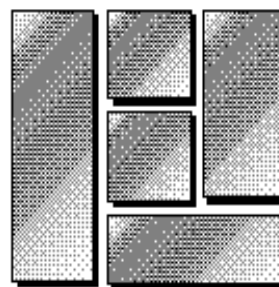

THE PROCESS EVALUATION OF PROJECT CONNECTION LESSONS ON LINKING DRUG COURTS AND COMMUNITIES



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Chapter 1

Introduction

Project Connection was initiated by the Brooklyn Treatment Court (BTC) to explore ways in which drug treatment courts can benefit from building bridges to the community. The goals of Project Connection are grounded in the concepts of community justice. From the perspective of community justice, the court's function is to serve the interests of community members, representing the interests of victims, neighborhoods, and institutions harmed by crime, supporting efforts to provide restitution and reparation to those who have been harmed, and engaging community members in the process of reaching dispositions that serve the interests of the community. At the same time, Project Connection is located in a treatment court that emerges from the drug court movement. From the perspective of drug courts, the primary goals of the court are to provide the combination of treatment, supervision, incentives, and penalties to assist addicted defendants attain sobriety with the understanding that there will be substantial gains in community safety from reductions in drug abuse.

In attempting to integrate community justice into a drug court setting, Project Connection faced several challenges. One was in how to define community. The "community" in most community courts is a relatively small, well-defined geographic area. Most community courts focus on crimes with a small number of easily defined victims. In drug courts, the area served is large and the specific acts of victimization hard to define. Despite these differences, Project Connection, through a series of exploratory activities, identified points at which the concepts of community justice and the goals of the drug court converge.

The primary point of convergence is the interest of the community in having formerly disruptive criminal offenders return and become productive, contributing citizens active in the life of the community. Community members want to see that addicts have recovered and can give back to others. From the point of drug courts, successful reintegration into the community represents the final stage in treatment and involvement in community activities a source of support in the continuing commitment to sobriety. Indeed, many drug courts are finding that the missing element in their programs has been the need to plan for ongoing aftercare following treatment graduation.

This report describes the activities of Project Connections and the ideas for how drug courts can support community reintegration following successful graduation from drug court. The results are based on qualitative analysis of Urban Institute interviews with project staff; focus group interviews with BTC clients and staff interviews conducted by research staff of the Center for Court Innovation; UI observation of a facilitated dialogue with community members; and analysis of records maintained by the project on accomplishments and activities. A description of data collection activities is provided in Appendix A.

The Brooklyn Treatment Court and Community

The King's County Supreme Court began BTC as an experimental project to test the feasibility and effectiveness of reducing offender drug use and criminal activity through court-mandated drug treatment and case management. The court assesses defendant drug addiction and social functioning shortly after arrest. If the defendant is determined to be addicted, BTC develops a treatment and monitoring plan to be put in place immediately. The development and operation of BTC has been funded by the Office of Drug Courts (DoJ, OJP), the Unified Court System of New York, and New York City. Under a separate contract from the Center on Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), the court offers case management and a network of services designed to meet the needs of addicted women. The Center for Court Innovation (CCI), a project of the Fund for the City of New York, received a grant from the State Justice Institute to support the development of Project Connection to help the treatment court develop linkages with the community that would further the treatment goals of the court.

BTC, which opened in June of 1996, is the first drug treatment court in New York City. The court offers drug-addicted defendants who plead guilty to drug charges the opportunity to have their case dismissed if they complete drug treatment and community service under the supervision of court-based case managers. To be eligible for BTC consideration, the defendants must be arrested on a drug felony charge in specified areas of Brooklyn and must be found to be addicted to drugs on the basis of a clinical assessment conducted prior to their first appearance in BTC. Defendants are excluded from BTC if they have a prior conviction or pending charge for a violent offense. Other defendants are excluded by prosecutorial review due to characteristics of their offense (e.g., drugs sales on school grounds or in an inside location). Defendants must agree to drug testing, complete drug treatment, and comply with other court conditions. If they adhere to these conditions, the charge against them is dismissed upon treatment graduation.

Project Connection began with the understanding that the interests and jurisdictions of drug courts extend beyond the walls of the courtroom and that the process of dispensing justice should address the concerns of the defendants, their victims, and their neighborhoods. This view stems from a broader concern with restorative justice in which the interests of the community are actively considered in court procedures and outcomes. From this perspective, the court seeks strategies for reparation of the harm to the community inflicted by the offender and the reintegration/restoration of the offender to the status of law-abiding, productive member of the community.

A primary challenge to drug courts in applying the concept of restorative justice is defining the drug court community. Community courts, such as the Midtown Community Court developed by the Center for Court Innovation, are designed to serve a variety of offenders from one or a small number of neighborhoods with clear geographic boundaries. In contrast, drug courts typically serve a narrowly defined class of offenders from a larger number of neighborhoods. Within multiple neighborhoods, the drug court community consists of those groups and individuals directly affected by drug abuse and abusers. This definition presents

logistical challenges in identifying and linking to the groups and individuals with a stake in removing drugs from the community.

Project Connection began conceptualizing the BTC community in relation to the courts' mission to reduce recidivism and substance abuse among offenders. Addiction has an impact on many levels. Three groups feel its effects profoundly:

- neighborhoods;
- family members; and
- police officers.

Project Connection's goal was to reach out to these constituencies within the neighborhoods served by BTC to create stronger connections and bring them into the court system to help sustain treatment involvement among nonviolent, substance-abusing defendants. The strategies addressed court linkages with individuals, including client family members and volunteers recruited from community residents, and with existing community agencies and organizations. The goal was to reach key community residents and to arrange ongoing collaborative activities with existing neighborhood institutions.

The project objectives were to (1) create partnerships with communities to establish improved court-community relations; (2) assist clients in community reintegration; (3) enlist familial support for clients and address broader issues faced by families with an addicted member; and (4) ameliorate quality of life problems in affected areas.

The range of strategies considered during the project planning are shown in the chart below.

NEIGHBORHOOD	FAMILY	POLICE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community advisory board • community impact/offender re-integration panels • Adopt-a-School program • formal court volunteers • neighborhood newsletter • community service and restitution projects • buddy system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • orientation sessions • support groups • feedback on defendants' progress • attendance at reward and graduation ceremonies • formal collaboration with family court and ACS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • systematic feedback on case outcomes, treatment status, and warrants • serving as community supports for the defendants and their families • attendance at court hearing and treatment graduations • Linking troubled community members to services via referral network

Project Development

Project Connection was developed and staffed by the Center for Court Innovation. It began operation in January 1997, three months after the award was received from the State Justice Institute, with the hiring of a project planner. The project planner devoted the first seven months of the project to outreach efforts to identify existing organizations, agencies, and community groups in one neighborhood served by BTC. Her initial efforts focused on Red Hook, a single, relatively well-defined Brooklyn neighborhood. The decision to limit the neighborhoods targeted by the pilot activities, rather than attempt to make links in all areas of Brooklyn served by BTC, was based on practical considerations (not an effort to define the community solely on geographic boundaries). Brooklyn is extremely large and diverse for a single staff person to make connections in multiple areas. Red Hook was selected because it was the site of an ongoing project to develop the Red Hook Community Court, which meant the Project could take advantage of connections to the community from that effort. The work in Red Hook was used to prepare an implementation plan that guided subsequent project activities.

The implementation plan identified potential activities in a number of areas. Those activities that appeared feasible upon further investigation were pursued; other parts of the plan were modified or dropped due to resource constraints or other barriers. The plan called for a two-stage approach to implementation and suggested activities in the following areas: evaluation using focus groups; public information dissemination through handouts and newsletters; linking to the police; education in the schools; impact/reintegration panels; community service; a speaker's bureau; collaboration on housing and drug elimination programs; a buddy system; a volunteer program; town hall meetings; and family orientation and focus groups.

After seven months of project development in Red Hook, a Community Ombudsperson was hired by the project in August 1997 to work full-time on community outreach and collaborative activities in a second neighborhood, Bedford-Stuyvesant. Bedford-Stuyvesant was selected because a large number of BTC clients were from that area and planning to return. The new staff member concentrated her efforts on outreach and collaborative activities in that area while the activities initiated in Red Hook continued. The Ombudsperson was deployed to (1) meet and establish relationships with key community contacts; (2) assemble and convene a community advisory board; and (3) schedule a town hall meeting.

Report Organization

This report is organized around the matrix of strategies for linking the courts and community. Chapter 2 describes how Project Connection reached out to the community and began the dialogue around community restoration and offender reintegration. Chapter 3 discusses the project efforts around offender activities in the community, while Chapter 4 examines efforts to involve the community in court activities. Activities to engage offenders' family members in BTC and develop sustained involvement of the police proved difficult to implement, as illustrated by Chapters 5 and 6. Lessons from Project Connection are presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2

Reaching the Community

Community Outreach Activities

Project Connection community outreach staff met with both individuals and small groups including community leaders, staff of public agencies serving BTC neighborhoods, and residents. They also attended community meetings organized by local groups and agencies. For instance, during the first six months of 1997, the Red Hook project planner recorded over 100 interviews, calls, and meetings with community members and representatives of organizations and agencies working in the community.

This outreach served three primary purposes: (1) to inform the community about BTC and Project Connection; (2) to learn about existing resources in the community; and (3) to solicit feedback and suggestions for Project Connection programs. A handout prepared for use in community outreach was distributed throughout this process. This outreach elicited feedback that helped shape the Project Connection implementation plan.

In Bedford-Stuyvesant, the Community Ombudsperson's first outreach to the community helped her gain a sense of the various constituencies in a neighborhood many times larger than Red Hook and that, unlike Red Hook's fixed perimeter, has fluid boundaries. In order to accomplish this she attended and observed many of the community meetings that were open to the public, including:

- the meeting for the local governing body, Community Board 3;
- the 79th and 81st Precinct Council meetings, where residents meet with police officers to learn of new police initiatives and share their own concerns about crime in the neighborhood;
- a Community School Board 16 meeting; and
- a Community School Board 16–sponsored town hall meeting focusing on youth gang activity.

At each of these meetings, the Community Ombudsperson gathered information about the issues that were important to these neighborhood residents. The Community Ombudsperson also met with a number of community leaders individually who gave her more specific information about the makeup of the community. In the last year, the community outreach efforts have gained in momentum. The Community Ombudsperson continues to attend community events and meetings. She has received recognition in these gatherings for the community service contributions of BTC clients, indicating growing community awareness of the court's program.

Project Connection staff developed educational materials about BTC for distribution to community groups, sponsored an open house for the community, and made presentations at some meetings. The court began publishing a newsletter in October 1997 in order to demystify court operations and provide a vehicle for ongoing collaboration. The first issue included an article on the court's opening, an interview with the judge, and a brief piece on the Adopt-a-School program (see newsletter attached). This issue was prepared by Project Connection staff with the hope that subsequent issues would be written by a community volunteer. It was mailed to 400 persons identified by combining a number of mailing lists of persons in contact with the court, such as service providers, agency contacts, and groups. The second issue was mailed in the summer of 1998 and included an interview with a recent BTC graduate. Other public education materials prepared by the court for community groups included a brochure for family members, a brochure for the schools, and letters to community groups.

An open house at the court was held to familiarize community members with court operations. Invitations were issued to a number of local organizations and groups to come to the court. The open house began with breakfast and introductory remarks by the BTC judge, project director, and clinical director. This was followed by a tour of the facilities, an opportunity to observe the court in action, and closing remarks by the Project Connection Ombudsperson. Response to the open house was enthusiastic. Those in attendance asked to be invited to court graduation ceremonies scheduled for two weeks later, and several attended.

Original plans to convene a community advisory board to guide the court-community partnership were deferred. The objectives for the board included making the needs and concerns of the community known to BTC; formulating processes for incorporating the community input in court operations; devising new avenues to provide information to the community on court operations; and identifying and securing relevant community resources and discussing after-care issues. The board was to include community groups, businesses, representatives of New York City agencies, cultural and civic associations, and potentially even BTC graduates. Special subcommittees were to be composed of members from the Project Connection target neighborhoods. However, during the first year and a half of BTC, the project was mainly devoted to building ties to community members, which was seen as a necessary precursor to establishing an effective and clearly focused advisory board that was not simply another meeting.

The project also initially planned to hold a town hall meeting to generate a dialogue about reintegration in the community. However, after attending many community group meetings and hearing about similar meetings, particularly in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the planners decided to use facilitated dialogues with BTC clients and community members for this purpose. The facilitated dialogues involved small groups of clients, community members, or both, sitting in a circle to engage in a discussion of selected topics led by a trained facilitator. The decision was based on concerns that large group meetings open to the public tended to degenerate into rowdy complaint sessions in which residents expressed their dissatisfaction with the failure of many agencies to respond to the multiple problems facing these neighborhoods. The risk seemed particularly acute in view of the different concerns of BTC clients and community members. BTC graduates are building new lives and reentering the community with a host of fears about housing, jobs,

relapse, and neighborhood hostility. However, community members have grave concerns about relapse, resentment over past harm caused by drug abusers, and reluctance to invest scarce community resources and opportunities in those who have caused these harms.

Lessons on Community Outreach

Overall, community outreach efforts were extremely successful in attaining several key goals. In a year and a half, trust and reciprocal interaction with community members have grown dramatically in areas where many residents are distrustful of the criminal justice system. Community members have attended treatment court graduations and express appreciation for BTC. Willingness and interest in community service projects is increasing. Community members are viewing the court and returning clients more positively.

