

Reintegration Framework

RED WING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY (RWCF) MAY 2015

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Consultant's Report

Overview

In March 2015 the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) contracted with the University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration (ICI) to assist Red Wing Correctional Facility (RWCF) in responding to Olmstead: Community Integration for Everyone legislation. The Reintegration Framework Strategic Toolkit (Toolkit) was chosen as a tool to help staff assess current proficiencies and to determine areas in which improvement is needed to achieve compliance with the Olmstead Act.

The Evaluation Group at the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Education, developed the Reintegration Framework and the Reintegration Framework Strategic Planning Toolkit (Toolkit). The Toolkit is designed to facilitate communication and sharing within and among interagency team members, based upon a common understanding of what constitutes best practice in transition and reintegration.

The Toolkit is used as a self-assessment tool to:

- better understand current operations;
- identify areas of strength, weakness, and opportunity;
- promote planning and continuous improvement;
- begin action for improving systems; and
- assess progress.

By completing this self-assessment tool, users achieve a shared frame of reference from which to build commitment and focus for setting priorities and improving transition/reintegration systems. The development of the Toolkit was grounded in theory and previous research, including theories on: (1) participants in the planning process and their receptiveness to proposed

innovations; (2) the conditions that support and promote interagency collaboration in the processes of self review, consensus-building, planning, and evaluation; and (3) theoretical perspectives on the planning process itself. Toolkit provides a strong, structured basis for self-assessment, priority setting, and action planning components, which is essential to building a unified direction for improvement efforts among diverse school and community partners.

Purpose

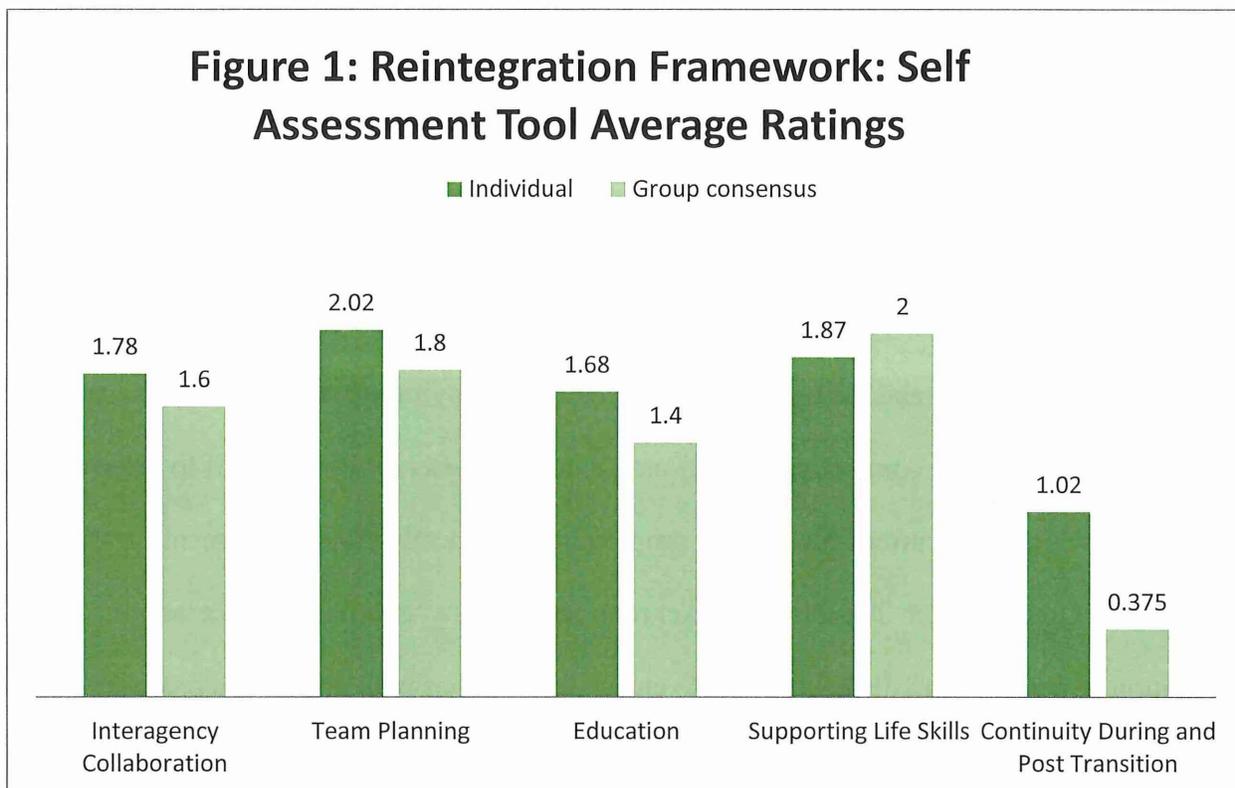
The Toolkit required that an intentional group from Red Wing Correctional Facility (RWCF) convene to complete a self-assessment, determine work priorities, and create a plan of action. RWCF staff participated in these sessions with the goal of better understanding current operations to identify areas of strength, weakness, and opportunity; promotion of planning and continuous improvement; and the beginning of action for improving systems, and assessing progress. The intention in completing the self-assessment tool was for RWCF staff to determine the extent to which their current educational programming was meeting the requirements of the 2009 Federal Olmstead Act. The Olmstead Act requires states to “eliminate unnecessary segregation of persons with disabilities and to ensure that persons with disabilities receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs” (United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2015). RWCF is charged with meeting the Act’s requirement of providing the least restrictive environment for youth with IEP’s when they return to school and a community setting.

