

Offender Assessment Programme Undergoes Expansion

The Offender Assessment Programme, facilitated by The National Task Force on Crime Prevention has received phenomenal responses from personnel within the agencies comprising Barbados' Criminal Justice System. Since the introduction of the Level of Service- Inventory (LSI-R) instrument, in 2003, the youth equivalent, the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) was successfully introduced in 2006. This instrument was likewise well-received by Probation Officers and regarded as equally useful for assessing young offenders, and offering suggestions regarding the most appropriate rehabilitative strategies aimed at assisting the offender and reducing the likelihood of re-offending.

In the previous publication, it was noted that plans were pending for the introduction of these offender assessment practices into other correctional facilities. Over the 2006-2007 period, this vision was realized, when The Barbados Prison Service, The Government Industrial School as well as members of the Judiciary all received training and sensitisation regarding the science, usefulness and success of these internationally recognised offender assessment tools.

October 2006 witnessed the introduction of the LSI-R methodologies to The Barbados Prison Service. Subsequently, in February 2007, of the 16 officers evaluated, 88% of this number received certification as competent in the use of the instrument. Personnel from this institution have also noted that the instrument is indeed extremely useful and will assist with classification of offenders, thus enhancing the effectiveness of the functions performed by staff.

Similarly, on October 20, 2006, members of the Judiciary were sensitised regarding the usefulness and purpose of both tools in a one-day workshop at The Tamarind Cove Hotel. The sessions not only informed the Judiciary of the science and authenticity surrounding the instruments, but also provided a comprehensive examination of their usefulness at informing sentence practices.

Full approval for Probation Officers to use both instruments within the court system was given by Chief Justice, The Honourable Sir David Simmons. The Chief Justice further noted that he

was thankful that “The (National) Task Force on Crime Prevention has been so far-sighted to put on this workshop...” He also made the point that “if this instrument can assist us in focussing on a series of individual factors, then those reports [produced by Probation Officers for the court] would be of far greater value to the sentencing process.” (*Nation Newspaper*; October 21, 2006)

In February 2007, officers from The Government Industrial School were introduced to the methodologies of the YLS/CMI instrument. Additionally, to guarantee the sustainability and success of the programme, six Probation Officers who were previously certified in the LSI-R methodology were trained as LSI-R trainers.

This initiative ensures that on cessation of the formal training provided by Canadian Consultant, Dr. Simourd that there are persons from Barbados who have the necessary competence to train and assist colleagues with assessments. This format also ensures that the quality of assessments is not compromised. Additionally, “in-house” trainers as they are referred to, have the dual responsibility of assisting The National Task Force on Crime Prevention with the integration of these new assessment practices into the regime of The Probation Department.

Officers trained from The Government Industrial School are expected to undergo the evaluation process during the month of July 2007 to become certified users of the YLS/CMI instrument. Dr. Simourd is also scheduled to return to Barbados in August 2007 to complete the final phase of training for officers of The Government Industrial School.

Additionally, approximately five officers from The Barbados Prison Service will be trained as LSI-R trainers to again ensure that this institution has the personnel on hand to assist with training other colleagues. Similar to the Probation officers, these “in-house” trainers will likewise assist The National Task Force on Crime Prevention with the integration of this system into the prison’s regime.

This year is the final round of training sessions for the departments identified. The National Task Force on Crime Prevention will therefore be charged with the responsibility of managing the programmes within each institution. The sound management of this programme guarantees that

Barbados' Criminal Justice System receives maximum benefits from this scientifically proven system of offender assessment.