APPLETON (WLUK) -- A new study shows a program that's trying to prevent repeat OWI offenses may be working in Outagamie County.

The program substitutes treatment, for jail time.

The Safe Streets Treatment Options Program, or SSTOP, has been in effect in Outagamie County since 2011.

"Instead of sitting in a jail cell they're going to treatment, they're seeing a case manager," explained Bernie Vetrone the director of the county's criminal justice treatment services.

SSTOP is a year-long regimen of treatment and is for 2nd or 3rd OWI offenders who are approved by a judge.

The county found out right away the program saves money. It costs taxpayers $50 a day to keep one person in the county jail.

"This program is $1.35 per day. So it's very cost effective," Vetrone told FOX 11 News.

More important, is what the county didn't know.

"What we thought we knew was that it was good at reducing recidivism, but we didn't have any concrete studies," Vetrone told us.

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The county partnered with a UW-Milwaukee criminologist on a year-long study to find out. She spoke to the county board Tuesday.

“We compared the SSTOP participants to a control group of participants. We actually found that the program reduced OWIs by 31%,” explained Tina Freiburger, who is the Chair of the Department of Criminal Justice for UW-Milwaukee.

The study looked at 346 SSTOP participants from 2012 and 2013 versus 346 offenders from 2009 and 2010, before the program started. The research encompassed three years out from their first convictions.

"We also found that they had fewer convictions overall, in addition to OWIs, as well as were sentenced to fewer days in jail," Freiburger told FOX 11.

According to the study, the SSTOP group had 36% fewer convictions than the comparison group and 22% fewer new incarcerations.

Vetrone told us even though the study was wide-ranging, he says SSTOP is a relatively young program. So they’ll have to continue doing studies on it in the future to ensure it’s beneficial.

"So in the future we hope to expand this to two, three, four years down the road," he said.

Winnebago and Waupaca Counties have similar programs. Winnebago was the first.
Neale Donald Walsch, an American author, is credited with stating, “Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.” Almost weekly, I have the privilege and opportunity of witnessing a particular group of individuals at the end of their comfort zone. For many, this is the first time they have been inside a jail; learning the jail system, rules, who to talk to and when, and jail expectations. The experience can be intimidating. Add the pressures of meeting school expectations, group and individual counseling, added assignments, the focus on developing certain skills, and this group of individuals is constantly outside of their comfort zone.

Criminal Justice Treatment Services facilitates the supervision of student interns, the majority working on a Master’s Degree in Counseling. In addition to those obtaining a Master’s Degree, there are Post-Master’s level individuals working on fulfilling the required hours to become a fully Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Wisconsin. In 2016, these individuals contributed over 1200 hours of mental health help for those incarcerated in the Outagamie County Jail, and 2017 is looking to be no different. Criminal Justice Treatment Services and the Sheriff’s Department is grateful to be able to work with these students, pushing them outside of their comfort zone, providing counseling services to this population.
EBDM Pilot Project Shows Positive Results and Cost Savings

By Beth Robinson

Pilot projects to expedite and streamline court case processing have been created from the work of Outagamie County’s Evidence Based Decision Making (EBDM) Policy Team. One such pilot project focused on revising practices for scheduling pre-trial hearings and jury trials. This pilot project was started in August of 2016 in three of our seven Circuit Court branches and has shown significant cost savings and other positive results.

Stephanie Jens, Victim/Witness Assistance Program Supervisor, said “Since August of 2016, over 7,000 subpoenas were not generated as a result of the new pre-trial conference practice. Prior to this, witnesses would receive multiple subpoenas for a case before it actually went to trial or resolved. With the reduction of subpoenas being issued, citizens have indicated a saving from taking off of work, re-adjusting their schedule, and less anxiety of having a case being rescheduled multiple times. There is also a cost savings to the court system for the issuance, service, and cancellation of those subpoenas.”

