

**The McLeod Center Partnership  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department  
April 30, 2003**



April 30, 2003

Members of the Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee:

I am very pleased to nominate the McLeod Center Partnership for the 2003 Herman Goldstein Award.

Police departments have struggled unsuccessfully for years to find ways to address the prostitution problems in their communities. It has been clear for a long time that enforcement has not been an effective solution but it has been difficult to find other ways to have a lasting impact on the prostitution issue.

Our partnership with the McLeod Center, a local drug treatment program, is an innovative approach to the prostitution problem. By helping prostitutes deal with their drug problems and develop life skills, we are able to get them off the streets and make them less vulnerable to crime. Effective working partnerships between police departments and drug treatment providers are uncommon but we have overcome some natural obstacles and built a strong relationship that is ultimately helping us build a safer community one life at a time.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department is very proud of its partnership with the McLeod Center. I believe this project is worthy of your consideration for the 2003 Herman Goldstein Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darrel W. Stephens".

Darrel W. Stephens  
Chief of Police

***Building Partnerships To Prevent The Next Crime.***

*Police Department • 601 East Trade Street • Charlotte, N.C. 28202-2940*

## **The McLeod Center Partnership Executive Summary**

### **Scanning**

In 1999, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police were concerned by six homicides and missing person cases, all of which involved African-American female victims. In looking for common elements in these cases, officers discovered that all of the female victims were involved in high-risk lifestyles that included prostitution.

### **Analysis**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department formed a High Risk Lifestyles Task Force to begin interviewing prostitutes to get information on the six victims and their associates. What began as an investigative tool became the impetus for finding a way to help women involved in prostitution change their lives so that they could get off the streets. Police officers realized that traditional enforcement measures had not been effective in dealing with the prostitution problem. The interviews showed them that the common theme in all of the women's stories was involvement in prostitution in order to obtain drugs. Officers realized that if they could help these women get off drugs and make other changes in their lives, they could get out of prostitution, making them less vulnerable to victimization.

### **Response**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department began a partnership with the McLeod Center that offered treatment assessments and a variety of both residential and out patient treatment programs. Police and drug treatment

providers were skeptical of each other's tactics and goals but the department overcame this by introducing the program to one group of officers at a time and having McLeod Center personnel accompany officers, even on prostitution stings. Center personnel reached out to women on the streets and took referrals from police officers on demand. Legal issues were resolved so that officers could receive feedback on the progress of the women they referred to the program.

### **Assessment**

The McLeod Center Partnership has been a success. Of the 117 women referred to the Center, 55 completed a treatment assessment. 35 women entered treatment and 21 have successfully completed treatment and are now rebuilding their lives by meeting success indicators including getting jobs, staying drug free and having no more arrests. Only three African American females with high-risk lifestyles have been homicide victims in the past three years as opposed to six cases in the nine months before this project began. The McLeod Center is now starting the McLeod Academy which will provide the women with drug treatment in addition to classes on a variety of life skills. Local judges have agreed to sentence women convicted of prostitution to complete this program.

## Scanning

In the spring of 1999, detectives at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department were frustrated by six separate cases in which African-American women were either homicide victims or reported missing by their families. All of the cases occurred within an eight-month period from August 1998 through April 1999. Initially the cases were treated as isolated incidents; each investigated by a different detective. Detectives worked on an individual basis and the department did not yet have a computerized information system that enabled detectives to search departmental databases to find linkages between cases.

Acting Chief Bob Schurmeier, working with the head of the department's Homicide Section, began reviewing outstanding unsolved cases to determine whether any additional investigative measures were needed. Five years earlier, the department had been stung by criticism when linkages among ten cases, all involving Black female victims and perpetrated by the same offender, were not discovered and acted upon on a timely basis. The department wanted to be sure that a similar situation was not occurring again. A wide-ranging review of the cases left no reason to believe that they were all committed by the same offender but it did show a clear commonality among all the dead and missing women. All six of them were women with high-risk lifestyles that centered on their involvement in prostitution.

Traditionally, police had treated prostitution as an enforcement issue, despite the fact that their enforcement measures had no long-term impact on the problem. In most cases, women engaging in prostitution were back out on the street the night after their arrests and the criminal justice system provided no meaningful sanctions or behavior modifications that acted as an incentive to a lifestyle change.

