.1.4:

“to prepare a Guide for Communities wanting to set up Court Diversion for S. 213 C.C. offences”.

This resource maps out how the COARSE program was created, highlights what learning and growth occurred during the pilot implementation, and describes plans for the future. Although a national court diversion option is sorely needed in Canada, locally implemented program models are – and should be – as unique as the strengths, resources and assets that are found in local communities. We hope that other communities can learn from the COARSE experience – and from the experiences of other Canadian court diversion program models (listed at the end of this resource).

The Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton (PAAFE)

The Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton is a collaboration of community-based individuals and groups working towards long-term solutions to the complex issues central to prostitution. Established in 1997, our non-profit organization facilitates four major initiatives:

- *The Prostitution Offender Program*
(“john school”), an alternative measures program for first time offenders charged with soliciting for the purposes of prostitution.
- *The Supports Program*
The majority of the funds generated through the Prostitution Offender Program are used to directly benefit individuals in transition. These supports include helping address basic needs caused by poverty, paying for counseling and offering bursaries to help people achieve their educational goals.
- *Public Awareness, Education and Community Initiatives*
Print materials, audio-visuals, media work, displays and special events, such as an annual Memorial to remember those who have lost their lives through involvement in street prostitution.
- *Creating Options Aimed at Reducing Sexual Exploitation (COARSE)*,
This two year pilot project was funded through the federal Voluntary Sector Initiative via the Department of Justice. The project includes a court diversion program, a variety of peer and community support initiatives, and increases the ability of the community and government sectors to work together to create positive change. The second phase of this continues with the support of government funders, private donors, church groups and foundations.

COARSE Project History

Prostitution is a longstanding criminal justice policy issue and has been the subject of ongoing federal-provincial discussions for years. The power to legislate and address the exploitative aspects of prostitution lies within federal jurisdiction, yet the impact is experienced most significantly at the municipal level.

Cities across Canada have tried different approaches to deal with the various forms of prostitution. In Edmonton, concerted action had been initiated to address the complex issues of street prostitution. One such action is the Prostitution Offender Program (POP), or “john school”, which has been operating since 1996 under the auspices of the Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton (PAAFE). Since the inception of the POP program, stakeholders interested in the issue of prostitution have identified the need to create a complementary diversion program that targets street prostitutes. This was identified through consultations with survivors of street prostitution, the PAAFE board of directors, the Edmonton Police Service, the Provincial Crown Prosecutor’s office, the communities affected by prostitution and agency partners.

These consultations questioned why traditional criminal sanctions for individuals charged with S. 213 C.C. offences seldom result in meaningful withdrawal from street prostitution. Traditional criminal sanctions failed to address the circumstances that shape the individual’s involvement in street prostitution. These factors include poverty, addictions, lack of education, inability to find and keep employment, etc. The chaos inherent in this existence is characterized by recidivism and hopelessness on the part of those charged. In many cases individuals charged either continued working in order to pay fines, failed to appear for court resulting in yet more charges, or plead guilty often without obtaining proper legal representation, resulting in fines or jail time.

With this in mind, PAAFE met with Minister Anne McLellan, then the Minister of Justice. She encouraged PAAFE to start a court diversion program geared to individuals who prostitute. Minister McLellan appointed a staff representative from the Department of Justice to work with PAAFE on the development of this project. The Minister encouraged PAAFE to pursue a pilot project and to report the results back to her.

The Critical Role of Federal and Provincial Crown Prosecutors and the Police Service

The idea of utilizing a court diversion process was possible because of the Provincial Crown Prosecutor's office (Edmonton), the Federal Crown Prosecutors office and the Edmonton Police Service. Each of these entities was interested offering diversion options for individuals charged with prostitution related offences in anticipation of meaningful life changes and reduced recidivism.

An initial barrier to the COARSE Court Diversion program was that the rules governing Alternative Measures stipulate that only first offences are eligible. In many cases, the target population identified for the COARSE pilot project was individuals who had any number of previous charges, and were technically ineligible. COARSE Court Diversion is possible because the Edmonton Provincial Crown Prosecutors office allowed **any** individual to participate, as long as they met all eligibility requirements. Therefore, an individual with a prior criminal record could obtain a reduced criminal sanction for a prostitution-related offence, if they completed their individual case plan under the supervision of the COARSE diversion coordinator. In every case, the resolution of the criminal charge is the decision of the Crown. Results range from complete withdrawal of the charge to probation or conditional sentences providing further opportunity to complete programs.

Similarly, the Federal Justice Alternatives Measures program saw value in the COARSE Diversion program for federally prosecuted simple drug possession charges, if those charged were known to be involved in prostitution. This department now refers eligible participants to COARSE, as an alternative to other Alternative Measures methods such as the performance of community service hours. Thus, the Diversion program worked with both provincial and federal Crown Prosecutors, and offered services to more eligible participants.

The Edmonton Police Service works closely with COARSE as the key agency that provides information about the diversion option and refers eligible individuals to the program.

