

CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION



MEETING DATE: September 14, 2021

ITEM NUMBER: 7.A

SECOND READING:

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TYPE OF ITEM: Special Reports/Presentations

PRESENTED BY:

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SUBJECT/AGENDA TITLE:

Update on OMNI Evaluation of REWiND (Rebuilding Expectations and Walking into New Directions) and CRJ (Community Restorative Justice).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Longmont contracted with OMNI Institute to conduct a formative and general evaluation of two programs: 1) The REWiND program (Rebuilding Expectations and Walking into New Directions), which is a collaborative initiative directly operated by the City of Longmont that involves Children, Youth, and Families (CYF); Longmont Municipal Court and Probation; City Attorney's Office/City Prosecutor; and Public Safety, and 2) Community Restorative Justice (CRJ), a program offered by Longmont Community Justice Partnership (LCJP), an independent non-profit agency with whom the City contracts to provide restorative justice services within the Longmont community. OMNI's final recommendations were presented to staff in July of 2020. Due to COVID impacts, further work in this area was put on hold. In early 2021, this work commenced again and staff wanted to update Council, as requested, on key findings from the evaluation and how staff is working together to implement recommendations regarding REWiND, and to strengthen the collaboration between REWiND and CRJ. Tonight three City of Longmont staff from Public Safety, Courts and Probation and Community Services as well as a one representative from CRJ (Longmont Community Justice Partnership) will make the presentation and answer any questions Council has about these programs and/or recommendations.

COUNCIL OPTIONS:

Information, only.

RECOMMENDED OPTIONS:

Information, only.

FISCAL IMPACT & FUND SOURCE FOR RECOMMENDED ACTION:

N/A

BACKGROUND AND ISSUE ANALYSIS:

The OMNI institute worked closely with Children, Youth and Families, Municipal Court and Probation, and Community Restorative Justice to understand program design, process flow, identify areas of strength and make recommendations on how to improve the system of service provision for youth in our community.

CRJ Specific Recommendations:

Based on review of CRJ documentation, available data, and interviews with staff and stakeholders, OMNI offered the following recommendations to enhance CRJ program fidelity and evaluation practices.

Program policies and protocols

To ensure that CRJ's services are available to all youth who may benefit from participating in a restorative process, eligibility criteria should be objective to the degree possible. OMNI additionally recommends that CRJ articulate and document the program's philosophy underlying specific exclusion criteria, the rationale behind why these criteria may undermine the RJ process, and develop a process to refer youth to outside services to address their needs, should such circumstances be present in their case.

Program data

To further demonstrate and track program effectiveness, OMNI recommends CRJ develop a data collection and analysis protocol for recidivism data at least 12 months after program completion. Furthermore, to better track who is and is not being served by CRJ in the City of Longmont, more detail or a categorization scheme should be developed for the ineligibility criteria for offenders not accepted into CRJ. Additional information detailing the items in offenders' community group conference contracts could be documented to allow for a better understanding of what specific actions are most correlated with short-term success in the program and reduced likelihood of reoffending. Suggested revisions to the protocols include the following:

- Remove any identifying information from the survey such as participant name, demographics, and signature.
- Provide participants an environment that ensures no undue CRJ or fellow-participant influence. Completing the survey in the presence of LCJP staff or others may dissuade participants from providing non-complimentary responses.
- Provide a sealed envelope or other medium to return the survey to staff that ensures staff cannot link the participant to specific responses.
- Alternatively, provide an anonymous online survey link.
- Develop separate surveys for different conference roles (e.g. offender, victim, participant) to ensure questions are applicable to the participant. This will prevent possible participant confusion when asked to report on perceptions of themselves. To facilitate this, skip patterns

can be employed via the use of an online survey platform to administer the satisfaction survey.

- Consider documenting recurring conference participant satisfaction, either via development of a unique participant ID, or with a survey question asking if the participant has participated in previous conferences. This will improve data quality by identifying when aggregate participant satisfaction data may be reflecting the views and opinions of a few individuals, such as with police liaisons who may frequently attend multiple conferences.

REWiND Specific Recommendations:

Based on a review of REWiND program documentation, available data, and interviews with stakeholders, OMNI recommends a more nuanced approach to program referrals, closer collaboration with City of Longmont police officers, and enhancements to tracking program data.

Referral process

To ensure offenders receive the minimal necessary contact with the criminal justice system and have any behavioral needs identified, OMNI recommends REWiND adapt the program referral process to allow the option of an officer referring an offender to CRJ through REWiND without the need to write a municipal summons.

OMNI recommends REWiND increase its collaboration with City of Longmont law enforcement officers in two key areas. REWiND would benefit from a stronger relationship with officers through regular trainings and briefings to inform them about REWiND program processes and policies, and the beneficial impacts that REWiND is having on offenders. A central part of REWiND is the offenders' intervention plan based on their total level of risk and identified needs. Accurate documentation of offenders' risks and needs is imperative to ensure interventions are appropriately and consistently prescribed based on unique offender profiles, and that interventions are allocated across cases with equity.

OMNI recommends the distinction of primary, secondary, and tertiary offenses in an offender's case. Furthermore, OMNI recommends more detailed documentation of which interventions in an offender's plan they fail to complete or comply with, that results in their lack of success in REWiND. Similarly, additional information specifying the requirements offenders must meet within each individual intervention in their plan could confirm that specific interventions are implemented consistently across cases (have consistent requirements), and pinpoint what aspects of interventions offenders might consistently fail to complete.

Program participant satisfaction

OMNI recommends the following modifications to the existing exit survey to enhance data collection and quality:

- Collect both youth and parent or guardian survey data using an online data collection format.
- If participants do not have online access, provide an environment that minimizes undue REWiND or fellow-participant influence, such as a computer isolated from others in a REWiND program office.
- Remove any identifying information from the survey such as participant name.
- Consider allowing participants to provide more detailed feedback on the specifics of their experience with each intervention.

Over the last 6 months, Sgt. John Garcia from Public Safety, Tara Johnson - Chief of Municipal Probation and Christina Pacheco - CYF Division Manager have collaborated to explore what a referral process would look like to allow the option of an officer referring an offender to CRJ through REWiND without the need to write a municipal summons. Staff has initiated an enhanced assessment process, as well as enhanced prevention and intervention options that better align with youth needs and the nature of the offense. This work will continue to evolve in the months to come. Additionally, City staff has begun to work with CRJ staff and their newly Appointed Executive Director - Shalene Onyango. CRJ has made the commitment to moving forward in the collaboration and be engaged in order to figure out participation based on staff capacity and expertise to contribute to this multidisciplinary team. Currently, the aforementioned leadership from Public Safety, CYF, Court and Probation, and CRJ are creating a plan to participate in facilitated discussions in order to have a plan in place by the first quarter of 2022.

ATTACHMENTS: N/A