

the VERA report

August, 1970



Appearance Control Project

Phase I of the Appearance Control Project, which began in January, 1970, excuses all witnesses, civilian and police, from appearing at the first adjourned date of a case in Part 1B1 of Manhattan's Criminal Court, and that date is limited to pleadings and statements.

Phase II, which began in early July and was instituted in three steps, introduced an alert procedure for police officers in Part 1B1 and in selected cases in Part 2A (only those cases emanating from 1B1). Uniformed police officers, as well as detectives, assigned to precinct duty are notified of their alert status via a mechanism closely resembling that which is used by Traffic Court Alert. Upon written notice from Appearance Control Project, The Precinct roll call officer informs the police officer of his alert date. On that date patrolmen and detectives are assigned to regular duty but must be in frequent communication with the stationhouse between 10:00 a.m. and noon. Statistics regarding tours of duty saved through the new alert procedure and the corresponding cost effectiveness to the City are not yet available. As of July 31, 2,617 witnesses excused under Phase I procedures have been spared an unnecessary trip to court. 541 of them were civilian witnesses, and 2,176 were police officers.

Three new people have joined the staff of ACP: Katherine Sullivan and Georgie DeLuca as court liaisons and Francine McAllister as secretary and office manager.

On the lighter side, a recent staff memo to ACP staff contained this notation: "The project has formerly advised West Publishing Company -- from whom we have ordered our copies of State statutes -- that the project's billing name is "Appearance Control Project", not, as our bills have been addressed, "Parents Control Project." With the new abortion law becoming effective in a few weeks, the rectification was no doubt timely.

"Staff members are urged to emphasize the first syllable of "appearance" in all telephone conversations. We have already received mail addressed to the "Virile Institute of Justice," and that coupled with "Parents Control" is too much to contemplate on one piece of postage."

Sure enough, the next call to the project resulted in the phone being answered "Ap Pearance Control Project."

Bronx Sentencing Project

Summary of Statistics: as of August 7, 1970

Cases sentenced or adjourned for supervised release in which there was a Vera Report present.

1488

Non-Prison Dispositions:

Cases which carried a recommendation for a non-prison sentence or an adjournment for the purpose of supervised release. 869

Cases in which the court followed such a recommendation. 794

Percentage of agreement between Vera and the court on non-prison dispositions.

first 8 months of project 83.3%
total project to date 91.4%

Prison Dispositions:

Cases which did not qualify for a non-prison recommendation or for an adjournment for supervised release 619

Cases in which the court followed such a "recommendation". 541

Percentage of agreement between Vera and the court on the prison disposition

87.3
first 8 months of project 83.7%
total project to date 87.4%

Comparison of the project statistics for the first 8 months with those of the totals to date indicates that in the category of non-prison dispositions we have gained significantly in the percentage of agreement between Vera Reports and the judges' sentences (83.3% as compared to 91.4%). This can be attributed to the presence of specific alternatives to prison for cases which qualified for supervised release. One alternative is the Volunteer Opportunities Incorporated community counselling program which has been in operation for approximately one year. It provides group and one-to-one counselling; employment, housing, health and other referrals to defendants. In addition, since September of 1969 we have had a narcotics coordinator who

is often asked by the court to interview defendants with a view toward adjourning their cases and parolling them for the purpose of admission to a narcotics treatment facility. These two alternatives did not exist at the beginning of the program.

At the same time the percentage of agreement for cases which the defendant did not qualify for a non-prison recommendation and was sentenced to prison has remained virtually unchanged throughout the project.

Joel Lieberman has been named director of the Bronx Sentencing Project. He was formerly the director of in-court operations for the project and replaces Andy Schaffer who has been acting director for the past few months.

Raul Rodriguez in addition to his duties as Narcotics Coordinator for the Project, has been appointed a consultant in the area of narcotics to Local School Districts 4 and 5 in Manhattan.

The Manhattan Bowery Project

This summer the Manhattan Bowery Project Out Patient Department added a new dimension to the service it provides for Bowery men. Two trips to points of interest in and around New York have been organized, one to the Bronx Zoo and the other to Lake Welsh in Harriman State Park. OPD men who participated expressed their enjoyment and additional trips are planned for the near future.

MBP has named Roger Suprenand as head social worker for In-Patients and Tom Roberson as head social worker for outpatients. New MBP staff members are William Wargo, social worker, Richard Lanham, out-patient aide, and Ofelia Solomonow, secretary.

As of August 19, MBP inpatient detoxification ward has accepted 8,789 admissions which represents the treatment of 2,876 men. The Out-patient Department offers supportive services to nearly 100 men a week, all of whom are referred to OPD from the inpatient detox program

An OPD patient visits his caseworker an average of 3 times a week to receive antabuse (a drug which if taken regularly will make you violently ill if you drink), counselling, medical care, and assistance with most any personal problem.