In the process of developing better community relations, Project Connection learned several important lessons. Such efforts can expect to encounter skepticism, if not hostility, at the start, and project staff need to spend a lot of time getting to know community members and helping in the community projects. At the same time, court outreach efforts have to steer clear of local politics and establish realistic expectations about what the court and returning clients can, and cannot, do through a process of continuing education and joint undertakings.

Community outreach in highly distressed neighborhoods faces a certain level of skepticism. Most community members are concerned about addiction and want to help. However, distrust in the criminal justice system is widespread and many activists in community groups remember times when statistics and good works were used against the community to highlight what is wrong, not what is right, with their neighborhood. The community wants to know what the project is and what it intends to get out of this. These communities often feel let down when agencies come in, promise services or assistance, and fail to deliver the goods. They also distinguish between bringing in a treatment program for abusers who are not in recovery and bringing in community services by those in recovery. The latter are far more welcome than the former.

Project Connection staff recommend a slow approach to community groups, allowing them to explain what they want before offering a plan or requesting help. In addition, staff stressed the importance of consistent contacts over a period of time. A critical element in success in these areas is regular attendance at community meetings and continued expressions of commitment to community interests. These recommendations translate into substantial time commitments for court staff assigned to community outreach development.

There were different advantages to different kinds of community contacts:

- **Large Group Meetings.** In large group meetings, community members usually had a number of questions about BTC operations. They were often concerned about whether the court was going to be bringing addicts into their community. Very frequently community

members would approach the Project Connection planner after the presentation to find out if BTC could broker treatment for their loved ones. The Project Connection planner attended most of the large community meetings at least once to make presentations about BTC. However, the connections between the court and the community would have been improved if the planner had had the time to continue to attend the meetings regularly, so as to build relationships with residents in the community and maintain a constant presence.

- **Smaller Group Meetings.** Smaller group meetings, such as the banking committee meeting (working to get a bank in Red Hook) provided a space for a more involved dialogue about drug crimes in the neighborhood and specific Project Connection activities. For instance, it was at these smaller meetings that the planner learned about past attempts to form partnerships with the police to solve drug crimes in the neighborhood and received advice about implementing impact/reintegration panels in close-knit communities. The Ombudsperson generally focused her presentations to groups on community service, rather than all aspects of BTC. Her goal was to develop opportunities for clients to represent the court through their work and successful reintegration.
- **One-on-One Individual Meetings.** Personal meetings with community leaders were particularly helpful in discussing specific project strategies and goals. For instance, the Community Ombudsperson met with the district manager for Community Board 3. He indicated that family disintegration is of great concern to neighborhood residents. He suggested that the Community Ombudsperson bring a female client as a representative of the court when presenting to Community Board 3 to stress that family restoration is an important element of the program. From a meeting with the assistant to an assemblyman, the Ombudsperson learned that most of the business owners in Bedford-Stuyvesant are not community residents nor have they formed any business associations. Thus the implementation of one of the goals of Project Connection — to reach out to local business owners as possible sites for community service and to support defendants as they reintegrate back into the community — had to be adjusted accordingly.

One benefit of intensive community outreach was the development of unexpected opportunities for court-community collaboration. One such opportunity arose in April during the National AmeriCorps Celebration of Service Fair on Saturday, April 27, 1997. Five members of the Red Hook Public Safety Corps were interested in co-producing an event for this fair with the Project Connection planner. Consequently, the planner trained the AmeriCorps members on court operations and worked with them to write and produce a skit about BTC.

The project planner and Ombudsperson contacted a wide variety of community groups and agencies in an effort to develop community service placements. In general, the contacts with the faith community generated the most placement opportunities. However, the staff found that it was more difficult to work with the clergy in larger churches than with parishioners or the directors of ongoing church projects. Several churches had active community outreach and service projects in operation and were able to include BTC clients in their projects. However, the

Ombudsman found it difficult to find the time to stay in touch with these smaller groups within church congregations.

The characteristics of the neighborhood, its history, and existing organizations were key factors affecting the ease of community outreach. It is necessary to gauge the neighborhood before beginning to do outreach in it. Project Connection experienced more difficulty in building community-court ties in Red Hook than in Bedford-Stuyvesant, despite the fact that the Center for Court Innovation had already done a great deal of work in Red Hook by holding focus groups and establishing a local AmeriCorps program. Because the project came on the heels of a great deal of planning for the Red Hook Community Justice Center, there was confusion in the neighborhood about the difference in the two projects and more difficulty establishing an identity for the treatment court. Bedford-Stuyvesant, on the other hand, posed a more complicated problem for outreach. There was little expertise in court staff about neighborhood dynamics, and the neighborhood itself was much harder to define; it is much larger than Red Hook and its boundaries are not as clearly delineated. Consequently, the Community Ombudsperson spent a great deal of time observing neighborhood meetings before actively presenting at them.

Another factor of some considerable importance was the number of court clients from the neighborhood. Red Hook turned out to have only a nominal number of neighborhood residents involved in BTC, none of whom were in outpatient treatment or had graduated from the court. Many of the community residents participating in local Red Hook group meetings were nonminority homeowners, not minority residents of the large public housing projects where most BTC clients from the neighborhood lived. This meant that structures that might have been put in place to help sustain defendants while in treatment and after graduation — such as buddy systems and support groups — were of little relevance. In addition, it was harder for community residents to feel that the court made a difference to their neighborhood. Consequently, the second target neighborhood, Bedford-Stuyvesant, was chosen largely because more BTC defendants came from that neighborhood than any other in the court's catchment areas. The lesson seems to be that outreach efforts need to focus on areas with relatively larger numbers of treatment court clients.

Chapter 3

Linking the Offender to the Community

A clear goal for Project Connection was to support the reintegration of BTC graduates into the community. The court graduated its first set of clients in January 1998 and was forced to deal with how it would support clients in their inevitable next step in recovery: aftercare. Project Connection viewed reintegration as both a challenge and an opportunity for clients and communities. Clients are typically motivated when they return, and they are mainly concerned about making their new lives productive and healthy — finding jobs and housing, making family connections, and using idle time constructively. But they also bring unique resources — a commitment to recovery and an intimate knowledge of the risks of street life to young people dabbling with drugs — that can help communities fight drug crime and addiction. Communities have resources to help clients, but need reassurances that BTC clients will contribute to the neighborhood.

Project Connection explored two general approaches for linking offenders to the community. One approach was to try to establish ways in which individual clients could engage personally with community members in ways that would benefit both. A second approach was to require that offenders complete community service projects to help the neighborhood.

Linking Clients to Community Members

The Project Connection proposal envisioned several potential activities for linking clients to community members: (1) a town hall meeting that would serve to introduce the concept, philosophy, and objectives of BTC to key Court constituents; (2) community impact panels, based on restorative justice principles, that would bring together BTC participants and community members to discuss the effect of addiction and street drug markets on communities; and (3) a buddy system in which a client would be “adopted” by a community organization such as a church congregation or service club that would agree to assist him/her in accessing resources such as housing, employment, and child care. Over the course of the project, these components gradually evolved and developed into a new idea: facilitated community dialogues focused on issues related to reintegration of treatment court graduates into the community. The facilitated dialogues combined elements of both the town hall and the impact panels with a focus on the issue of reintegration — an issue of pressing concern to Brooklyn Treatment Court staff and clients.

The Town Hall Meeting. After hiring the Community Ombudsperson, project planners moved forward with the idea of a town hall meeting as an opportunity to reinforce connections with community groups and the police. The town hall would look much like a community-based conference, in which residents and leaders could discuss with individuals representing criminal justice agencies (police, the district attorney’s office, corrections, probation, parole) collaborative ideas for curbing drug crime and addiction. However, the community outreach conducted by the Community Ombudsperson — introducing the

treatment court concept to the community and receiving feedback from the community on their needs and concerns — achieved the basic objectives of the town hall. Project planners determined that a separate forum would be both labor-intensive and low-yield; it would not produce any new information that would affect the structure and operations of the treatment court.

Community Impact Panels. Impact panels have been used as a technique for allowing clients and community members to negotiate an appropriate way for offenders to repay the community. The panels are intended to help offenders recognize that their behavior affects family and community and help community members recognize that addicts in recovery can benefit from community support and become valuable resources in the community. However, several concerns led project planners to decide not to implement the community impact panels as described in the Project Connection proposal. Court administrators were concerned about the possible negative effects on clients facing a group of potentially angry and frustrated community members. From a clinical perspective, the shaming elements inherent in these panels appeared to present the risk of undermining client gains in self-esteem made during treatment. Although there was a fair degree of support, some community members expressed fears about retaliation for participating in a face-to-face dialogue with a returning offender around the individual's harm and restitution activities. In addition, the project was unable to develop a satisfactory way to present the panels to clients. Unlikely to be chosen by clients as a positive community service project, it also seemed counter-productive to use the panels as a sanction option since involuntary participation would undermine clients' understanding of the process as restorative. Planners thus tinkered with the model, calling them "impact/reintegration panels." They altered the focus to the nature of addiction, the struggles of recovery, and the help clients need to forge positive relationships in the community that could potentially sustain them as they move back into the neighborhood. Although there was never a formal decision against the impact/reintegration panels, the lack of consensus on their purpose and procedures made them a low priority for BTC.

The Buddy System. The buddy system was intended to help clients develop social networks and gain access to resources that would facilitate sustained recovery. Project planners found it difficult to develop a buddy system for several reasons. Addicts preferred to have close relationships with other addicts and their sponsor rather than with a community member. Community residents were reluctant to commit substantial amounts of time and personal involvement in a person at risk of relapse and unknown to them. In addition, locating community members to match to returning graduates who were scattered across many areas of Brooklyn was difficult to organize.

What emerged from these explorations was a plan to hold facilitated dialogues to learn more about the nature of reintegration, the expectations of clients and community members, and the needs of each group. A facilitated dialogue between clients and community members seemed

a natural method for gaining potentially rich information that could inform both the Brooklyn treatment court's policies as well as policies of drug courts across the country.

Client Views on Returning to the Community

BTC clients were invited to a facilitated dialogue to discuss community reintegration. The facilitated dialogue methods are described in Appendix A. Participants were asked how they felt about returning to their home neighborhoods when they reintegrate into the community after completing treatment. Two of the three participants in outpatient care at the time of the focus group were living in their home communities. The other participants, four of whom were in residential treatment, discussed their experiences when they returned to their home neighborhoods for visits. In general the participants felt that their programs were meeting their aftercare needs. They expected to have, or already had, individual therapy, home groups, and sponsors. They felt it would not be helpful to be linked to a mentor who was not in recovery because that person would not be able to understand their issues.

In discussing their fears and hopes around returning to the community after graduating from the Court, participants described the tension between keeping the memory of their addiction fresh in their minds and the temptation to return to old habits. They felt that seeing where they had come from served to remind them how much progress they had made in recovery—keeping their recovery “green.” At the same time, they felt in certain situations the lure of old friends and hangouts would be too strong to resist. Finally, participants expressed the desire to have BTC play a larger role in facilitating their reintegration to their families and in resolving their concurrent Family Court cases.

Several participants either sought out the experience of keeping their recovery fresh—“keeping it green”—by contacting other addicts, or had established ways of turning unavoidable experiences due to living situations into positive ones.

For me in residential, I visit my old neighborhood, and the impact that it has on me. To me it's positive for me because I can go back around there and see some of these people that I was dealing with when I was getting high and stuff like that and their response to me now is a lot of reassurance to me knowing that I'm doing the right thing and they wishing that they could do the right thing. But that's the choice they have to make.

It keeps it green for me because this is my neighborhood... . When I come around I see some of the guys and the women I used to see out selling drugs; they keep it green for me ... they're glad to see me like this—even then when I was selling drugs they used to tell me, “You know you should stop using, you should stop selling.” They look forward to seeing me the way I am now. They're happy to see me just breaking loose. When I see negative people around me. When I was on the train, I saw one, his name is Bobby, and he said, “Yo, I'm going to go get one.” And I said, “Bobby, go ahead and go get yours, right now

I'm going to go and make this community service thing....” Now I see a different way. I can be around here. It keeps it green. Makes me more stronger.

The most important thing is when you lost that desire to get high. For me I lost a lot by getting high — a lot of things — financially — I want to stop. Sometimes I see some people who I used to get high with, I look at drug addicts now and think, “Damn, I was one of them.” That keeps it real for me.

Other participants actively avoided contact with other addicts in order to avoid the temptation of returning to old addictive behaviors. These participants had to balance the positive aspects of “keeping it green” — being reminded of where they were before recovery — and the temptation to fall back in with old acquaintances and old ways of behavior.

I'm from Williamsburg, Brooklyn — I did all my drugging there. I know that if I go back over there, they'll get me high before I get them clean. So I know that I can't go back over there. When I do go over there, when I see someone drugging, I talk to them about God. That'll get them away from me. It's true. So that's what I do. Okay. Not to say that I'm better than them. Okay. But I know that today I cannot be with them, I cannot hang around that negative aspect of what they are doing. So it's like “Hi, bye, see you later. I'm on my way to a meeting. I'm on my way to do something. I got God in my life.” I say, “I can't stay and talk to you, I got to go.” So I know I can't go back there.