Case plans

- ❑ A woman who had always had a mainstream job developed a medical condition, which affected her work and led to unemployment. She did not know where to turn for help or support when her savings ran out, and was too ashamed to approach her family or church. She had seen stories of prostitution on TV, and thought she could try it to get short-term cash. Her first ‘customer’ was an undercover police officer. She was referred to COARSE, and within days had obtained SFI and started a training course. She has been employed full time ever since. A charge was never laid in this case.
- ❑ A young woman with a severe addiction to cocaine wanted off the street and out of prostitution. She needed a lengthy rehab to assist her. There was an opening in a program, but she had no money to pay for it. She even approached her MLA to see if he could find funding but he was unsuccessful. A phone call from the diversion coordinator to a COARSE partner during their first meeting accessed the funds and the woman was in the rehab within 3 days. She completed the 90-day program. Her charge was withdrawn.
- ❑ A very entrenched young woman who was an alcoholic and had engaged in prostitution daily for 5 years agreed to attend rehab and life skills training to try to break her behavior patterns. She successfully completed both of them, and now attends college taking upgrading. Her goal is to work in the medical field. After completing her plan, she did resort to prostitution on a few occasions. We see this as a reduction from her past behaviour of prostituting all night every night. The Diversion Program provided a stepping-stone to success. Completing college and getting a job will help her fully end her involvement in prostitution. Her charge was withdrawn.
- ❑ One woman created a plan where she would deal with all her mental health and physical health issues. She was homeless, had a sleep disorder, had two diagnosed mental health conditions, and needed surgery for an injury. She was seeing a G.P., a surgeon, and a psychiatrist, all of whom had put her on a variety of medications. During the course of her plan, she found housing, arranged to have her medications stabilized and coordinated so that they did not counteract each other, and dealt with the medical issues. Her charge was withdrawn.
- ❑ Another young woman agreed to attend school to upgrade her education. She made it from grade 3 to grade 8 before her abusive boyfriend forced her to quit. Because of him she lost her apartment and fled the city to hide in a shelter. She did not complete her plan, but her progress was documented for the court so that the judge could take it into consideration. The judge deemed that she had done enough work on her plan. She stays in touch with the Diversion Coordinator, and still plans to return to go back to school when she feels it is safe. She has not returned to prostitution.

A young single mom with a child who has multiple disabilities had her welfare payment reduced when her child was old enough to attend school. However, the child was sick a lot and missed school. Mom couldn't work a regular job because of the sick child. She got behind in rent etc, so she turned to prostitution. The solution: she attended school where she was able to access a sign language course. In turn, the school advocated for more in-home support for her child. SFI and Child Welfare funding was restored. By the end of her plan, she was working full time. The charge was withdrawn and she has not returned to the street.

A single mom with 4 children ran short of money when her common-law husband moved out. She had to drop out of school because she had no one to look after the kids. Her student financing was withdrawn and it took some time to get SFI set up. She had prostituted many years before, so she decided to return to it to help her pay rent and put food on the table. As a result of COARSE, she was able to access services when she was short of diapers and baby food. She was unable, because of the children, to attend full day programming. She agreed to do a research project where she would investigate and document as many places as possible where an aboriginal single mom new to Edmonton could go to access healthy services and cultural support. The result was a very concise summary of local organizations listing their programs and contact information. She ended up accessing programs and was able to return to school to continue her degree. Her charge was also withdrawn.

Another woman with mental illness, a long history of abuse, and a cocaine addiction attended a literacy course in addition to addiction counseling. She is now working with an adult literacy group to write the story of her life. In addition, she spoke at a conference on adult literacy. Her charge was withdrawn.

A woman in her 50's with mental illness and (28 years of prostitution experience) was working for social interaction rather than money. She was bored and lonely. She decided to volunteer at an inner city agency so that she could meet people and make friends. She completed about 24 hours of volunteer work per week for 6 weeks, and continues to help out when needed. Her charge was withdrawn and she is no longer engaged in prostitution.

A 30 yr old woman with 17 years of prostitution and addiction issues decided that she wanted to take the opportunity offered her to quit. She attended rehab, and entered transitional housing where she has blossomed. Her charge was withdrawn. She developed a network of support for herself, and has learned to deal with life's issues without resorting to drugs and alcohol. She has now been clean and away from prostitution for 9 months, and is helping other young individuals in transition from the street.

The Pilot Project Plan Proposal

PAAFE secured funding to implement a two-year pilot project from the Federal Department of Justice through the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI). The City of Edmonton Community Services partnered to assist with evaluation services. Alberta Justice, the Solicitor General Prevention Programs and the Edmonton Police Service contributed research data and assistance. Many other community partners provided in-kind consultation and services to the Court Diversion participants. The VSI funding concluded on October 31, 2003.

The intent of the two-year pilot project was to create a personalized case plan court diversion process for individuals over the age of 18 charged with prostitution-related charges. The Court Diversion program is only one component of the COARSE project. As such, the pilot project had three additional goals:

- 4) To develop new relationships and strengthen existing working relationships among the three levels of government and the voluntary sector,
- 5) To ensure that those with past and present involvement in street prostitution are actively involved in designing the diversion process, and,
- 6) To provide substantive input into any policies and programs which affect those with past or present involvement in street prostitution.

The two-year pilot had three phases: an initial four-month Consultation and Development phase; concurrent with a two-year Implementation and Evaluation phase.

Phase 1 – Consultation & Development

Contract with consultants to design inclusive processes for consultation, communications, decision-making, implementation, research and policy development for Phases 1 and 2 of the project.

