



## **ReFinement Program Model**

### **Policy**

Volunteers of America, in association with the Penobscot County Sheriff's Department, will maintain the ReFinement Program to offer a viable alternative to incarceration for non-violent, low-to-moderate-risk, low-income offenders who are unable to pay court ordered fines. Volunteers of America will match participants with pre-screened community service sites, track and supervise participants at the community service sites, and provide detailed reports regarding offender participation and hourly completion to the court of jurisdiction.

### **Definition**

The ReFinement Program is a jail diversion program for offenders who meet eligibility criteria. Eligible offenders will perform community service at a conversion rate of \$10.00 per hour in lieu of making monetary fine payments and/or serving a jail sentence.

### **Purpose**

Jail diversion programs reduce overcrowding in the Penobscot County Jail, provide relief to taxpayers in Penobscot County, and provide pro-social alternatives to incarceration for lower-risk offenders.

### **Eligibility**

#### **Participant Eligibility Criteria:**

1. Participants should be non violent; offenders with a history of sexual offense of any kind will not be accepted into the program. Assault and Domestic Violence charges will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
2. Participants should show a history of repeated failure to pay fines or reasonable proof that the participant will be unable to pay fines in the future.
3. Participants should be low-income; ultimately eligibility is determined by the court of jurisdiction. Criteria can include (but is not limited to): standard judicial financial screening process; unemployment; disability; receipt of state or federal aid such as SSI, SSDI, food stamps, TANF, unemployment, and/or general assistance. Additional mitigating circumstances can be considered at the court's discretion.
4. Participants must show low to medium risk levels on the LSI-R;SV

#### **Community Service Site Eligibility Requirements:**

1. Community Service Sites must be non-profit or government organizations; examples include (but are not limited to) schools, libraries, city and state agencies, religious organizations, historical societies, and 501c3 organizations. Additional consideration will be given to for-profit organizations engaged in community service projects.
2. Community Service Sites must have staff members on site; Participants (both self-reliant and needing additional VOA Supervision) will not be allowed on site by themselves.

3. Community Service Sites must complete a Community Service Site Contract with Volunteers of America prior to placement of offenders.
4. Community Service Sites must complete a Community Service Opportunity Application at least 30 days in advance to be scheduled to a full Service Day.

### **Obtaining Clients**

#### **Obtaining Clients – Fridays, 2:30 PM at Weekly Unpaid Fines Court:**

1. Request for Fine Payment Modification or Extension forms will have an option of “Community Service / ReFinement Program”. Notifications of hearing dates for Fines will include an information and contact sheet for the ReFinement Program.
2. Court Clerks will email the docket to VOA prior to the court start date.
3. At the start of the Fines Hearings, or at 2:30, if lockups are still happening, the presiding judge will make the following announcement, “The ReFinement Program is a program that allows people to pay off their fines by performing community service. If anyone is interested in participating in this program, please go screen with Volunteers of America, and then come back in to be heard about your fines.”
4. Interested offenders will screen with VOA officer, who is located on site, immediately. If no offenders are interested, the VOA officer can leave by 3:00 PM.
5. If approved, VOA will complete a contract with the offender to include total fines to be paid, total hours to be served, and estimated Date of Completion (to always be on a Friday at 2:30PM). If more than 6 (six) months is estimated to complete the program, a status review date will be set for 6 (six) months from the current date.
6. If denied, VOA will indicate reason for denial in writing.
7. Offender will return to the court room on the same day and present the ReFinement contract or denial notice to the court for sentencing.
8. The presiding judge will grant or deny the request to participate in the ReFinement Program.
9. Court Clerk will complete a “Time to Pay” form with the estimated completion date.
10. Court keeps the original signed contract and gives a copy of the contract and Time to Pay form to VOA and to the offender.