The Deck Clinic, which began in April, 1969, and is operated jointly by MBP, Department of Social Services and St. Vincent's Hospital, was set up to provide emergency medical care and a refuge from the street for men who do not choose to be admitted to the MBP detoxification clinic for the require five day drying out period. 200 men a week come to the clinic, two thirds walk in off the street and the other third are brought in by the rescue teams.

Project Renewal

The ten men who are participating in Project Renewal have located a house in the Prospect Park Section of Brooklyn and moved in.

Each man had agreed when he joined the project that he would move off the Bowery with the Group as soon as suitable quarters could be found. However, when the move actually materialized, the men displayed a wide range of attitude from eagerness to get away from the Bowery and all it stands for to a reluctance and at first even refusal to leave what was familiar and comfortable. Project staff working with the men came to grips with a myriad of financial, organizational and personal problems and conflicts and the move was made on August 1 with the whole group participating. MBP and Vera staff and friends contributed household furnishings to help keep the cost to the men at a minimum and to avoid as much stress as possible. By the time moving date arrived, enough household items -- beds, linen, kitchen utensils, pots, pans, etc. - had been collected to insure that the men could move in.

(additional items will be welcome, particularly blankets, pillows, small end tables, or anything. Please call Mary Davidson at 677-4630. All contributions are tax deductible.)

Sports

The Vera Vixens handed an official summons to the Criminal Court Bureau of the District Attorneys Office challenging them to an intramural softball competition. The Vixens, composed of nine distaff members of the Appearance Control Project, agreed that the District Attorneys might field a limited number of the notoriously successful Hogan's Hooligans, and that the rest of their team could be drawn from the entire staff of the district attorneys office. Nevertheless, the Vixens were declared victor by default.

The Vera Institute of Music

"Cynthia is probably the straightest, most sensitive, most decent person I have known. Vera owes her a debt for the quality of her work and the quality of her person."

Herb Sturz

"How did a girl from the Bronx ever get into country music."

Nashville Music Community

Cynthia Rosen is Assistant Secretary of Vera, Assistant Treasurer of Vera and Assistant Treasurer of MBP. Cynthia is also a songwriter.

Though Cynthia spends her working days smoothing business matters for Vera, she devotes much of her non-working hours to her music. To date, Cynthia has written nearly 70 songs. She travels to Nashville twice a year to meet with song publishers and writers and may be seen carrying her guitar and music to appointments with New York publishers.

Cynthia got an early start in songwriting. She recalls writing poetry when she was 8

and had to sit out gym periods because of an injury suffered in an auto accident. Cynthia soon became the class poet and was encouraged to keep writing by her teachers. At fourteen, she inherited her brother's old guitar as well as his interest in country music. Together, Cynthia writing the lyrics and her brother the music, they spent many hours composing. Years later, Cynthia and her brother came to a parting of their creative ways. While her interests had shifted to the modern country sound, her brother preferred the more traditional country music. This split forced Cynthia to learn to write the music to go with her words. She remembers "a great feeling of independence and creativity at being able to create the whole".

Because of the diverse nature of her job at Vera, Cynthia has a difficult time defining it. She likes to think of herself as a "tie line" between the central office and the various projects. The importance of her job is the "being in touch" -- keeping in daily contact with the projects to see that all needs are met.

Cynthia started working at Vera fresh out of Queens College, November 1, 1961. Hired as secretary to Herb Sturz, she soon became committed to the work he was doing. As Vera has grown, so have Cynthia's responsibilities. She keeps track of all Vera personnel and monies and, having worked at Vera since its inception, Cynthia says she feels "like the Vera archives."

Last year she enjoyed particular satisfaction when she was able to bring her two worlds together by performing for the men at the Dove Toy Project and spending Christmas eve singing for the men at the Bowery.

Updated

Traffic Court Alert - During the first 9 months of the third year of operation, Traffic Court Alert procedures have saved 8,771 police tours at a saving to the City of \$631,512.

New York City Youth Diversion Project - The proposal to fund this community-based facility to divert juveniles from the crimi-

nal justice system has been approved by the CJCC and will be presented to the September meeting of the State Crime Control Planning Board for funding. It is hoped that the project can begin training staff and community representatives and locate a facility this fall and be ready to begin operation by January 1, 1971.

New Staff at Vera

Sandy Murdock, a second year law student at Columbia, has been doing research for the Youth Diversion Project.

Sandy Oliver, formerly with the Mayor's Urban Action Task Force, is working on the Youth Diversion Project.

John Ruhnka will examine the new criminal procedures law to identify what changes the new law mandates for New York City criminal justice agencies.

Florence Greer will be secretary for staff members on the fourth and fifth floors.

Gary Walker is developing a proposal for a supported work project under a grant from the Dept. of Labor.

David Othmer will work in the area of Urban Technology, concentrating on health. He comes to Vera from the Institute for Politics and Planning in Washington.

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