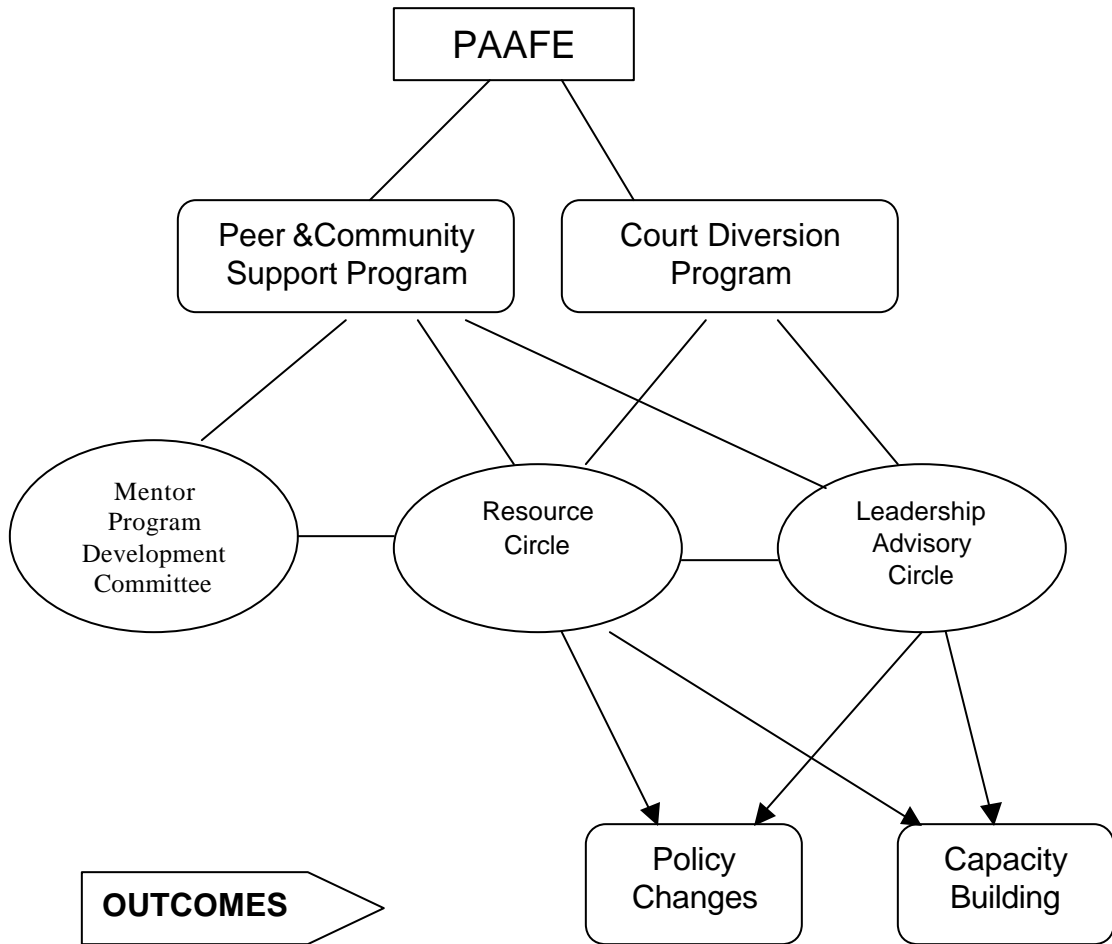
Phase 2 – Implementation and Monitoring

Hire Diversion Team (Diversion Coordinator, Mentorship Coordinator). Ensure all resources are in place, train first mentors (survivors of prostitution). Implement the Diversion process. Continue offering Diversion process. Ensure ongoing research and evaluation mechanisms are working.

Phase 3 - Evaluation

Conclude with an evaluation conference in October 2003, which would bring together Diversion program participants and government and voluntary sector partners.

COARSE Program Model Overview



The Pilot Project proposal to the Voluntary Sector Initiative, Department of Justice is found in [APPENDIX Link 1](#)

How the COARSE Court Diversion works

The COARSE Court Diversion Program has two primary goals:

1. To help sexually exploited adults end their involvement in street prostitution, reduce the possibility of a criminal record and make positive choices for their future, and;
2. To provide a new tool for the police, the legal community and the justice system to address prostitution-related offenses in the justice system.

The Court Diversion process:

The Edmonton Police Service members charge an individual with a prostitution-related summary conviction offense and inform her about the diversion program.

- The person decides if she is ready to make a change and contacts JoAnn McCartney, the COARSE Diversion Coordinator.
- They work out a plan to address the immediate reasons for turning to prostitution. (For example: homelessness, addictions, abusive boyfriend/pimp, short of money for basic needs, mental health conditions).
- The COARSE Diversion Coordinator offers information about drug and alcohol rehabilitation, education, job training, income support, housing, health care and other programs and resources that apply to the individuals' personal situation.
- JoAnn provides a personal contact for the resources and the individual does some of the research for her plan so that she is invested in making the changes to end her involvement. The individual commits to the plan in writing.
- The case plan is presented to the Crown Prosecutors' Office for approval. JoAnn and the client attend court. The court case is put over for long enough for the individual to complete her plan. After this time period, JoAnn provides a progress report to the Crown Prosecutors Office. The charges are withdrawn or there is a reduced court-imposed penalty.
- One condition is that she refrains from prostitution while she is on the plan. She must keep in contact with JoAnn and actively participate in the programs she has chosen.
- The length of the average plan is two (2) months.

