

TRANSFORMATIONS

Transforming Our Community: Building A Brighter Future

Following his incarceration for a drug offense, Webster is struggling to find work. With three small children to care for, he is eager to secure regular income. His brother is incarcerated and his sister lives out of state. His lack of a support network led Webster to feel somewhat depressed and overwhelmed. But then Webster heard about the Community Reentry Services Program (CRSP) through his probation officer, who referred him to the program.

A collaborative effort between the Delaware Center for Justice (DCJ), the Department of Correction and multiple community partners in the state of Delaware to reduce recidivism and promote self-sufficiency by providing comprehensive, client-centered case management with measurable goals and outcomes, the CRSP offers services to adults who are currently on probation in New Castle County. The CRSP is a voluntary program and case managers are located within the probation offices in New Castle County.

"I had heard about the program, and I had really wanted to be in it. And it actually helps!" said Webster. The goal of the reentry program is for case managers and participants to work together to discuss each individual's history and current needs, and then establish the participant's goals for a successful transition back into the community.

"If our program wasn't helping him with transportation, I'm not sure how he'd be getting around so he can apply for jobs. My role is to go that extra step—to actually help him and teach him, not just give him a flyer for a program," explained Webster's DCJ case manager, Suzanne.

When asked what it has been like to work with Suzanne, Webster said, "She has done a lot. She helped me put together a resume and she took me to fill out applications. She's helped me accomplish my goals—not just goals to get off probation, they're goals that help you succeed in life. I really wish I had this opportunity before. Then I probably wouldn't have ever gotten into trouble."

The two had planned an afternoon of job searching in the Wilmington area. A furniture store warehouse, several restaurants and a beverage store were planned stops. "We know these employers are hiring, because they just posted on Craigslist. How are you feeling, Webster?" asked Suzanne.



Suzanne and Webster sat together in Suzanne's car, reviewing the resume that Suzanne had prepared. "If it weren't for you, I'd still have a blank piece of paper without any words on it," Webster said, joking with Suzanne.

"I'm feeling nervous," he answered. "I'm sweating right through my shirt." The two went through a couple of common interview questions together, and Webster's demeanor became visibly calmer.

Suzanne coached him about how to respond if an employer quizzed him about the gap in his resume. "Always be honest," she advised him, "but then talk up the things you've done to better yourself."

The car pulled up in front of a restaurant and Suzanne smiled encouragingly at Webster. "Are you ready?" she asked him. Suzanne waited patiently in the car.

"Webster can get negative about himself, and sometimes cuts himself short. Hopefully, having a resume handy, in addition to filling out the job application, sets him apart. He's serious about making some changes," she said thoughtfully.

Webster secured an on-the-spot interview with a manager at the restaurant. As Suzanne dropped Webster off at his home and promised to check in with him soon, he appeared tired but positive. "My future looks bright," he said with a smile.



The DCJ staff thanks you for your support!



A Health Metamorphosis: Starting Over, Now Safe After Years of Abuse

When 79-year-old Viola* finally called the police two years ago to report her daughter's erratic and frightening behavior, Viola's blood pressure was at dangerous levels because of the stress and anxiety of coping with years of her daughter's verbal and emotional abuse. Her daughter often yelled curse words at Viola, and exhibited other odd behavior such as dumping items illegally behind Viola's house. Viola had tried to get her adult daughter the mental health treatment she needed, but nothing seemed to stick. Viola finally became so exasperated, that she called the police. Viola's dangerously high blood pressure and her bad back prevent her from driving or walking long distances, so she had no transportation to court, and the court process for pursuing protection from abuse was confusing and overwhelming to her.

Viola's case manager in the Elderly Victims Services Program at DCJ received Viola's case referral from the Wilmington Police Department. DCJ staff provided transportation so Viola could attend her court dates, and also helped her to understand how to file a Protection From Abuse Order to prevent Viola's daughter from coming to her house and frightening her. Viola's case manager has helped Viola renew the Protection From Abuse Order two times since then.

"Viola thought she understood the court process, but then she would get confused and it was clear to me that she didn't actually understand what had just happened in court. I often have to explain it to her again," said Viola's case manager.

Viola's daughter now stays away from the house, and Viola can focus on her health and maintaining a healthy blood pressure level.

Viola continues to struggle with finding transportation to her many medical appointments, but DCJ is assisting Viola with investigating various transportation options. "I'll call you soon so we can talk about your options," Viola's case manager said with a smile and a hug as she left the home visit.

**The client's name was changed to protect her privacy*



"I appreciated having someone there. Now I feel more secure. If not for DCJ, I would not have gotten the court order renewed. My DCJ case manager gave me a ride and explained things. I have peace of mind. I feel relaxed and not afraid, and my blood pressure is stable."

Funding for this program is through the Criminal Justice Council through grant VF11-158, under the U.S. DOJ, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office for Victims of Crime (OVC).

A New Day: A Greater Appreciation for Life

The father of Shannon's twin boys was physically abusing his son (he was not her biological child), and because she was also dwelling in the home, she was charged with assault in the second degree by neglect and was incarcerated.

Prior to being sentenced, Shannon was working as a barber and dealing with her own issues of physical abuse. In addition, she had recently given birth to twins.

After being imprisoned, Shannon became involved in DCJ's REACH program, so that she could learn to parent while serving her sentence.

When asked what impact her DCJ case manager had on her life, Shannon explained, "Working with my case manager definitely brought on peace during a stressful situation. Knowing I would see my kids made it a whole lot better. There were times I was challenged by other inmates, but knowing my visits were near, I would think twice about my behavior."

Shannon's DCJ case manager assisted her by coordinating her children's visits to the institution. "Being able to bond with my children was above anything I expected," Shannon said. "It was important for me to maintain the connection with my children. Before this incident, I was very much a part of their lives and it was important that it stayed that way! I needed to be able to assist in their development, to help build and improve their behavior, working on social skills and addressing day to day matters."



"Words cannot express my gratitude. I missed so much time with my kids, but because of REACH, I was still able to connect and be a part of my children's lives."

"My case manager was nonjudgmental, easy to talk to and really made the process easy. In addition to arranging visits, she was also available before and after the visits to talk," Shannon said.

When asked how she was doing now, Shannon enthusiastically replied, "I'm working! I'm back in the barber shop! It's been almost a year! My kids are doing well and I am taking life day by day. Every day is a new day and I have a greater appreciation for life. Life is really good right now!"