

B R O N X
C O M M U N I T Y
S O L U T I O N S

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What is Bronx Community Solutions?

Bronx Community Solutions is an experiment that applies lessons from New York's award-winning community courts to a courthouse handling 50,000 misdemeanor cases annually. Bronx Community Solutions combines punishment (community service) and help (drug treatment, job training, counseling) for eligible non-violent offenders.

What are its goals?

Bronx Community Solutions seeks to provide the court with increased sentencing options for low-level offenses such as drug possession, shoplifting and prostitution. By combining punishment (through community restitution projects) with help (through readily accessible drug treatment, mental health counseling, job training and other programs), Bronx Community Solutions hopes to reduce the Bronx's reliance on short-term jail sentences, while holding offenders accountable for their offenses.

Who are the project's partners?

Bronx Community Solutions is the product of a planning process involving the Unified Court System, the Bronx District Attorney's Office, the Criminal Justice Coordinator's Office of the City of New York, the defense bar, the New York City Department of Probation, local community boards, the Center for Court Innovation and others.

How is being implemented?

Bronx Community Solutions began in January 2005 in one of the two-full time arraignment court parts in the Bronx. In June 2005, it expanded to the second arraignment part, as well as night and weekend arraignments (on a part-time basis) in spring 2006. Arraignment was chosen because close to 60 percent of misdemeanants plead guilty at their first appearance before the judge. In July 2005, Bronx Community Solutions assumed responsibility for community service borough-wide. In addition, the project's services are available to all the judges working in the consolidated Bronx County Criminal Division.

Who funds it?

Bronx Community Solutions receives funding support from the New York Unified Court System, the Criminal Justice Coordinator's Office of the City of New York, the New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives, the United States Department of Justice and the Booth Ferris Foundation.

What services are available through Bronx Community Solutions?

Project staff lead a series of social service group classes in space provided by the New York City Department of Probation. Topics include drug treatment, mental health, personal responsibility and job training, among others. More intensive social services, such as individual counseling,

referrals to inpatient drug treatment and longer-term employment services are also available to defendants. Finally, each participant is offered the opportunity for referral to long-term, voluntary services which can be accessed with the assistance of program staff.

What results has it achieved?

In its first eighteen months of operations, more than 10,000 participants have been assigned to Bronx Community Solutions. During this time, this project has increased compliance rates with community-based sanctions by 40 percent. In addition, participants have contributed thousands of hours of community service (worth over \$300,000 to the Bronx), and over XXX have accepted referrals to long-term, voluntary services such as inpatient drug treatment or job training.

What role does the community play in the project?

Community groups and local residents play a number of roles in ongoing operations, including supervising community service offenders and participating in a project advisory board. In addition, local residents serve as full-time AmeriCorps community service volunteers, fulfilling important roles such as escorting defendants to community-based treatment.

How is Bronx Community Solutions different from other problem-solving courts?

Rather than targeting a single geographic area, or confining its work to one courtroom and a single judge, Bronx Community Solutions seeks to bring the problem-solving approach to a broader audience – defendants who have been arrested throughout the Bronx for low-level and misdemeanor and quality-of-life offenses. Upon entering the program, offenders undergo a screening designed to identify their service needs. They are then assigned to responsive programming. Compliance with program mandates is closely monitored and individuals determined to be non-compliant are promptly returned to court for the imposition of sanctions.

How can I be more involved in Bronx Community Solutions?

The project is also recruiting Bronx residents to serve as members of the Bronx Community Solutions advisory board, which meets quarterly. (The next meeting of the Advisory Board will take place on Monday, July 17th.) Please also visit our project's web-based diary, <http://changingthecourt.blogspot.com/>, for regular updates.

Questions? Please contact Aubrey Fox, Project Director, at (718) 590-8572.