The eligibility for the Court Diversion project includes:

Adult (over 18 years of age)

Charged with a S. 213 C.C. or other offenses related to prostitution. Some examples are: indecent act, failure to appear, drunk in public, jaywalking, minor assault etc. The requisite is that these charges are relating to the individual's prostitution activity.

Charges must originate in the Edmonton area

Note that there was demand for the Diversion program from people charged with S. 213 C.C. and related offenses from other parts of Alberta.

COARSE Stats – Pilot phase

How many individuals have asked for help (January 2002 – October 2003)

- ❑ Forty-two (42) asked for help
- ❑ Twenty-nine (29) are completely off Edmonton streets, and the other 13 are prostituting sporadically rather than constantly.

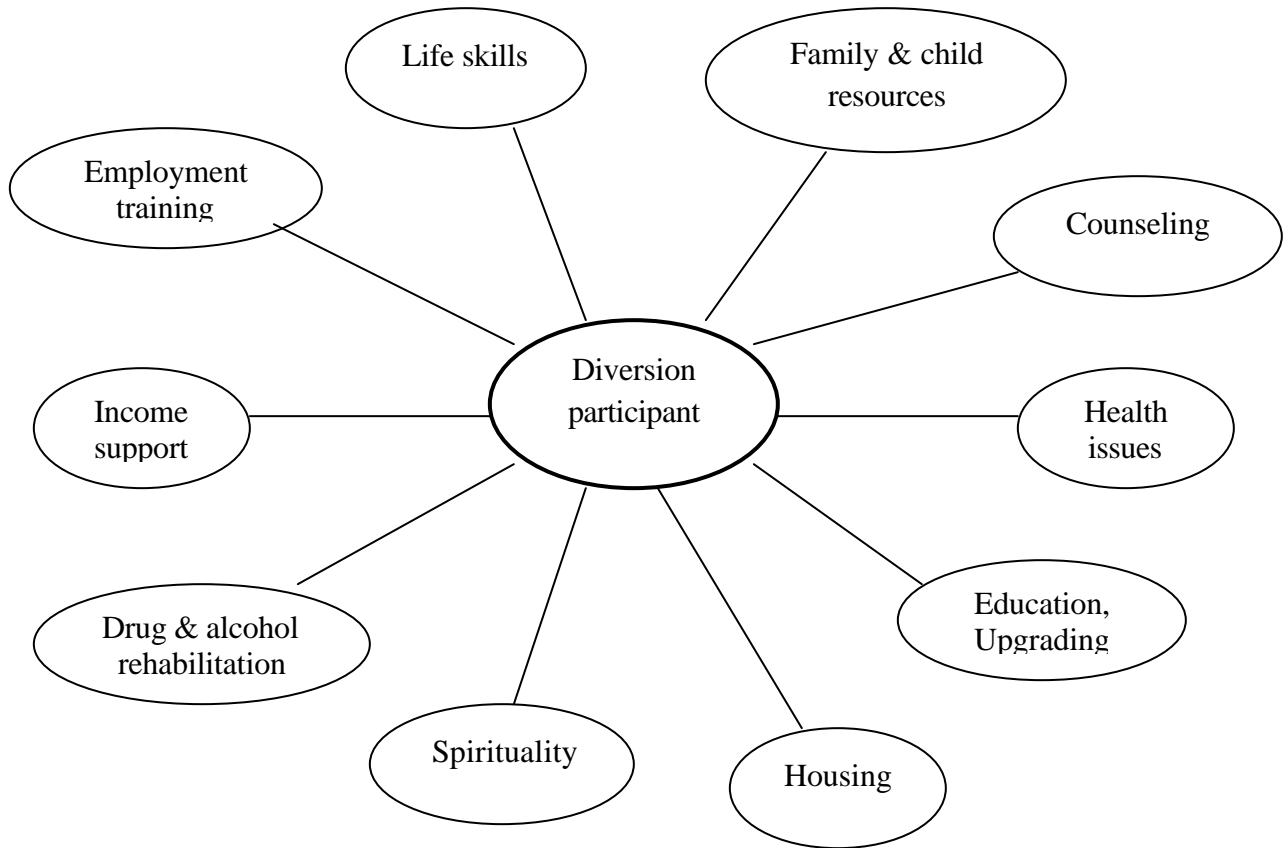
What are the characteristics of individuals asking for help?

- ❑ The average age is 32, the youngest is 18 and the oldest is 51.
- ❑ 33 had a history in prostitution longer than 6 months; 5 had recently turned to prostitution
- ❑ 16 are Caucasian, 13 have treaty status, 10 are Metis, 3 identified as “other”

What are the major barriers they experience at the time of arrest?

- ❑ 18 had no stable housing; 10 stayed with friends or family
- ❑ 17 reported addictions as their biggest barrier; 13 reported poverty; 11 have identified/diagnosed mental health issues and reported difficulty accessing appropriate services.

