

Breaking Free

Grant Type: Dollar

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Organization: Bernardine Franciscan Sisters Foundation



What was the objective of your grant or initiative?

Breaking Free is a prostitution diversion program conducted by the Center for Child & Family Services. The board of directors looked at the program as unique and providing a nonexistent service to a population that most people do not think of in terms of providing assistance to—other than incarceration.

What was your approach?

The uniqueness lies in the population that is being served through the program. As the executive director, I did not think that the board of directors would consider this program as something to be funded; however, the board stepped to the plate, realizing the unlikelihood of the program's being funded by another area foundation.

Staff conducting the program have participated in police stings in order to be available to talk about the program with women and/or men who need to face and address the barriers to successfully leaving prostitution. The program itself faces barriers that present limitations, such as the extensive amount of case management to be done to obtain the resources needed by each individual; the lack of affordable housing; and the lack of local, affordable treatment facilities for active users.

What were the outsized results?

The program began in mid-February 2014. Ten individuals have availed themselves of the services provided by the program, namely, psycho-education groups; individual therapy; job readiness and individualized job placement; substance abuse groups; and connections to housing, health care, and other resources.

The Center for Child & Family Services is an agency that has been very innovative and creative in developing programs to address unmet needs. Breaking Free, I believe, will become a model to be embraced by other state and possibly out-of-state locales.

