

Appendix A

Project D.A.R.E. – Option A – High Impact Programs for Diversion and Specific Populations

Key Features:

- Restores Project D.A.R.E. to its original mandate of being an alternative disposition and diversion from custody, delivering effective evidence-informed programming matched to the diverse needs and identities of participants;
- Provides customized short-term adventure and land-based experiential education residency programs collaboratively tailored to the needs/identities of specific Probation client groups (diversion programs, youth engagement, indigenous, LGBTQ, addiction, trauma, anxiety, etc.);
- Dynamic programming design driven by outcomes and client evaluation data to ensure high client satisfaction and goal achievement;
- Project D.A.R.E.'s financial pressures accumulated over the past twenty years of frozen/reduced funding is resolved from within the existing allocation to support high quality, sustainable program delivery.

Mandate and Vision of the Program:

We believe that the unique features and qualities of Project D.A.R.E. (Development through Adventure, Responsibility and Education) which have underpinned its outstanding reputation throughout almost fifty years of continuous service delivery, would find their most relevant and beneficial expression in the delivery of shorter term diversion and positive youth development programs tailored to the needs of specific groups within the youth justice population. Participants would be referred by/through Probation Officers to a specific themed program based on an assessment that the program represented a high impact opportunity for the young person. Participation in a program would require the voluntary informed consent of the young person and his parent(s)/guardian(s).

While the design (client group, goals, format, duration) is by definition of almost infinite variation, for purposes of initiating consideration of this proposal, we suggest the following:

1. Project D.A.R.E. in consultation with youth and stakeholders would design and deliver ten programs per year of 28 days duration each, typically for groups of 8-12 youth participants each.
2. Five of the programs would be designed as an alternative measures/diversion program where disposition of a young person's case would be deferred pending completion of the Project D.A.R.E. program, with successful completion potentially allowing the charge/conviction to be reconsidered.
3. Five of the programs would be designed in consultation with, and designed to be responsive to the unique interests and needs of a group sharing a common identity or treatment focus. For example, the program can be shaped to be responsive to persons identifying as indigenous or LGBTQ or racialized, or to the

shared therapeutic focus of addiction, anxiety, trauma, grief, etc.

4. Each program would have an academic component, including a credit course embedded into the program curriculum, plus capacity to support independent studies related to their community school enrollment or ILC's.

Exclusions:

These programs are not appropriate for youth who at the time of referral manifest the following characteristics:

- Current or recent serial history of high suicide risk;
- Unresolved impulse towards destructive/unsafe fire behaviour;
- Exceptional physical aggression or property destruction without provocation;
- Expresses a strong commitment to continuing anti-social or self-destructive behaviour (no interest in making positive change);
- Serious medical conditions unsuited to being active in a rural/wilderness setting.

Theoretical Framework for Service Delivery and Evidence-Informed Practice:

Project D.A.R.E.'s therapeutic design rests in its particular blend of the therapeutic approaches typically found in high-quality therapeutic residential programs with the addition of the unique elements of land-based adventure therapy.

We define therapeutic adventure as the prescriptive (intentional) use of adventure experiences (games, initiatives, challenge course activities, wilderness expeditions and reflective experiences) to kinaesthetically engage students on cognitive, affective and behavioural levels. We believe that the combination of evidence-based attributes of therapeutic intentionality within an experiential education context that involves safety, novel contexts, physical activity/challenge, playfulness, mindfulness, adventure and nature, provides a context and milieu for accelerated emotional healing and positive change. Within this context, the client becomes participant and co-creator rather than a spectator in 'therapy'. Therapeutic activities elicit client motivation in the form of energy, involvement and responsibility. The therapeutic activities are real and meaningful in terms of natural consequences for the client in the moment. Therapeutic activities are embodied rather than abstracted. Action-reflection is a critical element in developing a repertoire of skills for mastering challenging situations. Nature is a powerful healer and co-therapist.

The adventure therapy program is adjunctive and complementary to utilizing a trauma-informed cognitive-behavioural stages of change approach to supporting the young person to further develop the range of life and social skills which will support their successful journey to pro-social adulthood. Maintaining a personal and group context that gives priority to safety and self-regulation is an essential core to the program's therapeutic environment.

Progress Monitoring and Outcomes Data to Guide and Assess Individual and Program Performance:

Wendigo Lake proposes to utilize its existing capacity for tracking outcomes and progress monitoring through its Outcome Tools application which is designed to capture the voice of youth clients through self-reporting instruments (e.g. Youth Outcomes Questionnaire 2.0 SR) which becomes useful as a handrail into a conversation between direct care staff and youth about program impact on wellness. Concurrently, data will be used to drive continuous improvement at the program level. This is exactly the type of data collection and attention to monitoring the quality of therapeutic relationships and outcomes which the Residential Services Review Panel found broadly lacking in existing programs and strongly advocated.

We believe Project D.A.R.E. can provide an early beta-test and example of how progress monitoring can be effective and represents an off-the-shelf, standardized, validated, economical and broadly applicable set of measures which can enhance both individual and program outcomes.

Financial/Budget Implications:

This program design addresses financial pressures which have accumulated as a result of the succession of funding reductions and cumulative impact of inflation over the past twenty years (detailed in a separate memo previously submitted) as well as the financial impact of recent changes to employment standards. While the new program design does not fully erase the erosion of financial capacity, the new budget and staffing model restores program resilience and the capacity to hire, train and retain well-qualified staff and support the adventure and land-based elements of the program from within the existing Project D.A.R.E. base allocation. In addition to its historic role as a leader of innovation within youth justice services for the design and delivery of effective programming, Project D.A.R.E. has been an important catalyst for employment and business development in the economically disadvantaged region of East Parry Sound. In the event the Ministry wished to fund additional individualized-design programs beyond the capacity allowed by the base allocation, the additional cost for groups of 8-12 participants would be approximately \$200/participant/day. The Project D.A.R.E. campus can accommodate up to two additional program groups above existing funded operational capacity.

Note: This option is the preferred service mandate for Project D.A.R.E. – to deliver high-impact therapeutic programs of 30 days or less customized to be responsive to the interests and needs of specific youth justice populations. Given the context that this re-visioning of the Project D.A.R.E. program has been undertaken by Wendigo Lake at its own initiative, this submission is to be considered a conceptual-level outline of the proposed programming. A fully detailed proposal can be provided within a short timeframe if the Ministry indicates it has interest in exploring the concept in greater detail.