My neighborhood is Crown Heights, but I moved to Flatbush. I still go back to Crown Heights, but I don't hang around. I do electrical work, so most of the jobs that I do are in Crown Heights — every time I see people that I used to get high with — I say hi, and keep stepping.

I used to get high in Gowanus. I moved to Gowanus in 1990 and I hadn't rode a bus, a train, anything in like six years. I stayed in the houses. Now, I don't even drive past Gowanus. I am scared. Honestly I am scared to death of those projects, cuz I know how I went in there that one time I never came out. I never went as far as Court Street — I never went as far as Third Avenue — I stayed there. Literally I stayed there. Now, I don't go back there. I go downtown. I used to get high around Lafayette, around that way. Now I go back through there and I see some of the people that I used to get high with and I was like, “That's how I looked?” For real! They're like, “You look good.” As long as I see them, I will never forget. Every once in a while let me see just how bad it still is. Because that just gives me more motivation to not want to be back in there. Last weekend, I was out on a pass and this guy he knows good damn well what I've been doing with my life and what I'm doing. Didn't he ask me if I wanted a drink? Now, I could have just cursed him out, but I said no thank you. He asked me again. I said no thank you. He asked me again. I said you know what, I said, if I did want a drink I have money in my pocket. I can buy myself a drink. You know what I'm saying. What it showed me is that while we're getting better in here, the people out there either they don't know no better or they simply do not

care. They do not care. It really is about you and your strength. But strength for them projects, I do not have.

One participant stressed the importance of keeping busy and motivated as a way to avoid the potential to relapse.

As long as I'm motivated and have something, I'll be fine. I was clean for three years and then I fell for six months. As long I'm motivated and got my mind doing something, then I won't go back that way. I can be around my neighborhood, but I got to be moving. I got to be doing something positive. If not I probably will get high again.

The Client-Community Facilitated Dialogue

Subsequently, a facilitated dialogue between BTC graduates and community representatives was convened to discuss reintegration. The group was asked to discuss (1) whether the community can afford to extend resources and support to recovering addicts; (2) whether those who return to the community after drug treatment make a contribution or drain resources; (3) what communities can do for the families impacted by drug use; (4) how recovering addicts can use their idle time upon returning to the community; (5) whether housing is a major issue for returning BTC clients; and (6) what types of community service projects are important for the BTC clients to undertake.

Some interesting differences between the BTC graduates and community representatives emerged in the discussions of problems and priorities. The neighborhood representatives focused on (1) ways to assist BTC clients in using existing community resources; (2) increased networking among agencies around serving the needs of recovering addicts; and (3) offering ideas for community service that would help the community. The BTC graduates tended to focus on two issues: the need to find a job, and their personal need to stay sober and keep focused on a positive life style. In some ways, the differences reflect a tension between focusing on rehabilitation and reintegration, and finding strategies for accomplishing both. As one BTC graduate put it:

An addict staying clean is the best contribution you're going to get.

Finding a job and related problems such as housing and health care are pervasive in Bedford-Stuyvesant and not confined just to those in recovery or returning from the courts. The group discussion suggested that the community has existing services (which may not be sufficient, but exist to some extent) to help BTC graduates with these problems.

Almost everything you think you need as a client is here. It's a matter of working with us and letting us show you where it's at.

The challenge is how to educate the BTC graduates about ways to find and use these resources.

One community representative suggested starting the process early before BTC graduation by inviting community representatives to address BTC clients.

The idea of a community resource directory received considerable interest. Contents should include resource contact information, indexed by topic such as family, housing, health, and child care. There was debate about who should prepare the directory and a cautionary note by one experienced community worker that the contact information might need to be coupled with personal contact and encouragement, given the persistence required to get through to the right person at service delivery agencies. However, the discussion did not suggest that the community was prepared to give priority to BTC clients above other needy community members to these resources, but simply was encouraging BTC clients to reach out for the services they need just like other residents.

There's not a whole big space between working and welfare.... We have to think in terms of all of us because there's not a large disparity.

The new community knows nothing about you.... No one owes you anything.... Everyone in that community is trying to survive, they're busting their butt.... If you want something you go out there and get it.

The problem in defining the community, recognized by the planners of Project Connection, was reflected in the group discussions. The community served by the court and other agencies tends to be large, with poorly defined geographic borders, and served by multiple agencies and organizations who know little about each other. This makes it hard for BTC clients to find a community to which they can connect. Despite the extensive efforts to build neighborhood-based service centers (e.g., Restoration Hall in Bedford-Stuyvesant), there does not appear to be an organizational bridge with the vision of networking around the needs of recovering addicts, the needs of the community, and existing resources—and certainly not ones set up to serve different neighborhoods within Brooklyn. The community representatives were very enthusiastic about the facilitated discussion process, noting that the group served as a way for them to learn about other agencies, services and a way to build a network for recovering addicts.

It's all about networking.... I love this whole thing and think it should continue.

The resources you are looking for, they're right here in the community, but the community has to share with each other.... Many of them don't know each other, don't know what is in them.... There is so much you don't know about each other and so the resources can't come together....

The resources are so scattered.

Finding ways to use their idle time was also very important to the BTC graduates and related to community service in a complex way. The temptation of the streets and old friends is a problem for those returning, and they need ways to socialize, engage in hobbies such as music or

carpentry, and generally relax. An important part of their recovery is finding ways to maintain their self-esteem when faced with the challenges of reintegration. They do not immediately think of community service as a way to fill these hours nor to derive a sense of self-esteem from the contribution and accomplishment of community service. BTC graduates do not know about these opportunities and often feel so pressured by other responsibilities (get a job, take care of the kids, etc.) that they are too overwhelmed to take on additional commitments. They want social/nonwork activities and encouragement to help them stay focused on recovery.

It's really hard living in New York City and trying to do volunteer work because you have to take care of yourself first, and just looking for a job is a job.

You can't just take a person out the center and tell them, "Well what are you going to do for the community." You got to show them some kind of path and they will follow you.

You have to have some foundation already in place... before you go back home, or before you go back into the community.

The best thing for an addict is to deal with other addicts.

It was clear that while they need services, they also need a sober social life that includes positive activities, which might easily include community service if presented as a choice and a way of connecting to others. The potential is there if recovering addicts have a place to congregate and help each other.

What we need to do is help and assist each other in the outreach part, the advertising part, the part that says, "You know where I was today? I went to a peer group over at Restoration.... It is open to all of you. I was looking for a job today ... and I found out you can go over to Fulton Street and.... there's some people there who can make some phone calls.. where a job might be handy to you.

More formal aftercare programs that include education about community resources, service opportunities, and social activities and formal ongoing structured dialogues among agencies, neighborhood representatives, and clients might help. The court could play a leadership role in linking agencies around the needs of BTC graduates and other recovering addicts.

The community service opportunities suggested by the neighborhood representatives included: assisting at the polls and in voter registration; volunteering as a block organizer; helping young people in the neighborhood stay away from drugs by acting as a role model; and counseling addicts. The most promising service projects involve longer-term placements that build a sense of involvement with the project and the goals of service.

None of the participants thought that BTC graduation certificates would be useful credentials in getting jobs or gaining prestige in the community. Although the certificates provide graduates with a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem, expanding their use in

linking to other opportunities did not seem practical. The participants seemed to suggest that the primary role for the court was to encourage networking among the community agencies to assist graduates in making contact with these agencies through community service and to provide the graduates with information about resources. From the clients’ perspectives, reintegration needs to be incorporated with a strong community-based affiliation with other addicts through aftercare or other special programs that would combine ongoing work on their addiction; mutual assistance and services for specific reentry problems; and encouragement to participate in the community in useful and contributory ways. From the neighborhood representatives’ perspectives, reintegration activities need to focus less on repaying the community and more on taking an active role as a “good citizen.” This role includes taking responsibility for reentry into the community by working to get jobs, housing, and health care.

Community Service Activities

Community service in BTC was designed to assist graduates in their return to the community. The BTC judge uses community service as a reward, not a punishment, for doing well in treatment. Clients say the judge views community service as a way to give back to society. It signals the community that clients are ready to go back. It also shows *her* trust and faith in them. She tells them, “I feel good about sending *you* into the community.”

Because addiction affects communities as well as individuals, a central task for Project Connection was the creation of community service projects in coordination with community-based groups. These events provide an opportunity for BTC defendants to acknowledge the larger negative impact of their addiction, to restore harm done to the community, and to begin the process of positively reintegrating back into the community. Prior to the implementation of Project Connection, BTC defendants were not required by the court to do community service projects as a condition for graduation. Now BTC requires all defendants to do community service projects during the last two or three months of BTC monitoring.

BTC community service requirements are as follows:

<u>Type of Plea</u>	<u>Number of Projects</u>
Felony plea	Three community service projects, one for each of the three months of their final court monitoring period
Misdemeanor plea	Two community service projects—one for each of the two months of their final court monitoring period

The community service placement process is illustrated in Exhibit A and the client information handout is shown in Exhibit B.

Exhibit A

Community Service Outline

Case manager recommends advancement to Phase III

Leticia gives client attached letter (A) in court at time of advancement (*client must attend orientation immediately following advancement to Phase III*)

Client signs up for the next orientation on the first floor handout table

or

Client calls me to sign up for next orientation

or

Case manager calls or emails me to sign their client up for the next orientation

At orientation, community service is again explained and clients are then given the opportunity to sign up for any upcoming events. They will be given a flyer with the place, date, time, and directions to the event. Clients will be asked to provide contact information so they can be reached regarding future events.

The ways clients can sign up for future events are as follows:

Clients can call me or sign up during their court date for the next event

or

Case managers can call or email me with the name of the client and the date of the community service the client plans to attend

After each event and at the completion of the client's requirement I will update the treatment application under Onsite Services, as well as provide case managers with a sheet depicting how many events remain to be done, and update the graduation list on the H drive.

Exhibit B

Phase III Community Service Requirements

I. HOW MUCH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION DO I HAVE TO DO?

If you have a misdemeanor case, you must participate in two community service events. If you have a felony case, you must participate in three events.

II. WHAT EVENTS FULFILL THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENT?

Treatment Court Events

The Community Ombudsperson will make every effort to schedule at least two community service events a month, mostly on weekends. They will run about 6 hours in length and be located primarily in the Bedford-Stuyvesant or Red Hook sections of Brooklyn. They can be anything from park cleanups, to feeding the homeless, to clothing and canned food drives. Clients should come dressed appropriately for manual labor.

Speakers Bureau

On occasion the Community Ombudsperson will have an event at which clients may have a speaking role, for instance at a community meeting or a school. If you are interested in participating when such events come up, tell the Community Ombudsperson.

III. WHAT'S THE PROCESS FOR PARTICIPATION?:

It's important that *you* make sure that you get credit for the community service that you do.

- You must first sign up for a **community service orientation**. They are scheduled for the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. (**Your case manager will tell you how.**)
- You must then sign up *before the event* that you plan to attend with the Community Ombudsperson.

IV. HOW DO I FIND OUT ABOUT AN EVENT?

Information on these events will be posted:

- On the community service bulletin board
- On the courtroom monitor
- In the front on the handout table as flyers
- On the voice mailbox of the Community Ombudsperson

V. WHO IS THE COMMUNITY OMBUDSPERSON?

The Community Ombudsperson is your link to community participation. *Her name is Deirdra Smith and her phone number is 643-8664.*

Remember: Community service is mandatory for graduation! It is your responsibility to find out about, sign up for, and attend community service events.

Each placement lasts from two to six hours. Clients are required to complete three separate community service placements rather than tally up fixed number of hours. Before their final monitoring period, defendants are reminded by their case managers of this community service obligation and are given a list of community service options. Large-scale community service projects are arranged on a once-monthly basis. Defendants are also able to create their own community service project, which must be approved by the Community Ombudsperson. Most clients prefer to take advantage of court-sponsored events, but several have created their own, such as working with a Boy Scout troop or helping to coach a girls' basketball team.

The Project Connection planner and later the Community Ombudsperson developed a variety of community service events for BTC clients. At the first community participation event, defendants picked up over 20 bags of garbage from the yard of the unused Catholic school next door to Red Hook's Visitation Church. Drug dealers and other Red Hook residents had been using the school yard as a dumping ground, causing the local priest to receive fines from the Department of Sanitation. The priest supplied equipment and garbage bags for the event, while a neighbor across the street donated a shovel for the morning.

There were three BTC-sponsored community service events in Red Hook during the third quarter of 1997. A combined total of 65 defendants participated in these events. In July, BTC defendants cleaned up a park in Red Hook that was being used for the newly formed Red Hook Little League. The park was filled with debris that was only partially removed by the Little League players prior to each game. The project was arranged and overseen by a member of the Red Hook Public Safety Corps. In August, defendants cleaned up the area around the public swimming pool in Red Hook — a central source of recreation for Red Hook youth during the day that becomes a local dumping ground and hangout for illegal activities at night. In September, BTC defendants cleaned up Red Hook's Coffey Park, a landmark green space adjacent to the Red Hook housing projects that is often littered with broken glass and discarded cans. Also during this event, several defendants helped scrape and paint the fence of the local parish in Red Hook. During this time, community service began in Bedford-Stuyvesant: BTC clients help set up for the Centennial of the library.