Case Plan possibilities



Building Capacity through Community Partnerships

The community capacity-building framework is vital to the COARSE project. A key objective within this framework was to build the capacity of federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, and a wide array of non-governmental organizations and community service agencies to address the complex issues faced by Diversion participants. This included organizations specializing in crime reduction, prevention, homelessness initiatives, health and social services.

The involvement of these stakeholders shaped the implementation of the project programs and enhanced the supports and resources available to Diversion participants. Two ongoing advisory groups, namely, the **Leadership Advisory Circle** and the **Resource Circle** were established early in the project.

The advisory circles meet regularly with project staff to explore the issues, successes and challenges faced by the project. Each partnership provides consultative expertise, access to programming, and/or other in-kind supports to the project. While PAAFE had worked with many of the partners before to varying degrees, the project has attracted new partners. For example, two new partnerships that were formed in response to meeting needs of Diversion participants were specialists in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Native Counseling Services.

The process of extensive and ongoing consultation practices utilized in the project has had the effect of empowering the community, and attracting new partners. VSI funding afforded PAAFE the opportunity to form and sustain these partnerships. This grant provided the staffing, facility and hospitality resources required for PAAFE to plan, organize, facilitate and communicate with our partners. The broad scope and large scale of this work was possible because the required resources were invested by the VSI grant. PAAFE continues to perform this work as resources permit.

Leadership Advisory Circle

The Leadership Advisory Circle is made up of representatives from the Voluntary Sector and 3 levels of government. It is co-chaired by a government representative and meets several times a year. Its role is to advise the project and to monitor the progress of the program. This committee formed a sub-committee of federal and provincial research and evaluation experts in the preparation of the evaluation and Social Return on Investment (SROI) tools.

This committee is central to addressing systemic barriers to information and services, delivered either by government or NGO's. The work of this committee is intended to consider government policies and practices that can lead to the creation of tangible options for prostituted individuals.

Voluntary Sector: Community Program Partners	Supports provided
Crossroads Program – Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation	In-kind consultation; expertise /advice
Metis Child and Family Services	In-kind consultation; expertise/advice
Government Sector Partners: Federal	In-kind consultation; expertise/advice
Department of Justice: Federal Alternative Measures	In-kind consultation
Edmonton Federal Interdepartmental Committee on Homelessness (Liaison via HRDC)	Expertise/advice; departmental contact re: project development
*Status of Women	In-kind consultation; expertise/advice
Government Sector Partners: Provincial	
Alberta Justice: Crown Prosecutor's Office	In-kind consultation; expertise/advice
*Solicitor General: Crime Prevention and Restorative Justice	In-kind consultation; expertise/advice
Alberta Human Resources and Employment	In-kind consultation; expertise/advice
Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution	In-kind consultation; expertise/advice
Government Sector Partners: Municipal	
Edmonton Police Service: Vice Unit	In-kind consultation; expertise/advice
Edmonton Safer Cities Advisory Committee: PAAFE liaison	In-kind consultation; expertise/advice
*Capital Health Authority	Provision of information/data required for evaluation

*Denotes new partner

Resource Circle

The Resource Circle Committee is an active committee concerned with addressing the COARSE Court Diversion project day-to-day resource needs. This committee meets bi-monthly and is made up of community agencies and government departments that deliver front-line programs and supports. Its members are likely to be helpful to the individuals engaged in Court Diversion case plans. The COARSE Resource Circle works on the premise that a caring and supportive diversion process recognizes the effects of abuse, addictions, poverty and low self-esteem.

Some partners joined the project in response to the challenges and issues presented by Diversion participants as the project progressed. For example, the Diversion Coordinator discovered that some Diversion participants presented with mental health issues or were suspected of bearing the effects of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. In order for Diversion to be successful and to personalize the program for the participants, these issues required the expertise and resources available from new partners.

See next page for a full description of the Resource Circle partners' participation.

Resource Circle

Voluntary Sector and Community Program Partners	Supports provided in addition to committee involvement, client referral, support for case plans, expertise/advice
ECCCC – Crossroads program	Outreach/housing
*Elizabeth Fry Society	Life skills day program, casual labour, Aboriginal women’s program, clothing
CSS – Safe House Outreach program	Outreach/housing
* Safe Passages program - Catholic Social Services	Supportive housing
* FASD Support Programs- Catholic Social Services	Outreach support to pregnant and parenting women
Bissell Centre – Well Communities, Well program Families (FASD Program)	Outreach support to pregnant and parenting women
DECSA Transitions program	Employment, educational training program, transitional supports
Boyle McCauley Health Centre – Kindred House	Drop-in resource centre; access to medical support
*Salvation Army Anchorage program	Live-in long term rehabilitation program
*FASD Network – Success by Six (lead agency)	Staff and Community Supporter training
Metis Child & Family Services	Family support, parenting outreach
*Native Counseling Services	Housing, life skills, apprenticeship program, employment training for Aboriginals
Government Sector Partners	
*Alberta Human Resources & Employment: Income Support Programs Staff	Income support, referrals for subsidized employment training programs
Alberta Justice: Alternative Measures, Crown Prosecutor’s Office	Approval and processing of case plans; in-kind consultation
*Alberta Justice: Probation	Referrals to COARSE
*Capital Health Region	Referrals to health-related supports
Edmonton Police Service	Client referral
*Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission	Referrals to a variety of live-in and day program addictions treatment programs, counseling, staff and community supporter training

*Denotes new partner

Partnerships with other Court Diversion programs

Community capacity was strengthened on a national level. There are a number of Court Diversion programs offered – either formally or informally – across Canada, namely in Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Victoria, Vancouver and Calgary. In the consultation stage of the project a videoconference was held with these groups with the goal of establishing a national network of Court Diversion programs relative to street-prostitution related charges. While the response was positive, PAAFE and the other programs quickly realized that this network needed to be funded. Meeting opportunities during the “2001 Sexually Exploited Youth and Beyond Conference” in Victoria and the COARSE Sharing Forum in 2003 proved to be the venue to establish this network because of the opportunity to meet and spend time together “face-to-face”.