With the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's emphasis on the community problem oriented policing philosophy, Schurmeier began looking at these cases in a new way, with the focus on the women and the lifestyles that made them vulnerable to victimization. The department's problem solving efforts now centered on identifying the underlying cause of a problem and working with the appropriate partners to develop solutions that resulted in sustainable change. The department was aware that many women involved in prostitution never bothered to make a police report if they were victimized. They treated victimization, including violence, as an accepted part of the job and felt that police did not care about what happened to them. Those that did make police reports usually had a negative experience in the courts that ultimately continued the cycle of victimization.

The discovery of the bodies of two of the women, one in a pallet yard, the other in a lake, renewed the sense of urgency in identifying any linkages among these

cases. The department also feared that additional women with high-risk lifestyles would become victims if police did not intervene.

To that end, Schurmeier and Deputy Chief Larry Snider formed a High Risk Lifestyles Task Force comprised of officers from the department's Vice and Narcotics Bureau, homicide detectives, and patrol officers from districts where there were significant problems with prostitution. Their task was to find out as much information as they could about the victims in the six open cases and provide information that the department could apply to a problem solving initiative in this area.

### **Analysis**

The High Risk Lifestyles Task Force began its work by going into the streets and interviewing every known prostitute in the area. The initial goal was to obtain as much information as possible on the six victims and their associates in order to further the case investigations. However, what emerged from the interviews was a compelling portrait of the women who went into prostitution and a growing sense on the part of Charlotte-Mecklenburg police officers that they could and should find some way to intervene and reduce the risk of victimization for these women.

The prostitutes interviewed by the task force shared similar life experiences. Most of them had been sexually abused at an early age, usually by a family member, and most had continued to suffer physical abuse at the hands of the other men, including pimps, in their lives. Virtually all of the women suffered from low self-esteem and were involved in prostitution because they had no other job skills. In many cases, the women had mental health issues and almost all of them had limited life skills and difficulty in understanding the boundaries of appropriate behavior. Most said that they really did not want to do this but felt they had no other choice. In virtually, every case, the lack of options was the result of drug abuse. The officers found that these women were involved in prostitution because they were trading sex for the money to buy drugs or for the drugs themselves that were frequently supplied by their pimps. Most of the women had been drug addicted for years and could not imagine a life where all of their decisions were not predicated on the need for drugs.

The consequences to the community were enormous. A number of the women had children who were in foster care under the supervision of the Department of Social Services. Some of those babies were born addicted to crack. Many of the women had AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases and posed a health risk to the community. Many were on public assistance. Residents in neighborhoods where prostitution was common were disturbed by the decline in their neighborhoods and had begged police for help. That help had generally been high profile prostitution stings which ultimately had little more than public

relations value since even the prostitutes knew that "Charlotte's courts don't do anything."

For police, dealing with the prostitutes in a non-adversarial setting was a new experience. They had come to see the women as individuals and felt that they should find some non-traditional way for police to address the prostitution problem. To that end, police convened a meeting with a variety of service providers including the Department of Social Services, the Health Department, the school system, Area Mental Health, and other agencies likely to be dealing with the issues confronting women involved in prostitution. Each agency was asked to provide its assessment of what needed to be done to address the issues associated with prostitution outside of the traditional enforcement model. While each of the agencies offered a partial approach, police found that their solutions were within the parameters of their traditional service delivery methods and did not offer a holistic approach to the problem. This session resulted in the production of a computer map of the resources available to deal with the issues faced by the women involved in prostitution.

Despite the lack of a consensus on how to most effectively approach the issues of victimization and at-risk lifestyles, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department continued to seek an answer to the problem. Their analysis indicated that substance abuse was the single greatest impediment to these

women being willing or able to change their lives. The Police Department's search for a solution led them to a unique alliance with an unlikely partner.

### **Response**

During a good portion of his tenure at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, its then Acting Chief Bob Schurmeier had served on the board of the McLeod Center, a local drug treatment center that offered a wide range of both residential and out patient drug treatment programs. The McLeod Center had an excellent reputation within the community. While Schurmeier had served on the center's board as a part of the police department's commitment to community service, neither he nor McLeod Center administrators had ever considered any kind of active working partnership. Frustrated over the department's inability to find a way to address the long-term implications of the prostitution problem, Chief Schurmeier approached Gene Hall, the director of McLeod Center, to explore ways that the Center could work with police in reaching that unique segment of the population. Hall indicated that he would be interested in partnering with police and, from those preliminary conversations, a successful partnership was born.