In the six months from October 1997 to July 1998, Project Connection arranged 22 community service projects in Red Hook and Bedford-Stuyvesant. The activities included outdoor cleanups of parks and neighborhoods; serving a banquet at a local church; stuffing, sorting, and labeling over 1,000 pieces of mail for Catholic Charities; indoor cleaning, painting and repair work at churches, schools, and day care centers; and distributing literature on AIDS/HIV prevention and community opportunities. A total of 176 community service commitments were fulfilled through these activities. This represents multiple activities for many clients but does not include activities arranged to meet the needs of individual clients. Similar projects continued in the last half of 1998 and appear to be well on their way to becoming established in the neighborhood.

Project Connection staff checked the BTC MIS system to locate clients in the last phase of treatment who were ready for community service. They located potential clients through their BTC case managers and worked individually with BTC clients to develop community service placements appropriate to the person. This was often difficult and very time consuming. Arranging placements was more difficult in the winter than the summer, since organizations appeared to be more comfortable with inviting a group of former drug addicts to work outside on a community project than to invite them inside where supervision might be more difficult. Some clients were unable to undertake community service placements arranged by the project, and BTC case managers arranged for them to complete some community service under the supervision of their treatment program.

Client Views of Community Service

The Project Connection Community Ombudsperson at BTC organizes at least one event a month in each neighborhood. A significant effort is made to find community groups to sponsor events, and the events are geared to not feel punitive. Clients are encouraged to develop their own community service projects, and some clients have worked with Boy Scout troops or have coached basketball at community centers. Clients are not allowed to “double dip” and use community service events that they are required to do as part of their treatment program to fulfill their BTC mandates.

In December 1997, seven BTC clients were offered participation in a focus group to discuss their BTC experiences as a community service option (see description in Appendix A). All of the participants were in their final phase of court requirements. The focus group constituted the second community service event for five of the participants; for the other two, it was their first community service event. However, several of the participants had been engaged in community service projects, some of which were long-term placements, through their treatment programs. When discussing community service, it was difficult to distinguish between what participants did through their treatment programs and what they did through BTC, unless the distinction was the express topic of conversation. Some participants who expressed deep satisfaction with community service had participated in long-term projects through their programs.

The clients who participated in the focus group generally had very positive views of community service work. They felt that community service helped them gain job skills, reminded them of their former productivity in society, and boosted their self-esteem. Their feelings about community service were consistent regardless of whether the community service was arranged through BTC or their treatment program. Nevertheless, those participants with the most positive views on community service were those who had engaged in longer-term community service projects. Participants saw the court’s community service requirement as a tool used by the court to judge them and test whether they were ready to go back to the community. Participants also clearly stated that it was important to structure community service requirements for the latter stages of recovery, when clients are ready to give back to the community. This sentiment was also indirectly expressed by participants in the language they

used, which reflected steps 8 and 9 (“make a list of all we’ve harmed” and “make direct amends”) of the 12-step program to recovery. The following sections present the themes raised by the group.

Motivations for Participating in Community Service. When asked why they participated in community service, most of the participants stated they were told they had to complete three projects before they could graduate from the court. They clearly saw this as the last hurdle they had to jump before graduation from the court and the dismissal of their cases.

Basically they tell us that the community service part is the last phase of our graduation... We need it to graduate. Most of our cases are going to be closed up after we finish our community service and graduate from the court.

That’s how they put it to me. After you do community service, your records will be clean. And then you graduate and everything will be straight. When we do go out there and look for jobs, we don’t have to worry about what’s on our record and feeling real.... In other words ... the way I would feel is damn I would go for a job and they would ask me if I was ever locked up and boom but on my papers it says no. Because my records are clean. The way I got it is that our felonies are thrown out.

Participants also stated that community service offered an outlet for boredom.

I had crazy idle time — getting into trouble — tired of getting into trouble.

I had a lot of time. Took my idle time away.

Benefits of Community Service. Regardless of their motivations, participants expressed a variety of positive effects that emerged as a result of their community service participation, including increased self-esteem, self-respect, and job skills. They also discussed how participation in community service reminded them of their productive years before their addiction and instilled a respect for responsibility and accountability.

One result of doing community service was an increased sense of self-esteem and self-respect.

And it gives back to myself. I feel good about myself when I do something, you know — I don’t care if I don’t get no recognition for it. I’m doing it for me. And it makes me feel better. It brings up my self-esteem. Helps me deal with people just a little bit more better for that day.

Where possibly you could get more out of community service than just you cleaned up the city or something where you can feel like you’re a part of something, accomplishing something. Nothing does more to a person than knowing that their self-esteem — having high self-esteem and their self-worth is being appreciated .

Hand in hand with an improved sense of respect for themselves, participants gained increased respect for other people. Community service sometimes provided a forum in which participants directly worked with others — increasing their sense of connection and their understanding of other people's needs.

You can learn from them how to be open and willing to other people and caring. It's positive. They'll be teaching you. Something you see that you've never done before and you see a person who's been in there for years, doing it, it makes you feel good about helping other people, you know, and yourself. That's how I feel about it.

For the past ten years, I was just running and not caring whether the kids saw me getting high in the park or anything like that. You know what I'm saying? Now I'm learning to have respect for children because I didn't have none for them. I didn't.

Participants said that community service grounded them and provided a vehicle in which they were reminded of their former productivity in society.

First, it got me out of the house, down on Wall Street. It's in the executive offices, I work directly with the director of operations. It put me back in touch with where I was before I got involved with drugs, okay. When I was working and I was a productive member of society. Now I have a lot of responsibility down on Wall Street.

For myself, community service, I feel like I give back more to myself than the community. Because I used to do these things. You know what I'm saying. The things that I was doing in community service for the past couple of months, I did that at one point in my life. But I stopped. I stopped. And that lessened my being a productive member of society. I think that by doing community service is them giving me a chance to better myself — to make myself a stronger person. Do you know what I'm saying? And just to give myself back what I ripped myself out of.

Participants also felt that community service opened up new perspectives on their own potential and helped develop job skills.

And you may find something about yourself that you didn't know you had interest in while you're doing it.

Right now I'm going through an internship, and before I started, I was volunteering doing work upstairs in the school — I go to school for computers — I was staying there till 7:00 8:00 at night — whereas people who work there don't even stay that long. But this is what came out of it — now they came and they asked me to be an intern. You know what I'm saying. Not even to always look for something out of it — but sooner or later it always comes back to you.

Because most of the time, those that do go through the system, have not been through their schooling or gotten their GEDs. So this way, you know, doing the community service they get a feel, if they never worked, to be in a work environment — to be in a workplace setting and not only feel like they're giving back something to society but feel like they're getting something for themselves as well as being — like they're doing something and accomplishing something.

Participants felt that their performance during their community service participation could be the basis for a job reference from the BTC judge.

I think that what she asks for in community service like if we need references—they must be on time, they did what they had to do, it's like a reference thing for me. Without doing the community service, we be there for all three, we be on time, we do what we have to do, so it's like if they ask the judge, "Do you think that she's able to get this job, do you think that she'll be on time?"

While some participants expressed a desire for the court to make a more direct link between community service and potential employment, others saw this as unrealistic.

That she could put us in places where there might be a prospect of a job or internship.

I can't picture other companies taking a chance on community service as a job training.

Overall, participants expressed a new respect for responsibility in their lives.

I know that if I'm supposed to meet with Ms. X on Thursday at 2:00 and I don't be there, then okay, I should be held accountable and responsible for not doing it.

For me it's about accountability and responsibility for anything that you may have messed up. And if I can do community service that says it's okay—that means that I have to give part of my time to give back for messing up, it's okay. It's about being responsible and taking responsibility for what you do.

That's the thing about obligation, when you commit yourself to something. Knowing everything that you have to do. You take that on.

Participants believed by doing community service, they were paying back the harm that they had done to the community while they were addicts.

We think that we giving back—or you know what I'm saying—we paying a price. You have to realize all the people—people you don't even know—you have hurt them. You know by disrespecting them.... So if cleaning up in front of the corner store bodega is what it is then

that's what it is. You know what I'm saying. I bought drugs from out of your store. Why not clean up the front of it.

In addition to repaying the community, they felt a clear sense of obligation to BTC and saw the community service requirement as the least that they could do for the court.

For me I think it's only fair that the treatment court puts you through a program, so you can get your life back together. And all they ask of you is to do a community service. It's like you're giving back something that they gave you. You know, cuz, for most of us, if we kept doing what we were doing, we'd either be dead or locked up.

Participants also made a connection between giving to others through community service and giving to themselves. They saw community service as a path to self-improvement.

I know that what I was doing I was either going to end up dead or in jail for the rest of my life or in an institution. I decided that this was the time. And so now the treatment court needs me to do community service, it's okay today. Cause I know I need this for myself.

It's just something to build up ourselves. That's all it is. You know what I'm saying. Because we done took from the community so much. We done robbed, we done stole, we done did all of that. We paid the price because we have to pay the price because we did it. That's why I don't mind.

Not all participants thought that community service was a positive experience. One participant felt that community service was akin to slavery. Another felt that only rich people had the time to do community service.

I was at the community service at the church. I felt funny sitting there. I was listening to the preacher. People don't think I listen, but I do. He was getting emotion to his words and he was talking about slavery. And it came back to community service and from community service it came back to the welfare. Everything we do is a form of slavery—cheap labor where they don't have to pay. The preacher is over there preaching about slavery and forefathers and meanwhile they are hiring community service for no pay.

I never met nobody who volunteered. The only ones who volunteer are those who have money and the time to do it. The rich people. Because they can afford it. They don't have all the pressures that we have. Looking for our rent, looking for our food, looking to take care of our kids. They don't have to worry about that.

The Structure and Timing of Community Service. Four of the participants were required to do community service by other courts before becoming BTC clients. However, their experience of the community service required by other courts was markedly different than their

experience with BTC. Participants who received prior community service sanctions from other courts tended not to do them.

When I was running the streets and stuff, I had been sanctioned to community service and I would go one day and that was it. Or I wouldn't go at all.

Participants attributed their higher compliance rate with BTC's community service requirement to the differences that they felt internally as a result of going through treatment, not to more intensive judicial monitoring.

Back then I was still getting high. Now it's different. I don't mind doing it now.

When asked why she didn't comply with other courts' community service requirements, one participant stated that her mind-set was not on fulfilling her obligations.

I'd just keep running. Aside from all the community services I was supposed to do but did not do, that's the least I can do. If it's three, if it's four, if it's five from the Treatment Court. Like I said, again it's about change. I wasn't doing the community service back then. Something wasn't right. So I might as well do it now. It brings you back in touch with reality. Brings you back down to earth, because Lord knows I was in space back then. But it brings you back down to earth.

They also felt that BTC's community service requirement did not label them a criminal the way that other courts did. When asked, participants did not feel that it made a difference what work they were doing, and felt that it would be fine if BTC required them to clean a highway, the way other courts do. One participant felt that the difference lay in how invested BTC was in their future.

I had to go to criminal court and to me it's different from the Brooklyn Treatment Court's community service. It's like, okay, you committed a crime, come and do some work. They really don't care about what it is you're going through and how far you've come—you know what I'm saying—and what you plan to do after you get these things out of the way. It's just like, come in—sign in—do the work and keep going.

Other participants felt BTC's community service was more personal than punitive due to the change in attitudes. When asked whether it felt different because of the attention paid by BTC staff to them, one participant disagreed, saying, "I'm doing it for me."

I would have had community service... doing it to do it and then be going and then I'm on my way. In the treatment court I'm doing it because I care as a human being — as a person. I'm trying to do things the way I need to get them done. The way it should be done. That's the difference. A real difference.

Because like I said it's a whole different thinking, okay, I'm not thinking on the terms of me being a criminal. Okay. Because I don't think of myself like that, anymore, today. I think of myself as trying to be a productive person in society.

Most of the participants felt that the timing of the community service requirement was an important factor in what they were able to take from community service.

Now that I'm in treatment, okay, I'm changing the way I was. I'm not the person who you would have seen when I came in at October. I did a 360. For real. I came through the court tore up from the floor up. For real. My attitude, my way of thinking was nothing like it is today. I'm definitely more humble. I have a lot more gratitude. I'm more responsible as a human being. It works a lot better for me to come in and do community service now. I'm open to a lot of things now where I was closed before. I didn't want to hear nothing. You couldn't tell me nothing. If you sent me to the programs—I was gone.

Timing is very important. When I first came into the treatment court I don't see myself—them giving me a community service to do right then. The timing is like—by this time you should have your priorities straight—you should know the things that are important to you and what might be good for you and how you might learn how to make things work. The timing.... they gave us community service in the last phase—by that time you should have yourself pretty much together. You should know how to deal with and cope with doing things that you don't want to do. And just going on and doing it because you have to do it because you need to do—something for you. So I think that the timing—I couldn't see myself doing no community service three-four months into my treatment because I still got... on my brain.

Timing also played a role in what part of the week participants felt most able to complete their community service events. Some of the participants preferred the weekend. However, for those participants in residential treatment, a weekend community service event would come out of their weekend pass time. In general, participants were pleased to be able to come out of their program to participate in a community service event.

The Role of Community Service. BTC defines community service as an obligation that clients must fulfill before they can graduate from the court. This clearly departs from the use of community service by other criminal and drug treatment courts, which use community service as a sanction. When asked how they would feel if BTC used community service as a sanction for noncompliant behavior, participants had two basic reactions. The first was that a community service done as a sanction for BTC might be particularly difficult either because of the shame that would accompany the failure to perform or the denial that any misbehavior had occurred.

