

Community Forum Program

Quebec

What are we Going to do with Them?

Organizer: Montreal South-West Community Ministries

Date: March 18, 2005

Location: Montreal, Quebec

The community forum was held in Montreal on March 18, 2004 at a downtown YMCA. The one-day forum, held during the *Semaine Québécoise de la déficience intellectuelle 2005*, focused on the overall difficulties encountered when dealing with intellectually disabled offenders in the community.

The forum was the first one held for the Montreal Anglophone community and consisted of three workshops: Police, Court and Legal; Correctional Service; The Community, Parole and Probation. Approximately 50 people from the community attended, including representatives from the police, courts, legal services, Correctional Service Canada, and private and volunteer organizations.

The objective of the forum was to find realistic solutions with the community for dealing with intellectually disabled offenders. The forum responded to many questions from participants and useful suggestions were presented, such as involving specialized lawyers in cases, developing policies, and recruiting trained volunteers from the community to work with intellectually disabled individuals.

Reintegration of Offenders: The Important Role of the Haitian Community

Organizer: Association des Services de Réhabilitation Sociale du Québec (ASRSQ)

Date: March 29, 2005

Location: Montreal, Quebec

The community forum held in Montreal focused on informing Haitian community leaders and the general public about the correctional process and methods of helping Haitian offenders reintegrate back into society. Approximately 32 people from the community attended the forum.

The forum consisted of five presentations - the Role of CSC and its Programs; the Circumstances of Haitian Offenders in the Community; Parole; the Role of the Community; and the Testimony of an Offender on the Importance of Community Support upon Reintegration into the Community. The forum also included a roundtable and discussion groups.

The objective of the forum was to focus on the needs of offenders, cultural diversity and public safety. Overall, 60 per cent of participants indicated that they learned a lot from the forum. Their opinion on the correctional process as a whole had changed for the better, increasing their confidence in the correctional process. Many participants showed interest in becoming CSC volunteers and wanted to know more about CSC programs for offenders.

Ontario

Corrections Canada and Public Safety in your Community

Organizer: Loyalist Township Community Policing

Date: November 17, 2004

Location: Odessa, Ontario

The Corrections Canada and Public Safety in your Community forum was held on November 17, 2004. Approximately 60 people from the community attended the forum.

The purpose of the forum was to educate the community and listen to concerns about corrections and public safety. It consisted of presentations from staff of Correctional Service Canada, National Parole Board, and Ontario Police, as well as a question and answer session where forms were handed out to participants so that questions could be posed on paper, if preferred.

Evaluation forms from participants indicated that the majority felt that they had learned a lot from the forum and were more confident with how the Canadian correctional system works. Most participants specified that they attended the forum to meet and hear from the experts and to gain personal knowledge about the correctional system. Out of the 23 people who responded, 18 answered that the forum met their goals. The Restorative Justice Program and the Youth Criminal Justice Act were the two subjects that participants wanted to hear more about.

Community Forum on Justice 2005

Organizer: Spirit of the People - Aboriginal Support and Healing Centre

Date: March 1 & 2, 2005

Location: Toronto, Ontario

The Community Forum on Justice 2005 was held on March 1 & 2, 2005 at the Native Canadian Centre in Toronto, Ontario. The forum focused on the role of Aboriginal communities in corrections and included approximately 60 representatives from community organizations who work with Aboriginal clients.

The forum consisted of five workshops - Mental Health; Navigating the Courts; Aboriginal People/Policing; Homelessness; and Probation & Parole - and offered current

information and discussion about urban Aboriginal community initiatives for provincial and federal corrections, such as community based programming for Aboriginal offenders upon return to urban centres.

When asked to share comments and ideas about the forum, participants were very positive and indicated that they enjoyed hearing about the success stories; were thankful for meeting different people who worked in the correctional field; glad to receive new ideas and inspirations; and happy to see people come together to discuss aboriginal corrections.

Caring for Ex-Offenders

Organizer: St. Leonard's House

Date: March 5, 2005

Location: Windsor, Ontario

The Caring for Ex-Offenders community forum was held on March 5, 2005 at the Vineyard Community Church in Windsor, Ontario. Approximately 80 people attended the forum and included local chaplains, church leaders, ex-offenders and families of offenders, community organizations, volunteers, and members of the community.

The forum consisted of a key-note speaker and a panel of four community members - three ex-offenders and a family member of an offender - who volunteer for Correctional Service Canada to help reintegrate offenders into society. The panel shared their experiences and successes of volunteering and stressed the importance and need for volunteer help for offenders. St. Leonard's House shared volunteer opportunities with participants.

The forum created an understanding with participants about the needs of offenders and the structure of the criminal justice system. Feedback from participants was positive and 15 new volunteers were recruited and trained in March 2005.

Prairies

Partnering for Healthy Reintegration: Addressing Housing Needs of Released Offenders

Organizer: Saskatoon Community Chaplaincy

Date: January 18, 2005 and follow up meeting on February 8, 2005

Location: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

The Partnering for Healthy Reintegration forum was held on January 18, 2005 at the Mennonite Central Committee and focused on the need of providing housing for newly released offenders. Approximately 40 people from the community attended the forum,

including various community agencies, service providers, government, and justice and police services who work in the areas of housing and reintegration of offenders.

The forum consisted of a one-day workshop with several guest speakers and a follow up meeting was held a few weeks later. The purpose of the event was to establish new partnerships, solidify existing partnerships, heighten awareness about the housing needs of released offenders, challenge participants to become involved, and create a working group to move forward with this issue.

The community forum succeeded in increasing understanding, providing a network opportunity, reinforcing collaborative process, and challenging participants to act.

Pacific

The Release of Sexual Offenders and Public Safety – A Community Strategy That Works

Organizer: BC Crime Prevention Association (BCCPA)

Date: September 15, 2004

Location: Surrey, BC

The forum took place at the Sheraton Guildford Hotel in Surrey, BC. Approximately 70 community members participated in the forum, including members of the Vancouver City Police, Correctional Service Canada (CSC), National Parole Board, and Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA) – a community-based initiative for high risk and high needs sexual offenders returning to their communities at the end of their sentences.

Three themes were discussed throughout the event: needs of offenders, healing and reintegration, and public safety. The forum was comprised of a series of presentations, followed by question and answer to the panel members.

This event generated much interest among participants. Many expressed an interest in becoming a CoSA volunteer and questioned the ability to form CoSAs in smaller communities with the help of CSC. Organizers concluded that the forum was a success but that there is still scepticism about the ability to maintain safety when high risk offenders are released back into the community.