The COARSE Sharing Forum A Call to Action (APPENDIX link 4), details a call to action and recommendations for the implementation of a national delivery system for similar Diversion programs.

Links to other Canadian court diversion programs are found on page 29.

Key activities in the pilot phase of COARSE

PAAFE Staffing Model

Project Coordinator (pte)	Macro project coordination
Diversion Coordinator (pte)	Court Diversion program
Supports Coordinator (fte)	Peer & Community Supporter program
(Administrative Supports – pte)	(administrative support to all programs)
Community Supports Worker (a separate, yet related program development) (pte)	Community Supporter program (later merged with the Peer & Community Supporter Program)

Peer & Community Supporter program

Originally designed as a way of including individuals who are no longer active in street prostitution to support participants in the Diversion program, the project was conceived as a “Peer Mentoring” program. The goal was to invite individuals who are off the streets to offer one-to-one support to the participants of the COARSE Court Diversion program and women in transition.

A Supports Coordinator was hired to facilitate training of the mentors in a number of key areas such as: addictions, suicide intervention, etc. Other new resources became available to the project vis-à-vis the Capacity-building activities of the project. For example, staff and peer supporters were offered training in the area of Aboriginal Awareness and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The training curriculum is found in APPENDIX Link 3.

The Peer Mentor program evolved considerably. The first and most significant change occurred when the Mentors disclosed that the training triggered significant trauma stemming from their past street experiences. The Peer Mentors themselves red-flagged the risk of relapse in terms of their own addictions issues, as well as threatening the stability of their emotional and mental health. Despite their enthusiasm and heartfelt desire to help others, PAAFE learned that it was difficult to evaluate the readiness of the Mentors to provide supports to Diversion participants and women in transition. Furthermore, there were challenges in creating a safe emotional environment in which the Mentors could perform this role. In the interest of emotional safety, the one-to-one matching of Mentors to Diversion Participants and women in transition had to be reconsidered. What followed was a shift to a different approach.

The Mentor training continued and was viewed as beneficial by these participants. There was however, a shift from one-to-one mentoring among peers to mentoring each other through a variety of small group learning opportunities. Despite the fact that one-to-one matching of peers to participants did not happen as was originally conceived, peer fellowship, encouragement and support did occur in the small group training sessions. Over time, this opportunity was extended beyond Diversion participants, to include women in transition who were living either in transition houses or independently.

As such, the name used to describe this program also changed. The original name of “Mentor program” changed to “Peer Mentor program”, and finally to “Peer and Community Supporter program”. These name variations were made by the women involved in the program, in an effort to accurately name the role these supporters were best able to perform. For those involved, “Community and Peer Supporter” implied more mutuality and equality in the relationships between the women in transition and their Supporters.

Another development was the Community Supporter program. This came about because an interested community professional sought and obtained operating funds. Her idea of involving community members who do not have prior street involvement was linked immediately to the Peer Supporter program and matches to individuals in transition were facilitated.

Thus the target population of the Peer and Community Supporter program evolved to include persons who did not have a history of street prostitution. Ordinary citizens who expressed concerns for the well being of the women in transition wanted to offer encouragement and support. The availability of a wider generic community network was viewed as another positive resource to assist individuals in transition to stay off the streets. Several of the Peer Supporters who took the first phase of training asked to be partnered with community supporters. Community agencies that provide services to people involved in exiting street prostitution also had access to this new resource.

Another synchronistic development that added value to the Peer and Community Supporter program was the “Individual Development Account program”, made possible because of funding from the Flora Trust. The Flora Trust offered to match participants’ monthly savings contributions, enabling them to reach financial goals such as damage deposits for better housing, and purchases like appliances or other household items. Many of the Peer Supporters disclosed that they still struggled with poverty and eagerly volunteered for this program.

COARSE Sharing Forum – October 2003

An evaluation conference was held in Edmonton on October 16 and 17, 2003. The COARSE Sharing Forum brought together over 160 people from Edmonton and across Canada at an interactive forum to share the outcomes and future direction of Court Diversion relative to prostitution-related offenses and the Peer and Community Supporter program. The Forum itself served as another exercise in capacity building.

Representatives from justice and legal communities, law enforcement, community members, elders, front-line community service workers, senior management and elected representatives from all three levels of government, project partners and participants attended the Forum. Over thirty individuals participated as speakers or panelists at this event, including elected government representatives, researchers, front-line and senior human services staff, and Diversion and Peer and Community Supporter program participants. Evaluations of the conference overwhelmingly noted the Diversion and Peer and Community Supporter program participants as the most well received speakers at this event. These stories helped to illustrate the complex issues faced by those who are charged with prostitution-related offenses and exploded some commonly held but inaccurate beliefs about the causes and effects of street prostitution. This communication helped to garner support for the project activities from across the community and resulted in a great deal of cross-fertilization of information and expertise among the stakeholders.