I think that if you messed up somehow and they gave you community service — I think that community service is really on the individual and how the person feels about themselves. Especially if you know you messed up that is going to be the hardest

community service that you ever had. If you know that you messed up — you know that you did something wrong — and that you're just not one to be accountable for your actions, you're going to be real resistant to it. But if you can be accountable, and say okay I messed up, that community service is not going to be a problem. But it really depends on the individual.

Surprisingly, the overarching reaction to community service as a sanction was an inability to imagine the BTC judge letting them off that lightly.

Most of us have the same judge and she's not going to give no community service. If you do something wrong you have to go to the box or in the back.

I can't even think like that — not with her — because if you do something wrong with her you get... for it. This part — our community service that we doing now is because we graduated — we did what we had to do without having no problems within the time limit that she gave us. So this is like a reward that we are giving back to ourselves and a reward that we are giving back to her. Maybe it's me — I don't know how anyone else feels — I can't even think of putting me in her court and telling me that you got a community service because you missed your appointment with your case manager. No. It don't work.

The participants in the focus group were clearly able to discuss the restorative elements of community service. This message was conveyed by BTC staff who told defendants that such service was a requirement for graduation. (They did not receive any comments about community service from the judge, nor did they think it was necessary.)

Basically they tell us that the community service part is the last phase of our graduation— that's it—we need it to graduate.

My case manager just told me to call the community ombudsperson and I did and she told me that I had to do three community services to graduate from the program. She did not explain it to me, she just told me that I need to be there and she told me when the next one would be. And that was it.

When participants were asked why they thought the court had implemented this requirement, almost all of them stated that they felt that it was a test to see if they were responsible enough to graduate from the court. They arrived at this conclusion in spite of the fact that they understood the restorative nature of community service and had not felt that they received any contextual information about community service from court staff. They believed that BTC staff, and in particular the judge, were evaluating their performance at the community service event. In general the participants felt that this was a fair approach for the court to take.

Coming back from your lunch on time — seeing if you're just going to come and get your name checked off and break out — seeing if you know how to work among other people — seeing how you get along with other people. Even if it's sweeping or mopping or whatever, it's to get a sense of, "Are you ready?" That's how I take it.

It's like an evaluation to see — do you think that this is a person who will be able to handle when they go out looking for a job.

Although participants felt that they were being observed doing their community service event and that irresponsible behavior would be noted, they had mixed thoughts on whether the judge and other court staff would reprimand them for missed community service events.

Now the young man that came in just now, Robert [not real name]. He was with me last week and he was there on time for that one. But he wasn't on time for this one. They're going to look at that. It's like she said, it's like okay—in a sense she [the judge] might not say nothing about it to the one—but when it goes back, they'll say, "Why you made it on time for one but you can't make it on time for the other?" It is true—it's like a way they are looking at you. In this phase you're supposed to take a sense on what you're giving back—you got to be responsible—you know you have to be somewhere, you know you leave a little earlier to get there. I did it. I figure they're going to look at things like that. He might not be reprimanded about it though.

When I stepped in the court, the first day I stepped in the court, a girl forgot to apologize to one of the court officers and she [the judge] made her go back in the back for eight hours. Now, I was like, "Uh oh, damn, forget to apologize!" So imagine me forgetting to do one day of community service—she gonna yell at me.

Lessons on Community Service

The community service activities have been a very positive experience for BTC clients and community members. Community service has allowed clients to participate in projects that are restorative and valuable to the community. Their contributions are appreciated by community members and allow community members to view BTC graduates as productive and welcome in the neighborhood. More generally, community service projects have contributed to an appreciation for the treatment court and growing recognition of the value of drug treatment in reducing the toll of drug abuse in these areas.

Developing client placements was difficult and time consuming. Project Connection staff constantly struggled to generate additional community service options aside from the once-monthly BTC, sponsored group events to meet the needs of individual clients. However, it was difficult to find alternate groups that would support BTC defendants when the defendants were not, in fact, true volunteers and needed some level of supervision. According to the BTC project director, the best placements were those in which the clients really interacted with community

members in a positive way, such as at the soup kitchen or when working at a church.

There is a pressing need to institutionalize the community service process and minimize the burden on court staff to develop and monitor each client's community service. Ongoing partnerships with neighborhood groups and a process for recording service completion need to be developed. One community representative who sponsored some placements was unable to arrange subsequent placements due to scheduling difficulties. A process is needed to ensure a smooth flow of clients to reduce confusion and disappointment on the part of community sponsors.

It was a burden for case managers to track community service requirements, notify clients of their obligations, and verify client completion of service. The case managers did not get much feedback from clients on the community service experience or whether it was helpful. The BTC MIS did not include reminder fields for community service, and clients often attempted to get out of community service. The case manager's task is made more difficult because missed community service is not sanctioned by the judge as a missed appointment. This places the case manager in the position of sending a mixed message to clients: "You will be penalized for failing to comply with some of your court obligations, but not others." Missed appointments also can create dissatisfaction in the community with BTC and its graduates.

Because the community service is rather separate from other case management responsibilities and because case managers monitor a very large number of clients (75 to 80), community service is not "framed" for the clients by a discussion of its goals and role in their recovery. One community representative characterized community service as

an opportunity to teach them that you have to learn how to get along with supervisors and to communicate effectively—you can't just punch someone. You have to learn how to communicate. They should be aware that they have something to learn and gain here—this can take you somewhere. We should teach them that this is what they're gaining—otherwise they won't be aware. They won't think about what they could get from it. They'll just think it's about picking up garbage. We should ask them "What is something, that you'd like to derive out of this experience? What have you learned? What are your weaknesses? What do you want to learn?" It takes time to think critically about this. We have to change their mentality. It's a very big undertaking. We have to collaborate with the agencies and work together toward this.

The failure to convey this message in advance may reduce the benefits BTC clients receive and account for efforts to avoid the requirement. However, to change this part of the process, more case manager education is required. Case managers appear divided on whether community service is for restitution or for reintegration. They are neither familiar with the range of options nor do they know that clients have a choice in the placement selected. More work in this area might help reduce the tendency of clients to view case managers as monitors who police their compliance rather than specialists involved in their treatment and recovery. One case

manager suggested changing the name of community service to remove the punitive connotation of the activity.

Defining the parameters around acceptable community service projects has turned out to be an ongoing process for BTC staff. Some community service projects were seen as too “soft” and did not incorporate enough of a restorative element. For instance, staff decided that clients could receive credit for participating in a research focus group, but not if the focus group was their first project. However, as the judge noted, it is important that the community service not feel punitive. Case managers need to consider the client’s work and other commitments in order to minimize the delays in graduating from the program and returning to the community.

Although it was not possible to determine whether focus group comments about community service referred to activities organized by Project Connection or activities that were part of the requirements of their treatment program, it seems safe to assume that many of the benefits cited could only have been realized through longer-term community service participation. This seems to apply to perceptions of benefits around job preparation and recognition of a formerly productive self. This leads us to speculate that shorter-term BTC projects might be more effective as strategies for community restitution and encouraging the community to welcome the return of the offender, while longer-term community service placements may be more effective in terms of preparing the offender for reintegration with the community. The clinical director noted that a longer time commitment honing the client’s interests would be more helpful. Community placements that involve extended internships might lead to job placements and increase skills and self-esteem.

One issue that arose in planning community service placements was whether offenders should be placed in the “old bad neighborhood” in which they got into trouble originally or whether they should be placed in a different environment. Returning to their home neighborhoods gave clients a chance to repay the community they harmed but put them in places and around people associated with their drug use, thereby increasing the risk of relapse. Project staff reflected that the decision might depend on how well clients are doing in treatment and how personally committed they are to the mission of paying back the community they harmed.

The issues raised by clients and staff about community service highlighted a central question that arose repeatedly and in several different ways during Project Connection. Is the primary goal of community service to repair the harm inflicted on a victimized community (restorative justice) or is it to rehabilitate the BTC graduates by assisting them in their return to the community? Community service is usually used by the courts as a sanction — a penalty used for restitution in part of the damage resulting from criminal behavior. Indeed, BTC originally considered using community service as one of the graduated sanctions for noncompliance with court or treatment program requirements. Alternatively, many treatment programs require community service in the latter stages of treatment as a way of preparing clients for jobs and living as a sober person.

The Project Connection experience suggested that community service can be used by drug courts in a third way — as a means for helping addicts rejoin the community as productive citizens. This approach to community service focuses on reintegration in which the offender rejoins the community as a law-abiding citizen and is accepted and valued by the community as such. It encompasses both personal preparation for drug-free living (rehabilitation) and community improvement (restitution).

Using community service to engage BTC graduates in civic life is consistent with the interests expressed by neighborhood residents and by the recovering addicts. Community representatives did not seem to want a payback for specific losses due to drug addiction and were more interested in seeing former addicts join them in working to improve the neighborhood. In part this is due to the difficulty in identifying the victims in the community and assessing what restitution can be made for the specific harms. Instead, community members focused on future positive behaviors such as helping young people avoid addiction or cleaning up the neighborhood environment. As one noted, BTC clients have learned a lesson and are trying to move on from there. Another sees these clients as having made a mistake that should not be held against them. This approach to community service can help recovering addicts by enhancing self-esteem and keeping them focused on their primary job of staying sober. It can also help them move toward repaying others out of a sense of responsibility, not a sense of shame or self-blame.

Several suggestions for using community service for civic engagement emerged from Project Connection:

- Allow clients choice in selecting community service assignments;
- Develop partnerships with local volunteer groups such as church outreach groups, voter organizations, youth workers, advocacy groups, and block associations to provide a steady stream of service opportunities;
- Place BTC graduates as volunteers in organizations and activities in which civic-minded residents are volunteering to foster their image (to self and others) as contributing citizens;
- Encourage longer-term community service assignments which provide time for the client to make a contribution that is satisfying to them and more likely to develop skills applicable in the labor force;
- Schedule group meetings of BTC clients before placements to prepare them for community service, explain its meaning and potential role in their recovery, and help them select a good placement; and

- Schedule group meetings of BTC clients after several sessions of community service to discuss their experiences and what they have learned. It might be useful to have community representatives at this meeting; and
- Differentiate this form of community service from court-mandated restitution by giving it a different name and identity. These graduates could be called community volunteers.

The benefits of using BTC graduation as a credential to help with community reintegration were debated. In Project Connection, the BTC participants wore disposable painters, hats with the BTC logo on them. Alternatives could be t-shirts or even business cards identifying them. However, some thought that being known as a former addict could carry a stigma and work against obtaining acceptance in the community.

One suggestion consistent with these lessons was made by the first clinical director, who said,

It would be great to set up a storefront in the community — a central referral spot — where we use our linkages in the community and our strong partnerships with some agencies to case manage someone into a treatment program. Also a place where families could get information. You could set up a similar program to the street outreach services out of M.C. By bringing folks back to the storefront you've created some sort of hybrid project—rather than bringing them back to the court. You couldn't have these services on-site at the court.

When asked why the location should be in the community and not at the court, she pointed out the space constraints in the courthouse, the preference of the court for a separation between judicial processes and social service needs, and the advantage of locating services where the targeted population can easily access them.

Chapter 4

Linking the Community to the Court

Activities for Linking Individual Community Members: Using Volunteers

One of the underlying concepts of Project Connection is the need to demystify and destigmatize the court process for communities that have long been alienated from the judicial system. A formal court volunteer program, in addition to providing useful services to the court, serves as an institutional link between the court and communities. Volunteers become, in essence, public ambassadors for the court. The project identified potential volunteer assignments, including:

- escorting defendants to off-site treatment programs;
- writing and disseminating the community newsletter;
- assisting Spanish-speaking defendants and their families; and
- organizing community service days and acting as docents for visitors to the court.

Project Connection began its formal volunteer program during the project's third quarter. Volunteers from Red Hook Public Safety Corps assisted the Project Connection planner with the Adopt-a-School program, the Celebration of Service, and the ongoing monthly community participation events. In addition, volunteers were brought in to work on-site at the court. They escorted clients to their first treatment program appointment, entered data in the BTC MIS, and helped with office work.

Volunteers from the Red Hook Public Safety Corps were interviewed and screened by the Project Connection planner, the BTC clinical director, and the BTC program director. One applicant was chosen to volunteer at the court one day a week. This volunteer helped escort defendants to treatment programs and did general office work in the BTC clinic. Another volunteer from the Red Hook Public Safety Corps who worked at the court began to prepare a compendium of treatment providers in the New York metropolitan area. If completed, this compendium will begin to address the need, expressed by many community members during outreach presentations, to access treatment services. Other volunteers compiled a court mailing list for the newsletter, provided client escort services, and supervised community service activities.

In addition to bringing community members into the court to volunteer, the Community Ombudsperson worked closely with volunteers in the neighborhoods. For instance, one member of the Red Hook Public Safety Corps identified problem areas in Red Hook for community service sites, arranged for materials to be delivered from the Parks and Recreation Department, and helped oversee the community service participation of the defendants.

Lessons on Community Volunteer Activities

Volunteers have contributed substantially to BTC. Escorting clients to treatment programs has, in the view of the judge, reduced the number who failed to go to the programs for their first appointments, a critical dropout point in the court referral process. In addition, the volunteers helped the court develop resource materials and maintain records.