Process

Part One: Self-Assessment, Group Consensus

Eighteen staff members from RWCF took the Reintegration Framework Toolkit self-assessment. After individually completing the self-assessment, five members of the group (all education staff) reconvened to rate indicators as a group. Other staff were unavailable to

participate in this stage of the process. The five participants concluded that they were most confident in their agency's ability to conduct team planning and provide life skills support. Individually, and as a group, staff agreed that best practices occurred the least frequently during the organization's transition processes.



To ensure that the consensus reached by the small group was reflective of all individuals taking the self-assessment, ICI staff compiled individual responses and compared to the group consensus. Although only 28% of the group was able to reconvene and complete the group assessment process, individual and group findings show similar themes (Figure 1). Staff appeared to have the least information about questions asked in the education and transition sections, with education questions, 30% of responses were unknown, blank or N/A; and in the continuity during and post transition section, 26% of responses were unknown, blank, or N/A.

Individual Item Analysis

Within the five categories of the Toolkit: *interagency collaboration; team planning; education; supporting life skills; and continuity during and post transition*, analysis of group subsets showed specific activities which occurred the most and least frequently. Three items received mean individual ratings above a “2” rating, indicating that the best practice was usually evident at RWCF. The three items for which best practices were usually or always evident included: *one of the members of the planning team is identified as the youth’s key contact or advocate for the entire reintegration process (item 2.2); youth has an education plan with well-established academic, behavioral, and vocational goals and objectives (item 3.1); and that youth receives alcohol and drug abuse counseling if appropriate (item 4.4).*

Six practices, primarily in the continuity during and post transition section, were found to be either seldom or not evident. These items were: *student, parents, and receiving school staff sign a behavioral contract or reintegration plan (3.9); youth receives training for parenthood, if appropriate (4.3); youth meets with receiving school counselor within first two weeks of placement (5.1); youth meets with receiving school counselor on a regular basis (5.2); youth has on-going contact with staff from previous facility for at least 6 months (5.3); and staff to staff contacts are continued between receiving school and sending school for six months after reintegration (5.4).*

Part Two: Priority Setting

A subsequent meeting was held on May 12, 2015 at RWCF. Nineteen RWCF staff and two University of Minnesota-ICI facilitators were present. The RWCF participants represented teaching staff, coordinators, administrators, and state level administrators. Dr. Paul Norby,

principal of RWCF, began the meeting by describing the history of the federal legislation of the Olmstead Plan and the specific state legislation in which RWCF is required to comply. Of the six action areas (*Employment; Housing; Supports; Lifelong Learning and Education; Healthy Living; and Community Engagement*) of the Olmstead Plan, RWCF has responsibility to answer to the action area entitled "*Lifelong Learning and Education.*" RWCF's responsibility includes following youth with IEP's in their transition back to their home, community, and school, and for ensuring that students with active IEP's receive the most appropriate placement to continue their education.

ICI staff then provided an overview of the Toolkit and a summary of findings derived from individual responses and the subsequent group meeting. After the overview, staff were divided into three groups reflecting their roles at RWCF: education, case management, and administration. Within these groups, staff was asked to assign importance levels to each item in the Toolkit's five areas of emphasis. Once importance levels were determined, staff was asked to physically note their decisions on large charts which were displayed in front of the classroom. When all three groups had assigned levels of importance to each item, the facilitators reconvened the large group to review findings. The final step in the process of prioritizing items was a facilitated voting process in which staff were asked to review group assessment ratings and importance levels to determine each item's priority for improvement. A group vote was used to determine whether each item was of low, medium, or high priority for improvement.

Priority for Improvement

The results of the group priority setting for improvements included five items in three different categories as high priority areas for improvement. They are:

- Systems are developed and maintained that eliminate duplicate efforts (item 1.7)

- A plan is in place for school re-entry that includes sending and receiving school responsibilities (item 3.5)
- A pre-release visit and admissions interview is scheduled with receiving school and youth shares his/her transition plan (item 3.8).
- Youth receives training for parenthood, if appropriate (item 4.3)
- Youth has on-going contact with staff from previous facility for at least 6 months (item 5.3)

While developing action plan items, the group decided to focus on items related to education and transition. Although the group decided to focus on item 3.8, Dr. Norby also suggested listing all items in the education section as potential areas for improvement.

Action Plan

Action Item: A pre-release visit and admissions interview is scheduled with receiving school and youth shares his/her transition plan
<i>Steps Required</i>
Get an earlier start on the transition processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify school/ community/ home placement early during the youth's stay at RWCF
Create a checklist for youth transitioning back into the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that best practices are implemented consistently • Help all staff understand what services are available and how they can be accessed • Work collaboratively with MDE to address and resolve existing gaps in service
Ensure that all students receive transition services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review protocol for providing transition services to youth with IEPs • Devise a procedure which provides transition services to students in short-term programming
Improve relationships with community schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet regularly with Special Education Directors and school liaisons • Meet with individuals in the community who are part of the student transition process early and more frequently during the youth's stay at RWCF
Improve tracking and evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document who is doing what, when, and where • Take baseline measurements and document growth • Maintain a database on all youth at RWCF recording where they go after RWCF and their participation in activities such as school, after school, and work • Track each youth post RWCF for at least 90 days per Olmstead Act regulations • Talk directly with students at 90 day mark to learn more about status and reentry experience

Preliminary Steps In Place

RWCF recently started tracking the number of students with IEP's who leave the facility. Since tracking began in December 2014, 50 youth with IEPs have left the facility. Staff will continue monitoring and tracking to ensure that all students who have IEPs participate in a transition process.

Next steps

The next step in this process is for a smaller group of RWCF staff to convene to finalize the action plan and to begin enacting next steps. Kathy Halverson, the RWCF warden, suggested that whatever is done should relate to the RWCF performance standards.