The partnership agreement centered on the premise that substance abuse was the single most significant impediment to women with at risk lifestyles making the

necessary changes to get off the street and rebuild their lives. To that end, Schurmeier and Hall devised a program under which police officers could identify women in need of treatment for substance abuse and refer them directly to the McLeod Center for a treatment needs assessment. The Center made the commitment that they would provide the assessments on demand and would guarantee a slot in the appropriate treatment program to any woman who would agree to participate.

The goals of the new partnership were relatively simple. Success with the women would be measured incrementally with an initial goal of getting them to participate in the treatment assessment. Once that was accomplished, the next step would be to get them to go into treatment with an ultimate goal of completing the recommended program. For police, it was equally important to reduce the level of victimization among women with high-risk lifestyles, especially the number of homicides.

While the concept sounds simple, it was, in reality, a union of two unlikely partners that had to learn to understand one another and develop the trust that is the key to a strong working relationship. Police had traditionally approached prostitution as a crime problem and had shown little interest in or compassion for the women on the street. They were approached simply as a community problem that needed to be solved, not as individuals who, with some intervention, could become productive members of society. Police also had a healthy

skepticism regarding drug treatment. They had a general distrust of some of the concepts associated with treatment programs and some dismissed treatment for individuals involved in criminal activity as " hug-a-thug" programs.

McLeod Center staff were equally wary of police and felt that their traditional way of approaching addicted offenders was heavy-handed, unsympathetic, and reduced the offenders to nameless, faceless statistics. McLeod Center staff had limited exposure to police officers at the street level and were intimidated by them. It was clear they needed increased exposure to police officers to develop a better understanding of the challenges they faced in police work in general but especially in dealing with a difficult segment of the population such as prostitutes.

In structuring the partnership, Police and McLeod Center staff realized that it would need to be set up and introduced to police officers as a tool that they could use in their community problem solving efforts. They knew that it was imperative that the program be designed in a user friendly fashion so that officers who chose to use it could do so quickly and with a minimum of bureaucratic paperwork. They also knew that police officers were motivated by results and that it would be good if they could receive at least some level of feedback regarding the people they referred to the program.

Staff members working on structuring the program designed a simple, straightforward, one-page referral form that police officers could fill out very

quickly. Police and Gene Hall worked with the attorneys for their respective agencies to address the legal issues associated with sharing information about the women the officers referred to the program. They were able to work through those issues and establish procedures for a legally acceptable exchange of information.

The initial plan was to introduce the program in the department's patrol division by providing training to one patrol district at a time. Police and McLeod Center staff would jointly introduce the program. McLeod Center staff would also begin a series of ride-alongs with police so that they could build relationships with officers and begin developing the mutual respect, understanding, and trust that would be crucial to the program's success. Introducing the program incrementally would allow the champions of the program to make necessary adjustments as they gauged the reactions of police officers. It would also allow the program to build on its success stories, enabling officers to see that it could have a positive effect and making it a desirable tool to have at their disposal. The incremental approach would also keep McLeod Center staff from being overwhelmed and would give them time to build relationships within the Police Department.

When Chief Schurmeier tried to introduce the program in two of the patrol districts where street prostitution was a significant community concern, he met strong resistance from the police chain of command in those areas. They were

not sold on the non-traditional concept and saw it as a social experiment of little practical value to the police officer. The transition to the community problem oriented policing philosophy is often most difficult for command personnel whose length of service makes them more thoroughly indoctrinated in traditional police work. In Charlotte, command personnel needed to get past the idea that community policing would turn police officers into social workers. They had not yet embraced the idea that a holistic approach to the root cause of a problem could make their jobs easier and ultimately result in a safer community.

When the Patrol Division command staff stalled in implementing the program, Schurmeier decided to inaugurate the program in the Vice and Narcotics Bureau. In April 2000, the program was introduced to Vice officers who, while initially skeptical, were willing to try the new concept.

At the same time, the Vice and Narcotics Bureau implemented a program called Alternatives to Drugs through Empowerment (ADE). Detective Ron Simmons, who had developed a broad understanding of the issues related to prostitution, began working with the women who worked the streets. He learned to know them as individuals, each of whom had her own story as to how she had ended up involved in drugs and prostitution. The goal of the ADE program, run by Simmons, was to introduce these women to alternatives to the lives they were living and refer them to resources that could help them do everything from getting off drugs to getting a high school diploma and a job. With assistance provided by

a grant from the Foundation for the Carolinas, the department was able to hire a part-time Intensive Case Management Worker to do outreach with these women and to track their progress as they tried to make the fundamental changes that would enable them to leave a life of prostitution behind.