Using volunteers on-site at the court highlighted one of the ongoing tensions in creating closer ties between the court and the community. While theoretically interested in creating collaborative relationships, the court must also be concerned with the very practical matters of maintaining client confidentiality and ensuring that other projects do not detract from basic court operations. Thus, it took some time before the court staff felt comfortable bringing on volunteers. However, court staff now find them to be very valuable to court operations and are eager to bring in more.

Activities for Linking to Community Schools

The Adopt-a-School program, originally conceived in the Project Connection proposal, was meant to bring the court to a new audience and serve as a visible symbol of the court's commitment to problem-solving and community collaboration. The program was envisioned as a way to educate the neighborhood about the court and build community support and goodwill for its mission and graduates. A well-designed general drug awareness program for use by educators and others who work with youth was created to extend beyond the original goal of education about drugs and the role of the court. The program includes a curriculum, a list of resources, directions, and examples to guide the users to encourage easy replication in a variety of settings.

The program originally used a six-lesson curriculum developed by the Project Connection planner. The curriculum was piloted in sixth-grade classes in Public School 27 in Red Hook. The Project Connection planner led the program. To further involve community members, two volunteers from the Red Hook Public Safety Corps attended the Adopt-a-School class sessions and accompanied the students on a field trip. This school was selected for the pilot project because it had fewer resources and a greater need for enrichment programs than the other elementary school in the neighborhood.

Weekly guest speakers were invited to talk about various aspects of drug abuse and drug crimes. In the session on drugs and law, a Legal Aid attorney gave the students an overview of the legal ramifications of the possession and sale of controlled substances. The session on how drugs affect families was led by a counselor from the local family counseling center. This session guided students through several scenarios, created specifically for this Adopt-a-School program, that depicted the personal issues that arise when drugs affect friends and families. A BTC case manager taught a session on addiction and recovery. He talked to the students about the difficulties faced by his clients as they struggle to recover from their substance abuse problems.

Students were required to complete a three-paragraph assignment as part of the curriculum. The assignment asked students to write about how drugs have affected them and their communities. During the course of reading the students' papers and commenting on them, the Project Connection planner discovered several students who wrote about problems with drugs at home; the planner notified the students' teachers about these situations.

The program culminated in a field trip to BTC where the students observed the court in action and asked questions of the BTC judge. During the last session, students filled out an evaluation form that will help shape the Adopt-a-School program in the future. This form was used to refine the program. For example, some students loved the group poem, while others were upset that it did not rhyme. Several students suggested that the program would have been improved by including a police officer and a nurse in the list of speakers.

The Adopt-a-School program was subsequently expanded to eight sessions, including one on basic drug education, and an interactive session where the students work through a case-study about all the parties affected by one person's addiction. The community ombudsperson presented this version to a fifth-grade class in Public School 21 in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The school was selected because the principal was eager to include the program, and because it was in an area targeted by Project Connection. The community ombudsperson found that the curriculum needed to be simplified for fifth-graders, who were not familiar with many of the drugs mentioned in the drug education portion of the curriculum, and she made changes accordingly.

The fully developed curriculum and supporting materials were given to schools in the target neighborhoods for replication. The court staff, however, will discontinue their role as teachers, given the other pressing demands on their time and the fact that educators and community groups are able and more appropriately positioned to continue the program.

Lessons on Linking to Schools

Lessons on presenting the curriculum are as follows:

- Keep the classes small and avoid the end-of-the-school-day time slot. In Red Hook, program delivery suffered from trying to teach too many students at once. Two sixth grade classes were combined for the sessions. The regular classroom teachers helped maintain control in the class, but the number of students created too much noise and movement in the room for in-depth discussion of the lessons. In Bedford-Stuyvesant, the class met during the last hour of the school day, when students were very restless and eager to leave.
- Include community volunteers in the classroom. The use of volunteers from the community helped the students accept the message of the lessons as relevant to their neighborhood. Because the volunteers knew many of the students in the class, they were

able to bring to the Community Ombudsperson's attention those students who were having emotional difficulties dealing with a curriculum that for them hit close to home, and they helped direct the discussion.

The Adopt-A-School program was successful on several fronts. The schools said it helped them identify and help students with addiction problems in their families. The students liked the program. On the assessment forms, a number of the students indicated that they enjoyed the homework assignment because it helped them think through some personal issues surrounding drugs in their community.

Despite its warm reception in the schools, the court staff emerged from the process with reservations about committing limited court resources to the program. Because the curriculum focused on addiction more than on the court or the contribution of treatment to recovery, the program did not really address the goal of educating the community to appreciate or use BTC. Students as young as those in the fifth and sixth grades are unlikely to carry lessons on the court to other family members or community residents or to have any direct court experience themselves. As the judge noted, it is hard to get children that young to understand that not all people who do bad things are bad people; she also thought it was hard to explain court processes to that age group.

Future court outreach to schools may focus on a videotape about the treatment court. The BTC judge suggested developing a tape about the court as a less resource-intensive alternative to in-school instruction by court staff. The videotape could educate viewers about the court's mission, procedures, and successes and could be incorporated in drug education programs for many classes, schools, and age groups.

Chapter 5

Connecting the Court to Families

The strategies used in Project Connection to address the various concerns faced by families and to generate their support for the treatment progress of their loved ones fell along two lines: (1) linkages with Family Court and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and (2) direct contact with family members of defendants.

Activities for Linking to Family Court and Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

BTC explored strategies for coordinating with Family Court and ACS around BTC clients with active child abuse and neglect cases. Potential benefits to BTC of collaboration with the Family Court and ACS include providing BTC clients with a better understanding of the status of cases before the Family Court and their risk of losing custody, and providing BTC case managers with a better understanding of how parenting responsibilities affect the treatment placement. The potential benefits to the Family Court and ACS include access to information on the mother's progress in treatment and compliance with court mandates. A series of working meetings between BTC staff and ACS were held. Participants included the program director; the clinical director and the Project Connection planner from BTC; and the criminal justice coordinator and several field managers from ACS.

One of the initial topics was determining the extent of overlapping cases. As of March 28, 1997, BTC had a caseload of 392 offenders, 129 of whom were women. The majority of these women (89 percent), reported having young children. An initial database search of a sample of female BTC cases conducted by ACS indicated that approximately 40 percent of these women also have cases in Family Court. The number of women with co-occurring BTC and Family Court cases is expected to grow as the BTC caseload increases.

To coordinate case management of women with co-occurring cases, BTC and ACS implemented a system in which BTC staff notified ACS of female BTC participants. ACS field managers then checked for Family Court involvement. Possibly due to incomplete or inaccurate identifying information, the search missed many defendants who actually had cases in Family Court. Consequently, the Project planner, in conjunction with the BTC program director and the clinical director, conducted a more in-depth analysis of opportunities for collaboration with ACS, using several of the female BTC defendants who had open cases in Family Court as case studies. The detailed analyses of these cases identified areas where BTC could work with ACS to support defendants with complicated family issues through the treatment process.

One such defendant in a residential treatment program outside of the New York metropolitan area was worried about being unable to arrange regular visitations with her child in foster care. Having regular contact with children in foster care is often a mandate of Family Court before children will be returned to their parents. In this particular case, the defendant will

now be able to have supervised visitations with her children on BTC premises, and thus maintain the possibility of having her children restored to her at a later date.

The project also arranged for training of BTC in the operations of ACS and the Family Court in conjunction with a new program, Families Ties, that will be offering legal assistance to mothers of small children under the auspices of Brooklyn Legal Services.

Lessons on Linking to Family Court and Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

Coordination with the Family Court also posed some unexpected problems. The way records are maintained by the Family Court made it difficult to cross-check for cases active in both courts. Family Court records are maintained by the name of the child, while BTC records are maintained by name of the parent. The conflicting mission of the two courts also created tensions. BTC is working to rehabilitate the addicts and reintegrate them with family and community. The Family Court is mandated to protect the child. In addition, the Family Court lacks information available to criminal courts, such as fingerprints and access to criminal histories. They had more to gain from BTC information than BTC had to gain from them.

Problems arose when ACS attorneys tried to get access to BTC records that could potentially be used against the parent. BTC was concerned that the release of this information could infringe on the client's right to confidentiality of treatment records and damage the trust between the BTC client and case manager. On two occasions, ACS attorneys sought subpoenas for records and information beyond the scope of BTC waivers and subpoenaed case managers. Efforts to resolve this problem have been initiated. New York is now experimenting with Family Treatment Courts that provide drug treatment to parents appearing in child abuse and neglect cases by adapting the BTC treatment model to the needs of the Family Court.

However, efforts to build ties between the courts are continuing following the appointment of a new family court judge who has expressed an interest in increasing the collaboration. Specifically, the courts plan to examine ways to integrate the case management and monitoring of women with cases in both courts. They also plan to improve communication between courts by using waivers to alleviate confidentiality concerns and encourage free exchange of information.

Activities for Connecting to Families

The project planned several family orientation sessions that were designed to educate family members about the court process, involve them in assisting the client's recovery, and make them aware of support services in the community. The sessions were scheduled to take place in the courtroom in the late afternoon after the end of the cases for the day. Plans for the orientation included refreshments and remarks by the judge. It was hoped that orientations would lead to ongoing self-run family support groups. However, in spite of intensive advertising for several family orientation sessions, no family members attended. Several different times and

locations were attempted. Advertising included posting signs at many different locations in the courthouse, handing out flyers in the waiting room at court, and issuing invitations through case managers.

Lessons on Connecting to Families

Family members often accompany their loved ones to BTC, particularly for the first court appearance, and some continue to come to ongoing court appearances. Some were deeply appreciative of BTC efforts to help their family member. One father, a baker, brought bagels and thanked the court for helping his daughter.

Nevertheless, family members were unresponsive to the court's attempts to engage them on a deeper level. Possible theories include that late afternoons are bad times to hold meetings; families have many problems of a more pertinent nature; and personal connection with family members must be made in order to ensure a turnout. The late-afternoon meetings may conflict with work or the need to meet children returning home from school. This hour was selected because the courtroom was free at that time; the courthouse is not open at night and generally not available at lunchtime. Alternative locations were rejected because the family members would not have an opportunity to see the judge in the courtroom and familiarize themselves with the location of the offices. The strategy for advertising the orientations did not involve personal calls or letters to family members, making it easier for family members to assume that the orientations were for others or to discount the importance of their individual presence. Finally, the orientations did not promise to offer families assistance, and many were facing substantial problems that had higher priority than an opportunity to learn more about the court.

Future efforts to involve families may need to be more personalized and linked to family services. The connection may be most effective if offered by the treatment provider (most already do this). In addition, the judge may be able to use graduation or other court appearances as an opportunity to engage family members who appear at one of these events.

The BTC project director and clinical director suggested working more directly with clients to improve their family ties. They suggested that BTC could offer parenting-skills classes with a special focus on raising children without violence. BTC could also encourage family support group meetings in the community while clients are still in treatment. Case managers could assess BTC clients before graduation to determine the potential help the family might provide to the client during recovery and the risks that family members might pose toward relapse. Case managers could develop aftercare plans for seeking support and avoiding high risk people and situations.

BTC staff also hoped BTC could expand aftercare for graduates and link to community resources for vocational training and other services that promote reintegration. The clinical director suggested a continuing care program that picks up where treatment leaves off, perhaps through an alumni bureau. One case manager also mentioned the potential of alumni in helping

clients overcome their fears and lack of confidence about remaining drug free. The court has already started acting on these suggestions. An alumni group has been established to offer friendship to clients as they approach graduation, perhaps in groups facilitated by case managers or court staff. Plans for expanding access to aftercare services are underway.

More extensive on-site services to family may be too ambitious for BTC and might be better located in a treatment or aftercare program. BTC has discussed the potential role of a family advocate on the staff. However, trying to meet all the needs of families of recovering addicts would be complicated and would shift the focus of BTC from one defendant per case to multiple family members per case. This expansion may exceed the mandate and resources of the criminal court, which addresses the behavior of the offender, not the family.

Client Views on Family Involvement

The focus group participants had varying levels of contact with their family members. They all generally felt that it was important for their families to understand their involvement with BTC, and that this knowledge could lead to family reconciliations.

My family knows what I'm going through at the Brooklyn Treatment Court—they know that I'm going to graduate. My mother used to not be in tune when I was getting out of the program, because she figured that I should have known better. But she's understanding now why I got high. And things like that. I tell her everything about the Brooklyn Treatment Court and she made two appointments with me there. She knows what it's about, and my kids also know what it's about and what I'm doing here. And now that I'm getting ready to graduate they are willing to be there, they are willing to help me with myself now. They understand.

My mother makes it her business to know about the Treatment Court.

Through the courts you really get to see your progress. In your program where you at—things could change from day to day. Your family doesn't understand how it moves like that. But when your family comes to court, they get a very good idea of where you are at.

Participants had differing degrees of contact with and estrangement from their families.

At first I used to hate my mother. I used to hate her—but I love her. At first she comes to my program—we have therapy together. I had a lot of anger and stuff. I can't say she really understands, but she has an idea of what I'm doing and what I'm going through.

My family is not in town. I'm the only one in New York. My mother is in [Pennsylvania]. She knows I'm in a program but that's all she knows. But they all are very supportive. Just hope that I do what I need to do.

Participants also recognized that in addition to ask for understanding from their families, they also had to increase their own understanding of how their addiction affected their families.

