



MWCA Best Practices

SUBMISSION FORM

WIB Name/WSA **Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, WSA 6**

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The Community Plus Program is a collaborative effort between the City of Marshall, the Minnesota Department of Corrections, and the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (PIC). This purpose of the program is to assist adjudicated youth complete court ordered community service work and restitution. It offers a safe, organized, and supervised avenue for youth to make amends for their conduct while instilling a sense of belonging and teamwork. The philosophy of this program is simple- reduce delinquent behavior through mentoring and training in hopes of providing the youth an opportunity to enhance their positive self worth and learn basic life skills that are critical to being a productive, law-abiding citizen. The program holds offenders personally accountable for their crimes and forces them to make reparations to their victims.

The City of Marshall, through the SW MN Private Industry Council, coordinates the worksites for youth to complete their court ordered service hours. The Private Industry Council has managed employment and training programs for at-risk youth for over twenty years. The two agencies together have developed a large network of worksites including city parks, schools, and a college where projects can be completed that will benefit the whole community. Projects include, but are not limited to, cleaning parks, beautifying campus courtyards, cleaning recycling sheds, and maintaining school buildings.

Youth, age 11-19, are referred to this project directly from Lyon County Probation agents. Youth participate in organized community work service activities during the summer. Based on evaluation of the success of Community Plus, the staff of Lyon County Corrections and SW MN PIC has implemented a crew concept for the summers versus individual site placements. The change to a work crew concept is mainly due to the difficulty in finding worksites that have work for the youth after school hours or that can provide adequate supervision on a sporadic individual basis.

The youth referred to the program are expected to follow clear guidelines and meet certain expectations. In order to give the youth ownership of the projects, certain aspects of the projects will offer the youth to make structured choices. They may be asked to give input on projects or decide the discipline structure for the group.

Some of the youth involved have a difficult time finding employment because of their age, inexperience, or reputation. In addition to the crew work, an additional component will include weekly team learning sessions related to careers and employment. Topics include: on-line and paper job application processes; locating job openings by using local resources such as the WorkForce Center, area newspapers, and direct employer contacts; interviewing skills and job keeping skills; identification of skills, career interests and work values; and career exploration.

The outcomes address at-risk youth reducing if not entirely eliminating their participation in illegal activities. Too much unorganized time often leads to the youth finding other, less productive activities. Youth develop a sense of community by being involved in a common enterprise which in turn reduces their likelihood to re-offend.

Effectiveness of the project is measured in a variety of ways. The number of youth who complete their required service hours and pay restitution to their victims will be the primary measure of the effectiveness of the project. Measuring the number of youth who re-offend within six months of completing their community service hours also give credibility to the programs effectiveness. Data is collected at the time youth complete the program and six months later. Finally, youth who complete their work service requirements may continue with the team and earn an hourly wage, thereby creating an incentive for participation.

Youth will work as members of a crew supervised by SW MN Private Industry Council staff to complete community service projects. Staff will work with different divisions of the City of Marshall, Lyon County, SW State University – Marshall and Marshall Public schools to find meaningful projects. Small groups of youth will work together to complete these projects. The concept is similar to the Sentence-to-Serve program implemented in many counties.

The Lyon County Alliance for Youth and Families, of which both the City of Marshall and the SW MN Private Industry Council are members, organizes the annual Red Ribbon Week activities in our area. Red Ribbon Week is the most far-reaching and well-known drug prevention event in America. The National Family Partnership, which coordinates Red Ribbon activities nationally, estimates that over 80 million Americans participate in Red Ribbon events.

Each year members of the Alliance pool resources to bring in speakers to educate youth and their parents about trends, affects, and dangers of drug use. Red ribbons adorn community parks, local businesses, and school yards during the last week of October each year as a reminder to stay drug free. Participants in the Community Plus Program are required to attend the Red Ribbon events.