Since virtually all of these women were involved in substance abuse, the ADE Program was a natural fit with the McLeod Center partnership and was the source of some of the initial referrals to the McLeod Center. McLeod Center personnel went into the field with Vice officers, accompanying them on prostitution stings, and talking with the women, in a street setting, about treatment options.

As word spread about the program, the resistance to integrating it into the Patrol Division diminished. The program has now been introduced into six of the department's twelve patrol districts. The training is brief and informal and includes an orientation to the program and a discussion of the legal issues involved in the exchange of information between police and the McLeod Center. McLeod Center personnel ride in each district as the program is introduced. The ride alongs have been a particularly effective part of the program. Both police and drug treatment professionals are traditionally accustomed to being in control of any situation so the ride alongs enabled them to develop a better understanding of one another's functions and, ultimately, a willingness to relinquish some level of control to the other. Over time, the relationships

established between police and McLeod Center staff have resulted in mutual confidence and a high level of enthusiasm for the program.

### **Assessment**

From the perspective of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, the partnership with the McLeod Center has been one of the most successful of the problem solving partnerships it has established. Women whose risk of victimization is exacerbated by their high-risk lifestyles are a difficult population to deal with but both police and the McLeod Center felt the rewards would be worth the effort. Both parties in the partnership acknowledge that it is difficult to definitively define success in dealing with this unique population but they feel they have made tremendous progress.

Since the partnership was initiated in April 2000, 117 people have been referred to the McLeod Center for a treatment assessment. Of that number, 55 went to the McLeod Center and completed the assessment, a number that drug treatment professionals consider a success. Most of the people do not go to the assessment at the time they are referred and almost never come within the first 30 days. Each of the women must pick the time that they are receptive to wanting to change their lives and are able to acknowledge that they cannot do so on their own. What makes this program unique is that the women have had the personal contact and encouragement from a police officer and, in a number of

cases, a McLeod Center staff member who has been in the field with the officer. For many of these women, the police officer is the first person that has ever offered any encouragement or belief that the woman had the potential for change. That makes an impression on the woman and leaves her with alternatives to consider. When she is ready, she will go for the assessment. Indeed one of the most outstanding success stories from this program has been a woman with multiple prostitution arrests and an addiction to crack. She showed up at the McLeod Center two months after the initial referral with the McLeod Center's card in her shoe.

Of the 55 people who have shown up for the assessment, 35 actually went into treatment and 21 have successfully completed their treatment programs. The definition of success is relative to each of the women but has, in all of the 21 cases, led to the woman successfully beginning the transition to becoming a productive member of the community. Some of the women have gotten jobs; some have been reunited with children that had been placed in foster care by the Department of Social Services. Some have gotten off of public assistance and are in housing that they are able to pay for through legitimate means. These women are no longer involved in criminal activity and are far less vulnerable to victimization. Most important, they are, for now, drug free.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department also considers the program a success. The department's community policing philosophy acknowledges that

building a safer community is, at best, an incremental process, and that sometimes it must be done one person at a time. For the police officers committed to this program, each woman who is off the streets and on her way to a new life is a success story. Equally important to police is the reduction in homicides among this high-risk population. The impetus for the project was six African-American prostitutes murdered or reported missing in a nine-month period. Since the inception of the McLeod Center Partnership in April 2000, there have been only three African-American prostitutes murdered in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. To the Police Department, this is a significant victory.

Late last year, the Police Department held a reception that honored seven of the former prostitutes who had completed treatment through the McLeod Center along with the officers who had sponsored their referrals to McLeod. The women, dressed in their best clothes, mingled with the officers whom they had formerly considered as adversaries. A number of the women, and their sponsoring officers, spoke about what the program meant to them. One of the officers who had sponsored a woman who had been considered an unlikely candidate for success said he felt as proud as if one of his own children had graduated from high school. The woman he sponsored now has a job and has been reunited with three daughters she had virtually no relationship with for years. Her most prized possession is her Mother's Day gift from her children-the first Mother's Day gift she has ever received.