When I was getting high I never called—I went two-three years—they only lived five blocks away—I never talked to them when I was getting high. As far as I was concerned I wasn't hurting them or putting them through anything. But what I really realize now is when I have had groups and things with my family is how it affects them. Here we're getting better—but some of them do have doubts. They need to get better just as we need to get better.

One vehicle for families to understand what is going on at the court is for them to attend court sessions. Four of the participants had family members visit the court. In general participants felt that it was a positive experience to have family members attend phase advancements, rather than court updates.

My mother was there the first two times I advanced. And now that I'm getting ready to graduate, she is coming again. She is with me with this time. Before she was like, "You're not going to do this." But now that she understands what I'm going through, she is with me. She sees the things that I'm going through and she hears the things that I'm doing, and she's there for me. Before she doubted everything.

Phase advancements are better for family to come to.

Court updates are just like business that you take care of. Not so important to have family there.

Another vehicle for families to understand the court is for them to attend a family orientation at BTC. In general, participants felt that family orientations would be helpful and thought that family members would attend. They suggested holding the orientation sessions on weekends, when family members would be off work. All of the participants felt that the orientation sessions would be far better if they were held with clients and family members together. Participants also thought that sending an announcement in the mail would make the invitation feel more official.

Send it in the mail. It feels more real when you see something on paper.

Mail a letter. They'll be there.

Six of the focus group participants were parents. The children were in a variety of living situations; including living with their parents living with kinship care through a Family Court placement; and living in kinship care not through a Family Court placement. They all generally hoped to have their children returned to them after graduating from the court. When asked what BTC should do to help them deal with their Family Court concerns, participants wanted BTC to

share information with the Family Court. They felt that BTC had a wealth of information that was generally lacking in the Family Court.

I've been asking that the treatment court send all the records over for me to Family Court.

If something goes wrong, at least you know that they have the records.

They [BTC] have everything documented already.

ACS doesn't know how you're doing in your program. I give them my lawyer's name, my worker's name—to this day they don't know what's happening.

I placed my kids with my mother because I knew that I was coming to this program. I have to stay on his [ACS case manager?] back. He should be helping me too.

BTC should be involved. They [Family Court] misplace their kids, their files. Or something gets screwed up.

They [Family Court] mandate me to a program to get my kids back, but they never follow up to see.

It's like two worlds even though they are right across the street.

When asked how they would feel if the information that BTC shared with the Family Court worked against them, and kept them from regaining custody of their children, participants responded fatalistically, “So be it.”

Chapter 6 Linking the Court to the Police

Activities for Linking to the Police

The initial goals of Project Connection's police-court collaboration included:

- engaging police in monitoring court participants in the community;
- expediting treatment court warrant enforcement;
- encouraging police to attend court graduation ceremonies; and
- educating police about the treatment court and influencing police culture.

During the planning phase of Project Connection, the project planner and court staff held meetings with several branches of the New York City Police Department, including local precincts; the homeless outreach unit; the narcotics division; and the warrants division. Officers in each of these divisions greeted news of the treatment court and the opportunities for collaboration with enthusiasm. Police generally recognized the need to treat the addiction problems of the offenders they picked up on warrants, arrested on narcotics offenses, or even used as informants for narcotics sales. They also wanted to link homeless people to drug treatment services. In this planning process, several ideas were generated for collaboration with police. For various reasons, delineated below, including lack of project resources, Project Connection did not lead to new forms of police partnerships. This outreach, however, did serve to introduce the treatment court to various branches of the police department that identified a high level of police interest in accessing treatment for offenders and identified potential strategies for collaboration.

Two key roles for the police were identified in the search for ways to build closer connections with the treatment court. These included:

Police as "Eyes and Ears": One of the initial Project Connection visions for collaboration with police was quickly determined infeasible after initial outreach to police. Project planners thought that police could be the court's "eyes and ears" for treatment court clients in outpatient treatment. Police assigned on a daily basis to a drug-infested area were initially seen as a useful resource to help sustain clients in treatment. The theory was that police become familiar with neighborhood residents, particularly those involved in drug sales who may be re-arrested on frequent occasions. If officers were given the names and statuses of clients who were involved with the treatment court, the officers would be able to track clients' behavior and inform case managers if clients seemed likely to slip in their compliance with court mandates. However, this initiative clearly required strong community policing units in which officers walked beat assignments and knew community residents. None of the relevant precincts for the Project Connection target

neighborhoods had sufficient community policing resources.

Police as Contacts for Linking Individuals to Treatment: Police frequently look for new options to offer individuals who provide critical information to assist anti-drug activity. These individuals are designated as confidential informants and, upon DA approval, may receive preferential treatment in exchange for their information. Because these informants—typically low-level drug dealers—are often addicts themselves, police officers wanted to offer a sentence at the treatment court as an option for confidential informants. Project planners did not pursue this idea because mixing informants with other treatment court clients poses security risks to both. Getting treatment through the court could jeopardize the confidential status of informants. Other court clients could be unsafe if street dealers thought that they could be informants because of their affiliation with the court.

Collaborative efforts with the police were conducted both within the local precincts of the target neighborhoods and with centralized police divisions, such as the Warrant Division. The strategies used in Project Connection sought to reach out to four separate police departments:

- narcotics;
- warrants;
- homeless outreach; and
- local precincts.

Narcotics Division. The BTC program director and the Project Connection planner met with staff from the Brooklyn South Narcotics Division to discuss avenues for police-court collaboration. The initial outreach to narcotics police, who were more likely than other police branches to have contact with treatment court clients, revealed an interesting opportunity for treatment court procedures. Police officers who stop someone for possession of minor amounts of drugs (a misdemeanor) conduct a search for outstanding arrest warrants, but are not able to access any other criminal history at the time of the arrest. Often, absent the presence of an arrest warrant, the officer will merely issue a “Desk Appearance Ticket” (DAT) for a court appearance a minimum of four weeks away. This would be the earliest treatment court staff would know of the incident. This gap in information about new offenses breaches one of the basic principles of the treatment court: the imposition of immediate consequences to violations of court orders. If narcotics officers stationed in neighborhood precincts were provided with a list of clients involved in the treatment court, they would know to alert treatment court staff as soon as a client received a DAT. Court staff held preliminary discussions about possible solutions to this situation including establishing a computerized link between the court and the police and faxing the police the names of treatment court clients who reside in the precinct. The court did not pursue the computerized link with the police, since the treatment court’s database was still under construction at the time of the Project Connection planning. Adding new database components, such as links to outside agencies, was premature. The treatment court database also does not sort clients by precinct of residence, making it difficult to send ready lists of clients to precincts.

Finally, there were logistical issues with having police serve as “eyes and ears” for the treatment court. There were both too few clients on the street in the target precincts and insufficient police resources.

Warrants Division. The BTC project director and Project Connection planner met with the Detective Bureau to discuss ways in which BTC could facilitate the work at the warrant division and help expedite warrants issued for BTC defendants. The warrant division provided a natural setting for court-police collaboration. The warrant squad had already been very effective at finding treatment court clients and bringing them back before Project Connection began. Project planners thus hoped to improve on this process, and in meetings with police warrant officers, the mutual benefits of a collaboration became clear. Warrant officers often had insufficient information for finding defendants, while the treatment court had a wealth of information about its clients and a need to get clients returned on warrants quickly. Planners discussed two possible programs: attaching additional information to all treatment court warrants before being sent to the central warrant division, and sending the additional information on residents of the 79th Precinct directly to that precinct. BTC policies were developed to facilitate the work of the warrant division by sending all warrants for BTC clients to headquarters to centralize their enforcement under one division. The first option, sending additional information on all warrants, turned out to be unwieldy, as the treatment court database was not designed to print out the appropriate subset of information. Treatment court staff did start a pilot project with the officers at the 79th Precinct. However, the database was unable to sort clients by home precinct. Thus, finding clients whose home precinct was the 79th required a time-consuming hand match in each case. This process ultimately became prohibitively difficult to maintain over a long period.

Homeless Outreach. In order to address the problems of addicts in the target neighborhoods who do not necessarily have cases in the criminal justice system, the project has begun exploring whether BTC services can be made available to substance-abusers without formal adjudication. The Project Connection planner met with the Homeless Outreach Unit at the police department to learn about its operations and to discuss possible areas for cooperation. The Homeless Outreach Unit frequently comes into contact with homeless people who are in need of drug treatment. Although BTC cannot mandate treatment for homeless members of the community, it can potentially make other services available to them, such as the treatment readiness program or the on-site social services. Before these services can be made available to the public, the BTC program director and clinical director must assess whether there are adequate resources to allow for increased usage.

Precinct-Based Outreach. In the course of making presentations at precinct trainings, the Project Connection planner learned that the 76th precinct in Red Hook has a weak community policing initiative and that officers out of the Precinct have little regular contact with community members, focusing most of their efforts on answering emergency calls. Thus, it soon became clear that forming collaborative links with police officers was a larger task than could be undertaken in the time span of Project Connection. Officers did show interest in the possibility

of using the court connection as an option for recruiting confidential informants. Unfortunately, this was not a viable project as it would have compromised the court's integrity.

Lessons on Connecting to the Police

Although there were ample opportunities and interest on both sides to collaborate, the efforts of Project Connection staff to create links with the police did not lead to new forms of partnerships between the Brooklyn Treatment Court and the police.¹ Some of the difficulties in implementation arose because of the early nature of the court's operations. The database, although operational, was still a work in progress, and did not readily support links to outside agencies or permit sharing precinct-specific information. Also, few of the court's clients were either in outpatient treatment or had graduated from the court, eliminating the need for police oversight of their activities in the community. Other problems in implementation arose because the needs of the police and the court did not mesh. Although police wanted a useful option for their confidential informants, the court could not risk the security of its clients by allowing it. Additionally, the court couldn't spare the case management resources needed to link non-court-mandated addicts to treatment.

The project did succeed, however, in educating police about the treatment court, which elicited interest at all police levels in the court. Moreover, Project Connection outreach efforts identified a significant police desire to link addicted offenders to treatment. As it matures, the treatment court might be able to seize on more opportunities for police-court collaboration. In the interim, the resource guide being developed by the Community Ombudsperson will serve to support the court's connection with the police in their efforts to link offenders to appropriate treatment settings.

The desire expressed by police to link people to services was a recurring theme. The representative of the police homeless outreach unit wanted to refer the homeless people she contacted on the street to the treatment court. Additionally, warrant police expressed concern about the defendants they picked up on misdemeanor warrants who were clearly addicts. While models for this kind of police-court link existed at the time, Brooklyn Treatment Court staff were concerned that the court's limited resources made it impossible to open the doors to the general population for services.² Court staff decided that in response to the needs of the police and the constraints around the Court's resources, the Community Ombudsperson would develop a resource guide for use by police and other community residents.

Future efforts might also include involving officers in court proceedings as a way to let them see that the court is responding to their efforts and making progress in reducing drug

¹ Note that collaborations already existed with the warrant squad.

²In Midtown Community Court's program, "Street Outreach Services," a social worker from the court teams up with homeless outreach police on patrol and links individuals in need to the services at the community court.

problems in the community. The judge recommended inviting arrest officers to graduations of those they arrested. The officers may become more active allies if they can be more directly involved with BTC and see BTC efforts to address the problems behind the devastating effects of addiction. Recent visits to the court by high-ranking police officers indicated profound interest in BTC.

Chapter 7

Learning from Project Connection

One of the central themes to emerge from Project Connection is the primary interest shared by BTC and the community in returning former addict-offenders to the community as productive citizens. BTC clients stressed the primacy of their focus on recovery, getting a job, and building new social networks. Community representatives were less interested in restitution than in enlisting BTC graduates in community-enhancing activities. The facilitated dialogues contributed significantly to a better understanding of how these interests overlapped and generated several ideas for the future.

Not surprisingly, BTC clients' number-one concern was getting a job after they graduated. All faced challenges in this area and wanted help with locating employment. However, other needs emerged in the facilitated dialogue. Defendants need to develop a new social network and set of activities to occupy their time and keep them focused on recovery. Maintaining the gains in self-esteem made during treatment is difficult in the face of rejection when looking for work. The temptation of the streets is an ongoing problem. During idle hours, while waiting for a job, familiar old friends, drug hangouts, and boredom threaten to provoke relapse. The graduates indicated a need for a place or group where they could socialize, engage in hobbies such as playing music or carpentry, and generally relax. They do not immediately think of community service as a way to fill these hours nor do they expect to derive a sense of self-esteem from the contribution and accomplishment of community service. Also, they do not place high priority on these needs, feeling so pressured by other responsibilities (like finding a job or caring for children) that they are too overwhelmed to take on additional commitments. Nonetheless, community service, correctly structured and presented, may be a way to fill non-work hours with focused projects that reward the participants.

BTC graduates had very little information about community resources and opportunities and did not know how to seek assistance or make contact with others in the community who could help them. They expressed considerable interest in having a directory of contacts in their neighborhood. The lack of connectedness to the neighborhood was very obvious during the facilitated dialogue.

Community representatives, while all deeply involved in specific organizations and activities on behalf of the neighborhood, also evidenced lack of connectedness to other organizations in the community. Their enthusiastic response to the facilitated dialogue stemmed as much from the opportunity to network with other organizations as from the opportunity to discuss what they would like to see from the court and returning offenders.