As indicated by Jens, under old scheduling practices, pre-trial hearings and jury trials were frequently rescheduled multiple times, and often cancellations occurred the day before the hearings were set to take place. These last minute cancellations have major impacts on both victims and witnesses. For example, police departments often have policies and contracts that require officers to still be paid for their time, including overtime. For analysts from the Wisconsin Crime Lab, late cancellations result in the analysts not being available in other counties for other cases. For citizen victims and witnesses, they often have to take vacation time, give up their shift, or give up overtime to attend hearings. This can often result in time being lost.

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In addition to how the new scheduling practices have impacted victims and witnesses, there has been a significant cost savings related to non-issue of subpoenas for multiple pre-trial hearings and jury trials. This goes beyond the cost of paper, envelopes, postage, and staff time to create and process subpoenas. For example, since August of 2016 this pilot project has resulted in approximately 7,115 fewer subpoenas being issued. Of the 7,115 subpoenas that were saved, approximately 808 of those would have required a process server to serve the subpoena, at an average cost of $27 per service. This is a direct cost savings of $21,816 to the District Attorney’s Office budget.

Due to the positive results of this pilot project, additional branches have adopted the new scheduling practices. The new scheduling practices allow for two pre-trial conferences. This gives the prosecutor and defense time to work to resolve the case or determine if a jury trial is needed. Most cases have been resolved without scheduling jury trials.

Welcome to our Student Intern

My name is Katrina Land, and I am interning with CJTS as a part of my master's degree program at Liberty University Online. I have worked in the financial industry for the past 7 years, and while that was interesting work, I have wanted to do more to give back. The program here at the Outagamie County jail was an opportunity presented to me through an acquaintance, and while I was a bit hesitant as to what it might involve, I have highly enjoyed working with this clientele. I am glad to have the ability to utilize the academic knowledge and to gain insight into counseling techniques from the wonderful group of counseling professionals here. The opportunity to give back has not only been rewarding, but has increased my gratitude for the culture here in Northeast Wisconsin, and the willingness of people to open their hearts to help people.
GED Testing in OCJ

By: Jon Philipp & Deena Larsen

2017 has proven to be another exciting year for GED/HSED testing in the Outagamie County Jail. Currently, we have administered 121 GED/HSED tests, and we still have a few more weeks to go before the year is out. Of the 121 tests given, 113 were passing scores, which puts our passing percentage at 93%. We had a goal going into this year to give 100 tests and still keep the passing rate above 90%, so we have surpassed our expectations. All of these tests have allowed 20 individuals to obtain either their GED or HSED.

The following is what some of the more recent graduates had to say about what getting their HSED meant to them and their motivation for completing their credential:

“It means a lot because my father has always pushed me to do well in school, so I know this will make him proud. What motivated me is I know this will help me tremendously down the road in my life. I’m thankful for this opportunity.”

B.Z.

“It was a personal goal I had and it has meant a lot to obtain my HSED. I didn’t have confidence in myself that I could get it, but my best friend and family kept me motivated to get my HSED.”

L.W.

“It meant the world to me and many other doors and opportunities opened in my life. The ability to obtain more jobs and to continue with schooling motivated me to complete my testing along with being pushed by Jon.”

J.V.
As we close out 2017, I’d like to look back at a few of the major accomplishments CJTS achieved this last year. Most notable was the study UW Milwaukee conducted on the Safe Streets Treatment Options Program (SSTOP) that demonstrated the program not only saves jail beds, but has a significant impact on reducing future drunk driving offenses of those who participate in SSTOP.

Our jail education program continues to be one of the best in the country, with a 93% GED/HSED passer rating in 2017. To put that number in perspective, the national passer rate for the general population is 85%.

In January, CJTS brought the Day Report Center and Safe Exchange Program in-house. For the same amount of money as we were paying an outside contractor, we were able to increase the capacity of our pretrial program, while also increasing the percentage of pretrial justice defendants making their court dates from 75% to 91%. Moreover, we doubled the amount of families participating in the Safe Exchange Program.

Stay tuned for 2018 as we have some big plans on how to build on our successes of 2017!

Happy Holidays!

Bernie Vetrone