The McLeod Center partnership is now ready to take on an entirely new dimension in its work with prostitutes. The Center is ready to begin the McLeod Academy, a fourteen-week program that will include not only treatment for drug and alcohol addiction but also an extensive life skill component. Topics to be covered will include parenting, finances, self-esteem, domestic violence, mental health, effective communication, nutrition, self-defense, stress relief, employment issues, hygiene and health issues including sexually transmitted diseases, and legal issues. There will also be a cognitive behavior intervention component that will include conflict resolution, anger management, decision-making and related topics. The program is an acknowledgement that drug treatment alone is not enough to help a woman change her life-she must be given the tools to know how to do so. The Academy's goal is to engender those skills in these women and to provide an after care component that will insure that they get continued encouragement as they rebuild their lives.

Local judges recognize the Police-McLeod Center Partnership as an important tool in dealing with the prostitution problem in Charlotte. Judges have agreed to sentence women convicted of prostitution to attend this program and, if they do not comply, will sentence them to 120 days in jail. Both the District Attorney and the Public Defender have endorsed this concept, providing an unprecedented level of support for the Police-McLeod Center partnership. With the added support of the criminal justice system, more women are likely to become involved in this unique program. Police and McLeod Center staff will be at the jail three

days per week to explain the program to women who will be sentenced to participate. Their goal is to help these women overcome any initial resistance to the program and help them fully understand the benefits they will derive through their active involvement in both the treatment and life skills components. The Police Department believes that the new McLeod Academy will become the centerpiece of this partnership and a critical component in reducing the incidence of prostitution and its related victimization in Charlotte.

For the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, this program has evolved from an uneasy alliance between two unlikely partners to a valuable tool in dealing with a population that has been a perpetual enforcement problem. The police officers who have sponsored women in the program have new insights into the prostitution problem and now see the problem as far more than a community nuisance. The officers who have worked with the program truly understand the concept of building a safer community by changing individual lives. The partnership with the McLeod Center is an excellent example of police seeking unique problem-solving practices, outside the parameters of traditional police work, to impact the safety of their communities.

## Agency and Officer Information

1. The initiative was originally adopted by a Deputy Chief, the Vice and Narcotics Bureau, and the officers assigned to the High Risk Lifestyles Task Force.
2. All Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police officers are trained in community problem oriented policing, the SARA model and problem solving techniques.
3. There are no additional incentives given to officers who engage in problem solving as problem solving is considered a fundamental part of their jobs.
4. Most of the problem solving examples used in this project were examples of what had not worked in the past.
5. No specific issues were identified with the problem-solving model other than the reluctance of some command personnel to use it.
6. Personnel resources were taken from Vice and Narcotics, the Homicide Unit, and several patrol districts. The only resource beyond the departmental budget was the funding for the Intensive Case Management Worker. Initial funding was from a grant from the Foundation for the Carolinas; the salary is now being funded under the department's Local Law Enforcement Block Grant.
7. The contact person is : Deputy Chief Bob Schurmeier