A key result of the forum was the COARSE Sharing Forum A Call to Action (APPENDIX link 4), which details a call to action and recommendations for the implementation of a national delivery system for similar Diversion programs.

COARSE Evaluation

An evaluation was essential to determine:

- The benefits of this capacity building approach,
- What policies at which levels were revised or developed,
- The impact of the individualized case plan process for the individuals and the community;
- Whether or not to continue this process and what changes are needed to meet its objectives.

Evaluation Team	
Coyne Community Development Services	Consultation
City of Edmonton, Innovative Services	In-kind consultation and service
Social Return on Investment Sub-Committee Team	
Alberta Solicitor General research staff and Crime Prevention manager	In-kind consultation and service
Evaluators (see Evaluation Team above)	Consultation
PAAFE staff (including Intergovernmental Consultant)	Expertise/advice

The COARSE Project 2002 – 2003 Final Evaluation Report can be found in the APPENDIX link 2.

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

PAAFE continues to offer the court diversion program and peer supports and evaluate the longer-term outcomes. There is ongoing development of the research and data collection for the Social Return on Investment (SROI) component.

By diverting individuals away from involvement in the court system, it was theorized that the COARSE project would, in addition to improving the lives of women and their families, also save the taxpayers money. Project partners wanted to identify the return on investment that would accrue when women have alternatives to the existing justice process. The SROI Committee met monthly from September 2002 to September 2003. The work plan was to collaboratively develop an analysis framework, with the support from the consultant, then collect the required data from their own government departments. The committee determined that the project timeline is not sufficient to determine post program costs and savings; however, it can highlight possible patterns that may provide a reasonable argument for subsequent research. They set out to identify services that would be used or not used by the participant and non-participant, and identified costs that could be reasonably attributed to these services.

Based on the proxy data, the calculation shows that in the first year of the program, participants use more services than do non-participants and cost the taxpayer more to meet their needs. This pattern begins to shift immediately as participants complete the program and succeed in staying off the street. It is estimated that by year 5, the cumulative cost of providing services to program participants is approximately \$120,000 while for non-participants, the cumulative cost could be as high as \$290,000. The break-even point appears to be between Year 1 and Year 2, depending on how a participant or non-participant access resources. By Year 10, it is estimated the cumulative cost of providing services to a non-participant could be as high as \$580,000 while cumulative costs for services to program participants is much lower at \$170,000.

This calculation suggests that the return on program investment is significant over time. In Year 1 there is no return on investment, in fact, for each dollar invested in this program in the first year, an additional eight dollars is spent on participants. Clearly, in the short-term, it cost more to provide services than it would be to simply incarcerate women charged. However, this assessment suggests that, in the long-term, significant returns to the taxpayer are accrued. By Year 5, for each program dollar spent, \$138 is saved in services not used and by Year 10, \$342 per participant.

Savings Per \$ Spent for Program	
Year 1:	(\$8)
Year 2:	\$138
Year 10:	\$342

The SROI component requires a longer timeframe to provide documentation and analysis that can benefit government decision-making priorities and processes. A longitudinal study could be a planning resource for municipal, provincial and federal ministries.

Please refer to the COARSE Final Evaluation Report, pp 43–49.

COARSE Current status

(Updated April 2004)

The Pilot is now complete and much has been learned about finding meaningful ways to assist individuals charged with prostitution related charges not to re-offend – and more importantly to leave street prostitution altogether. (For detailed information see APPENDIX Links: 2 & 3)

The COARSE Diversion project has been a success as evidenced by the outcomes for the Diversion participants as well as the support from project stakeholders. PAAFE is actively seeking sustainable funding. At this time, PAAFE continues to operate the Diversion program through interim funding for the fiscal year ending March 2005. Our partners have all indicated a commitment to continue to support this endeavor.

Components of the Peer Training program continue until other financial resources can be secured. New support or learning groups have been added such as “Intimate Partner Violence”. This is co-facilitated by the Diversion Coordinator and a City of Edmonton Community Services Social Worker. The Diversion Coordinator and a Resource Circle participant developed an innovative program for incarcerated individuals at the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre. They designed 4 module workshops to help individuals make healthier choices and connect them with community resources upon release and to reduce readmission rates. Fortunately, the Community Supporter program will continue as it is already funded through donations from church and community resources.

Future Directions: How PAAFE is building on the lessons learned from the pilot

In the future, PAAFE will utilize different strategies to involve Peer Supporters, Educators and Advocates in the work. As described in the lessons learned in Peer & Community Supporters section of this document, PAAFE would address the issues of emotional safety and accountability by developing a different framework for involving experiential participants. One strategy could be to create more paid employment for peers. Paid employment would help to improve the personal financial situations of peers, since poverty was a significant barrier for the individuals volunteering for the Peer and Community Supporter program. Another benefit to paid ongoing employment is that PAAFE would be better able to provide a framework for accountability and structure that promotes stability and safety.