As noted earlier, several suggestions for structuring community service to encourage civic engagement emerged from Project Connection:

- allow clients choice in selecting community service assignments;

- place BTC graduates as volunteers in organizations and activities in which civic-minded residents are volunteering to foster their image (to self and others) as contributing citizens;
- encourage longer-term community service assignments which provide time for that clients to make a contribution that is satisfying to them and more likely to develop skills applicable in the labor force;
- schedule group meetings of BTC clients before placements to prepare them for community service, its meaning, and potential role in their recovery and help them select a good placement;
- schedule group meetings of BTC clients after several sessions of community service to discuss their experiences and what they have learned. It might be useful to have community representatives at this meeting; and
- differentiate this form of community service from court-mandated restitution by giving it a different name and identity. These graduates could be called community volunteers.

Linking the court to institutions at an organizational level proved difficult, despite clearly overlapping interests of the involved agencies. The police department and the court clearly share an interest at the neighborhood level in preventing drug-related crimes. But Project Connection efforts such as precinct-based outreach and outreach to the warrant and narcotics divisions did not succeed in involving officers with court activities. Similarly, efforts to link to the Family Court encountered challenges stemming from different mandates and practices. The school-based educational program for elementary students was well received, but did not really build an understanding of the court's mission and activities in the community nor translate into an ongoing partnership.

Despite these problems, long-term success of the court's community outreach may well depend on developing working relationships with other agencies serving BTC neighborhoods. BTC staff alone cannot build and sustain the network needed to pursue the many activities needed by returning graduates. The task of making arrangements for community service placements on a case-by-case basis was enormously labor intensive and would benefit from building organizational ties to neighborhood-based partners. Partnerships with local volunteer groups such as church outreach groups, voter organizations, youth workers, advocacy groups, and block associations are needed to provide a steady stream of service opportunities. The community representatives who attended the facilitated dialogues clearly knew of opportunities and resources that could benefit BTC graduates, but appeared to lack a network for communicating with other agencies in the neighborhood around the issue of helping returning addicts with reintegration.

However, the results also suggested that community service placements are only part of the network needed to sustain recovery and promote the interests of the court and community. The BTC graduates need aftercare and attention to the task of building a sober social network. The proposed buddy system addressed this need, but was perhaps too individual, building one-on-one ties when group ties are needed. A major theme, buried in the experiences throughout Project Connection, is that the BTC community in Brooklyn really consists of a number of neighborhoods defined by geography, rather than defined by larger collectives such as police, schools, and families spanning multiple neighborhoods. It is within a place, a neighborhood, that building ties among these organizations and with the court takes place. For example, linkages with the police might be more easily forged around community policing initiatives in specific areas. Neighborhood block organizations, churches, and neighborhood centers bring together networks within places with which the court can build ties. Agencies that provide services often organize case management activities by area. This suggests that the court needs to establish multiple outposts in a jurisdiction as large as Brooklyn—either physically or organizationally.

One of the most perplexing areas addressed by Project Connection was how to work with the families of BTC clients. The BTC families ranged widely from being very supportive and appreciative of BTC to being part of the drug-involved milieu to be avoided by the graduate after treatment. Many families fell somewhere between these extremes. In general, families did not avail themselves of opportunities to become more involved with BTC. Perhaps this was because it was inconvenient to do so due to location and operating hours or because BTC did not offer services to help them with other needs. Several suggestions emerged from the Project, including (1) more personalized outreach to family members who come to court by the Judge and case managers; (2) working with clients around family issues by offering parenting skills classes and family support group meetings in the community; (3) assessing BTC clients before graduation to determine the potential help/risk from family members during recovery; and (4) developing aftercare plans for clients seeking support and avoiding high-risk people and situations. More structured efforts to expand aftercare for BTC graduates and to link to community resources for vocational training and other services may be needed. One idea was a continuing care program that picks up where treatment leaves off, perhaps through an alumni bureau. This could also help graduates overcome their fears and lack of confidence about remaining drug free. It was widely agreed that the court could not take on the role of serving multiple family members and their many service needs.

Project Connection was an extraordinarily rich opportunity to explore alternative ways a treatment court like BTC can create closer ties to the community it serves. As a pilot program, the project was able to shift course in response to lessons about community outreach, community service, and community-court collaboration. In general, the newness of the court both helped and hindered the implementation of Project Connection. Because the court was just starting, it was not clear where BTC graduates would live, what their needs and characteristics would be, and how the court would relate to other branches of the criminal justice system. As a result, BTC tended to focus its resources on the core problem of identifying appropriate clients and delivering services to them while their case was active. BTC paid less attention to aftercare and community

services, which placed burdens on the case management staff. However, the lack of focus allowed Project Connection to start slowly and experiment widely with alternatives. Because BTC was a “work-in-progress,” Project Connection, with its independent funding, was able to try new initiatives with little fanfare. For instance, the community service requirement for graduation was implemented in the tenth or eleventh month of court operations with very little resistance, whereas a more established BTC might have had difficulty changing the job responsibilities of case managers and the mandate for clients. Both case managers and clients experienced community services as an additional burden; all parties recognized that the procedures for a successful BTC were evolving and that it was important to adapt. On the negative side, it was difficult for the community outreach efforts to take priority with the court and gain a place at the table as a major treatment component. This is expected to change as the number of graduates increases and core BTC operations stabilize.

A Vision for the Future

Several principles for furthering court-community linkages emerged. These include:

- organize by neighborhood;
- focus on facilitating reintegration through civic engagement;
- begin aftercare planning early and involve community members and BTC alumni;
- build a network in neighborhoods around the needs of recovering offenders—this may require staff and/or space devoted to specific catchment areas and staff taking a leadership role in network development;
- educate BTC clients on how to get help in their neighborhood when they have social, treatment, and vocational needs;
- help BTC graduates link to others in recovery for social activities;
- define and reorganize the community service requirement to help defendants understand its role in recovery and the benefits to be gained from the experience. This means clearly differentiating it from community service as a penalty; and
- continue community outreach and education at the neighborhood level to open new opportunities and help communities understand the benefits of a treatment court.

Court activities to support community reintegration can begin with modest efforts to engage BTC clients nearing graduation in a process of planning for getting the services and aftercare they need in the community and planning for reintegration with input from community members and BTC graduates who have already returned to the area. This can involve group

sessions at the court organized by the areas in which the BTC clients live or plan to live after graduation. Topics for discussion could include facing the challenges of reintegration, the positive benefits of participation in community activities, the availability of services and resources in the community, the social activities for recovering addicts in the community, and specific community projects that need their help.

More expansive efforts could include locating court staff in the community to engage in community outreach and education while organizing community service activities, making referrals to services, and helping addicts connect to aftercare services. Ideally, this staff would be co-located with community service agencies or community-based organizations.

While the level of court investment in community reintegration may vary, it seems that the core principle needs to be ensuring that treatment court graduates continue their recovery and become involved, productive citizens in their communities, while ensuring that community members are engaged and represented in court efforts to attain this goal.

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Data for the evaluation were collected through focus groups with BTC clients, in-depth interviews with court staff and project partners, and a facilitated dialogue between community members and BTC clients. These activities, described below, supplemented site visits by Urban Institute staff, regular conference calls on project activities and implementation, and review of project reports.

Client Focus Groups

The focus group was conducted on December 10, 1997, in a community center located in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Sarah Bryer, the on-site field researcher for Project Connection, conducted the focus group with the assistance of Leslie Paik, a research associate at the Center for Court Innovation. The seven participants—four men and three women—were all BTC clients in their third and final phase of the court's requirements. Four of the participants were in residential treatment, two were in outpatient treatment, and one participant was in aftercare. They received a community service credit for their participation. Topics covered during the focus group included (1) community service, (2) feelings about BTC, (3) fears about community reintegration, and (4) family involvement in the client's treatment and BTC involvement with the family.

Several procedures were used to protect the focus group participants. Participation in the focus group was voluntary, as participants had numerous options for fulfilling their community service requirements. Participants were informed that the focus group would be kept confidential and that the session was being audiotaped for research purposes only. Some details have been changed or omitted to protect the privacy of participants. Participants were asked to agree not to repeat anything they heard in the discussion outside of the room. In order to allay participants' concerns that negative comments might affect their status at BTC, the facilitators stressed repeatedly that all comments would be kept confidential and would not be used in any way to judge the participants.

Facilitated Dialogue between BTC Clients and Community Members

In April 1998, project planners developed a proposal for a trio of facilitated dialogues. The concept of the dialogue series incorporated components of both the town hall discussions and the community impact panel models, and included the following elements: idea generation, planning, information sharing, and joint learning. The dialogues were to be professionally facilitated and developed in three parts: clients alone; community members alone; and the two groups together. This structure allowed each subsequent dialogue to build on the information gained in the previous dialogues. The natural site for these discussions was Bedford-Stuyvesant, which was chosen as the second target neighborhood because it was home to so many of the court's clients. The end result of the dialogues was a written analysis, which the Brooklyn Treatment Court and other drug courts could use to think about aftercare and community

reintegration in ways that build on the community's own capacities to support clients.

In May 1998, the logistic arrangements for the dialogues were solidified. A professional, trained facilitator was hired and space was located at a long-standing community agency, Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration. After the clients-only dialogue, the process of the dialogues was shifted slightly (see agenda for client dialogue). In the clients dialogue, the facilitator split the clients into two separate groups, one discussion being facilitated by the Community Ombudsperson. Her questions were focused on individual client needs and hopes for reintegration and, specifically, how the Treatment Court could help them. The dialogue elicited mini-action plans for each client. The facilitator was instructed to keep all participants in one group in the next dialogue and to open the scope of questioning from individual commitments to the development of broader recommendations (see Greg Berman's memo). Planners also gave her a number of quotes from the client focus group conducted in December 1997 to spur the discussion. Out of these instructions, the facilitator developed an agenda for the community member dialogue (see agenda attached), and the Community Ombudsperson developed the invite list (attached).

After the separate client and community dialogues, project planners developed the agenda for the third dialogue. This dialogue focused on those issues that were common between the two groups, but in which a difference of opinion had been expressed. The project planner analyzed the two dialogue transcriptions and targeted several areas of tension with appropriate quotes. (See topics for third focus group.) The targeted structure of the dialogue was that two thirds of the discussion would be on the tensions in the group and one third would be action- focused. In a subsequent discussion with the facilitator, it was decided that the "tension" part of the discussion would be toned down in order not to cause any overt conflicts. (See the facilitator's agenda for the third dialogue.)

The first two facilitated dialogues were held on May 14 and June 5, 1998. Rahmelle Green, an independent consultant, facilitated the discussions. The first was held at the BTC offices and was attended by eight participants: four graduates of the BTC, two clients in the final stage of treatment, and two in the middle phase of treatment. This group examined the issues graduates face in trying to reintegrate into the community and the role of the court in helping graduates create community connections. The topics included living situations in the community and home life; relationships with families, friends, and acquaintances; and involvement in education, work, and community service. The next facilitated dialogue was held in Bedford-Stuyvesant community center and was attended by members of the community and representatives of several community-based and city organizations. Groups represented included the police, churches, schools, treatment providers, community health providers, and the aging. The group addressed BTC graduate reintegration into the community their role in reintegration, community service, and the role of the court.

A facilitated dialogue between community representatives and BTC graduates was held June 29, 1998, at Restoration Hall, a community center in Bedford-Stuyvesant. For about an hour and a half, participants discussed a series of topics suggested in the two earlier dialogues. Participants, drawn from members of the earlier dialogues, included five recent BTC graduates,

four representatives from the neighborhood, including the BTC Ombudsperson from Bedford-Stuyvesant and the facilitator. The BTC graduates were African American and ranged in age from the early twenties to over forty. Four of the five were men. All were currently looking for work, but this may have resulted from the fact that the discussion was held in the late afternoon to accommodate the schedule of the community representatives and thus could not accommodate working BTC graduates. The neighborhood, male and female, ranged from old-timers who had spent years devoted to community services through volunteer work to community-based organizations, and other service providing agencies. Their interests and experiences included job training programs, advocacy for the elderly, recreational and educational programs for youth, and neighborhood block organizing. The dialogue topics included (1) whether the community can afford to extend resources and support to recovering addicts; (2) whether those who return to the community after drug treatment make a contribution or drain resources; (3) what communities can do for the families impacted by drug use; (4) how recovering addicts can use their idle time upon returning to the community; (5) whether housing is a major issue for returning BTC clients; and (6) what types of community service projects are important for the BTC clients to undertake.

In-Depth Interviews

As part of the process evaluation, the Fund for the City of New York on-site researcher interviewed the key staff and community members most actively involved in the development and implementation of Project Connection. The interviews were conducted in August of 1998 in person or by telephone as noted. Those interviewed included:

1. Judge JoAnn Ferdinand
2. Valerie Raine, Program Director
3. Deirdra Smith, Community Ombudsperson
4. Jayme Fitzgerald, Deputy Director
5. Rudy Pile, Assistant Case Manager
6. Wayne Willis, Senior Case Manager
7. Raye Barbieri, former Deputy Director
8. Sandra Williams, community service sponsor (phone)
9. Sheretta Felton, community service sponsor (phone)

The topics discussed included the specific difficulties in implementing Project Connection strategies and envisioning effective activities in light of the limited resources available to the court, the appropriate use of community service and its goals, and unexpected consequences of the community outreach efforts. The results of these interviews are combined in the report at appropriate places. Their comments are used in identifying implementation issues and recommendations for future work.