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department

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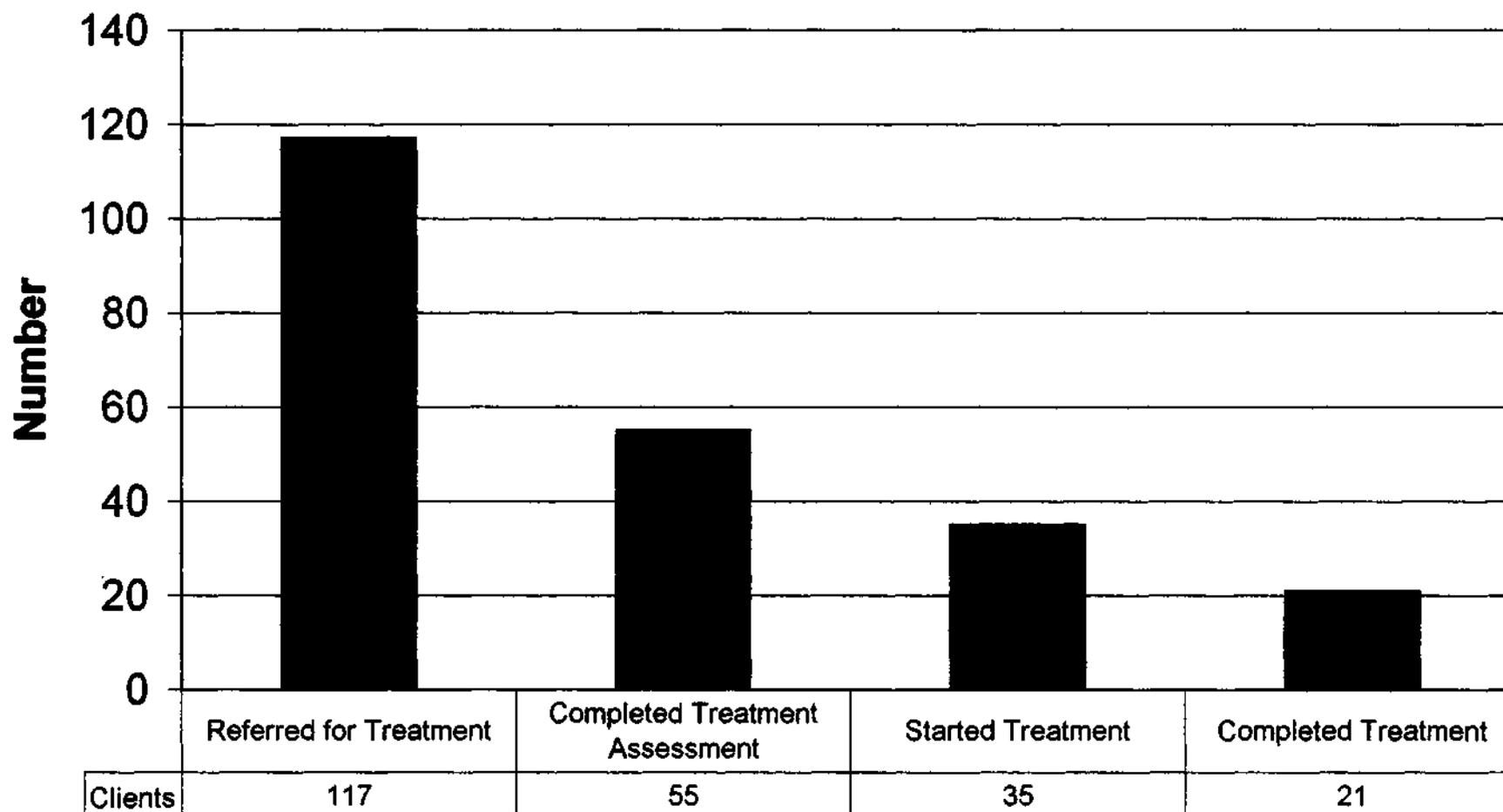
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## McLeod Center Partnership Referrals April 2000 - Present



## CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG

# Program to help prostitutes reform

*Drug treatment, counseling offered as an alternative to jail*

BY MELISSA MANWARE  
Staff Writer

For Charlotte-Mecklenburg's police officers it is a frustrating sight: Women working the streets again after being arrested repeatedly for prostitution - sometimes twice in the same week.

Now, Mecklenburg District Court officials have teamed with police and the McLeod drug treatment center to try to stop the cycle.

Instead of spending time in jail or on probation, women and men who plead guilty to selling their bodies can take a 14-week court-ordered course that includes drug and alcohol treatment, life-skills training and counseling to improve decision-making and self-esteem.

Anyone who signs up and then

quits the course will spend 120 days in jail.

"We've been recycling these people in and out of jail for years, until they die," District Court Judge Phil Howerton said. "(The program) is certainly going to help some people, and in programs like these you measure success one person at a time."

Charlotte-Mecklenburg police had run a similar program since September 2001, but its organizers say having the courts behind them is better and may give participants incentive to follow through.

Vice Detective Ron Simmons, who helped start the program, said almost all who work as prostitutes in Charlotte are selling their bodies to feed drug habits. Most don't want to be involved in prostitution but feel stuck.

Last year, Charlotte-Mecklenburg police made 252 prostitution-related arrests. Police didn't track how many were repeat offenders but said they know it's a large number.

"The police department realiz-

es we can't arrest our way out of some situations," Simmons said. "We saw that it was a revolving door. Because it's not a crime of violence and a misdemeanor, it's real difficult to sentence these folks to jail time. Hopefully, this will help us break the chain."

Genny Kleiser, director of operations at McLeod, said Thursday that 14 women, many more than she expected, were referred to the program in its first two days. Four had already begun treatment.

In the past women involved in prostitution who've gone to McLeod for drug or alcohol treatment have had a hard time staying clean, Kleiser said. She believes that's partly because they lack the skills to be successful.

The court-ordered program requires attendance four days a week, generally from 2:30 to 9 p.m. Graduates will get help putting their lives in order, including finding a job and a place to live.

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