

REFERRALS

For more information about the boards, when and where they meet, or to make a referral, please contact:

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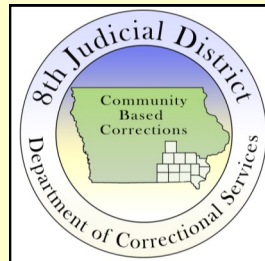
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Eighth Judicial District

Community Accountability Boards



Serving Des Moines, Henry, Lee and Wapello Counties



Eighth Judicial District Department of Correctional Services

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COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY BOARDS

HISTORY OF BOARDS

Community accountability boards have been operating in the Eighth Judicial District since the inception of the Ottumwa Youthful Offender Program board in 1996. Similar boards were subsequently formed in Burlington and Keokuk to complement the respective YOP programs in those communities. Most recently, two new boards were added to specifically serve adult probationers and parolees in the Ottumwa and Burlington areas.

TYPES OF BOARDS

Although the various boards serve different client populations, their practices are based on restorative justice principles and values. Currently, there are two types of boards in the Eight Judicial District:

YOP Accountability Boards

These boards serve young adults, age 16 to 21 court-ordered to the Youthful Offender Program serving Burlington and Keokuk. The Ottumwa board has change its focus to work with adult offenders. All referrals to the boards are made by the program officer. The boards meet with clients on a regular basis to evaluate their progress in the program. In addition, the boards conduct exit interviews with clients to receive feedback about the program.

Adult Accountability Boards

The adult boards work with all other probationers or parolees who have been referred by a supervisor, resource team, or a probation and parole officer. Clients are not necessarily in a specific treatment program, but may be struggling to complete probation or parole. Working with the boards can be one of many contributing factors in their success.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Community Accountability Board?

Local citizens and professionals concerned about the safety of their communities comprise community accountability boards. Working directly with community-based corrections staff and offenders, the goal of a board is to represent the community perspective in addressing crime by serving as a resource for offenders and, in turn, holding them accountable as they begin the process of returning to their communities.

What Happens at Board Meetings?

The focus is on the future. Each month, the respective boards meet with offenders to establish a rapport with clients and discuss any obstacles they may be facing. Those obstacles may include employment, housing, finances, relationships and other problems. After some brainstorming, board members work with offenders to establish obtainable goals for the upcoming month. Monthly contracts are signed by all parties and reviewed for compliance at the next meeting. Several of the boards maintain a fund to assist clients facing temporary financial problems. Those funds, unless determined otherwise, must be reimbursed by clients so that others may benefit in the future. Referring probation and parole officers will receive copies of the monthly meeting minutes.

What If a Client Fails to Comply?

Although board members have adopted an informal, non-confrontational approach to working with clients, they do evaluate an individual's progress on a regular basis. If a client refuses to cooperate with the board, the relationship is terminated and a letter outlining the problem is mailed to the referring probation and parole officer to use as he or she sees fit. On several occasions, those letters have been submitted to the Court during revocation hearings.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Community accountability board members come from all walks of life including private citizens, retirees, educators, law enforcement officials, attorneys, ministers, social workers, and healthcare professionals. They volunteer their time and skills to serve as a unique resource for offenders. Membership is open to any citizen. In the past, former offenders have also served on a board.

REFERRAL CRITERIA

Probation or parole officers will know best whom to refer to a board based on their interaction with offenders. Community accountability boards are most effective when working with clients who are motivated to make positive changes in their lives, but can still benefit from receiving extra guidance and mentoring in working toward the goal of successfully returning to their communities as productive citizens. While it is not unusual for some offenders to be skeptical at the outset, they should at least be receptive to working with a specific board. Experience has shown that working with offenders who are extremely resistive or continually violating the rules of probation or parole are not likely to thrive in a board setting. The boards are not a panacea, but rather another tool or option that can effectively complement existing probation and parole practices and treatment. Below are some referral guidelines for offenders:

- Motivated to Change
- Mandatory Attendance
- Available Transportation

Once a referral is made, the board facilitators assume responsibility for sending meeting notification letters and any other follow-up paperwork.