PAAFE continues to link with similar diversion programs to advocate for national access to Court Diversion for prostitution-related offences.

Considerations for developing a court diversion program for S. 213 C.C. offences

What documentation and/or data is available regarding the scope of street prostitution in your community?

How are street prostitution-related charges dealt with now? Are there examples of court diversion programs in other communities within your province?

What human service resources are in place now to deal with individuals involved in street prostitution?

Is the Provincial Crown Prosecutor and local Police Service part of the local initiative? Is there potential to utilize a modified court diversion method for your program? What resource needs do they have in order to accomplish this?

Who are potential partners and stakeholders – individuals, government agencies, non-profit service providers, and community representatives, elected officials - in your community?

What stake do they have in addressing prostitution-related issues in your community?

What are the barriers to starting a court diversion program in your community?

What will it take for stakeholders to “buy in” to the idea?

Are there opportunities for stakeholders to give advice about the development of your project? How can survivors of street prostitution be involved in this program?

Are stakeholders willing or able to bring resources and/or other supports to your project?

Contact the COARSE Court Diversion Program

For further information about the Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton (PAAFE) or the COARSE Diversion program, please contact us. We are interested in knowing about the progress of Court Diversion options in your community.

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COARSE Diversion Coordinator
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Contacts for related Canadian Community Programs

British Columbia

PEERS (Prostitutes Empowerment & Education Resource)

211- 620 View Street,
Victoria British Columbia V8W 1J6

Tel: (250) 388-5328

Fax: (250) 388-5324

Email: fas@peers.bc.ca

Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Diversion program

Shawna Baher, RCMP

303 Prideaux Street

Nanaimo, BC V9R 2N3

Tel: (250) 754-2345

Email: SHAWNA.BAHER@rcmp-grc.gc.ca

Alberta

Stepping Out YWCA

Calgary, Alberta

Tel: (403) 503-9924

Email: stepout@telus.net

Servants Anonymous

Calgary, Alberta

Tel: (403) 205-5533

Saskatchewan

EGADZ – Operation Help Program

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Tel: (306) 931-6644

Fax: (306) 665-1344

Email: bill@egadz.ca

Saskatoon "HOPE School"

Salvation Army

Contact: Marci McLaughlin

Tel: (306) 651-0733

mcmar1@sasktel.net

Regina "HOPE School"

Indian Metis Christian Fellowship

Regina, Saskatchewan

Contact: William Davison

Tel: (306) 359-1096

imcf2@sasktel.net

Manitoba

Salvation Army, Prostitution Diversion Program
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Tel: (204) 949-2100
Fax: (204) 949-2110
Email: Dianna_Bussey@sacorrections.ca

Ontario

Streetlights Support Service
674 Markham Street, Toronto, ON M6G 2L9
Tel: (416) 534-0680
Fax: (416) 534-4952
Email: info@streetlightsupportservices.com

(Updated September 2004)

APPENDIX Documents

- 1) POLICY CAPACITY PROPOSAL: Edmonton Prostitution Court Diversion Process - (COARSE – “Creating Options Aimed At Reducing Sexual Exploitation”)
- 2) COARSE Project 2002 – 2003 Final Evaluation Report
- 3) Peer & Community Supporter Training Curriculum
- 4) COARSE Sharing Forum: A Call to Action (attached)

Please contact COARSE for further information

A Call to Action

Creating Options Aimed at Reducing Sexual Exploitation – Sharing Forum

October 16 – 17, 2003 - Edmonton Alberta

Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton

COARSE Program, PAAFE - Edmonton, Alberta

PEERS - Victoria, B.C. (Prostitutes Empowerment and Employment Resource Society)

Operation HELP Program, EGADZ – Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Prostitution Diversion Program, Salvation Army – Winnipeg

CHOICES Program, Streetlights Services – Toronto, Ontario

Key Recommendation:

Advocate with all levels of government, the criminal justice system and the Canadian public:

- that prostitution be recognized as a multi-faceted addiction that requires a long and specific recovery process to address the underlying abuse, trauma and poverty issues;
- that legislation, programs and policies be adapted accordingly.

Criminal Justice System Recommendations:

1. Establish the capacity for permanent funding for Prostitution Diversion Coordinators across Canada;
 - Large cities like Toronto may want to consider the establishment of one court to deal with prostitution-related charges
2. Encourage police agencies to develop or strengthen initiatives to build trust between police and individuals involved in prostitution:
 - to encourage reporting of violent assaults;
 - testifying against pimps, drug dealers or gang leaders;
 - linking individuals to community resources;Education Initiatives:
 - Invite survivors of prostitution to help educate police members
 - Have teams of survivors and police members educate the public
3. Request that the “demand” side be addressed through the establishment of more first time prostitution offender programs across Canada; and that more strategies be developed to address the problem of repeat offenders and offenders who do not get caught through the traditional undercover operations for S. 213 CC.

Health and Social Services:

1. HOUSING: Create more opportunities and funding for housing programs for all ages to support individuals along the continuum of recovery.

Ensure sustainable funding for long-term proven programs for all ages that address the multi-stage continuum of recovery: addictions, trauma, parenting/family support, holistic healing (affirming the healing of the body-mind-spirit and finding meaning in life), healthy recreation activities and participation in community life.