#### **Obtaining Clients – In-custody arraignments; Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays at 1:00 PM at PCJ**

1. VOA will review a copy of the daily docket as provided by the jail.
2. After completing the risk assessments for in-custody arraignments, VOA will address those in-custody on warrants with the following announcement; “The ReFinement Program is a program that allows people to pay off their fines by performing community service. If anyone is interested in participating in this program, please raise your hand for screening.”
3. VOA will screen all interested offenders prior to the offender seeing a judge.
4. If approved, VOA will complete a contract with the offender to include estimated date of completion.
5. If denied VOA will indicate reason for denial in writing.
6. VOA will work with PCJ officers to scan and/or fax contracts and denial notices to the court clerk for the day.
7. VOA will come up to the podium with the offender if s/he qualifies for the ReFinement Program.
8. The presiding judge will grant or deny the request to participate in the ReFinement Program. If granted, the court clerk or presiding judge will complete the total fine amount and total hours to be completed section.
9. Court Clerk will complete a “Time to Pay” form with the estimated completion date.

10. Court keeps the original signed contract and gives a copy of the contract and Time to Pay form to VOA and to the offender.

If VOA is not available at court:

1. Court Clerks will complete a “Time to Pay” form indicating that the client must appear again at Fines Extension Court on the next Friday at 2:30PM when VOA is available. “Time to Pay” form will include VOA contact information.
2. The client can choose to contact VOA prior to the next court date for screening, or s/he can wait to speak with VOA at the next court date.

**Completion Process**

1. VOA will fax or email a Return of Service form to Court Clerks (Kelly, cc Heather) upon any removal from the program.
  - Violations – send Violation Report
  - No-Show – send Violation Report
  - Intent to Pay Remainder of Fines – send Completion Report
  - Completed Required Number of Hours – send Completion Report.
2. If a client does not report for service or is held in violation, the courts will send out a Notice to Appear for an upcoming Fines court.
3. Court clerks will adjust the client’s total amount owed to reflect that fines were paid in full.

**Weekly and Monthly Reporting**

1. Clients will be responsible for completing a time sheet and returning that sheet to VOA weekly.
2. VOA will verify signed time cards with service sites.
3. VOA will log hours completed in the Clients’ file.
4. VOA will complete a Return of Service Update for each individual client and email it to the court of jurisdiction (Kelly, cc Heather) on the 30<sup>th</sup> of each month (28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> in February).
5. VOA will report clients and hours served on the weekly Sheriff’s Report, monthly reports, and yearly reports.
6. Court Clerks will notify VOA via email if client pays the remaining fines.
7. Court clerks will adjust the client’s total amount owed on a monthly basis as if the client was making a monetary payment.

**Community Service Sites:**

Partnering with Community Service Sites

1. VOA will contact potential Community Service Sites based on a list provided by Ltnt Babb and their own community connections.
2. Community Service Sites will complete the Service Site Contract to be kept on file at VOA.
3. VOA will provide Service Site orientation to the Community Service Site.
4. Community Service Site will complete a Community Service Opportunity Application for each job that needs to be filled. Applications should be received by VOA at least 30 days in advance to ensure enough time to find appropriate volunteers to fill the space.

5. VOA will ensure that they have full understanding of the tasks and volunteer hours required by the Community Service Site by engaging in conversation with the Community Service Site as needed.
6. VOA will work closely with Community Service Sites to determine appropriate levels of supervision while offenders are on-site.
7. Community Service Site Supervisors will sign client time sheets at the end of each work week or job opportunity to verify hours served.

#### Matching Clients with Sites:

1. VOA will review client applications and Risk Assessment to determine the level of supervision required by each individual client.
  - Low Risk; no additional supervision required
  - Low to Moderate Risk: review on a case-by-case basis for additional supervision
  - Moderate Risk: VOA supervision will be required in addition to site supervision.
2. VOA will schedule at least 2 eight-hour Service Dates per month at a confirmed Community Service Site. If demand is high, multiple Service Sites may be scheduled for Service Dates concurrently.
3. VOA will review Community Service Sites and match clients with tasks based on skills and level of supervision required.
4. VOA will supply Community Service Site with Client Assignment list, to ensure they have a full understanding of who will be arriving on site and when.
5. If additional supervision is required for any client, VOA Case Manager will be present at the Community Service Site and provide additional supervision as needed for the entirety of the day.
6. VOA will provide time sheets to each client for each service opportunity.

#### Visibility

1. VOA will write and publish a Press Release with local newspapers, radio stations, tv stations and with VOA newsletters announcing the start of the program and requesting that any Non-Profit Organizations interested in becoming Community Service Sites contact VOA.
2. VOA will produce and publish brochures to pass out to potential clients, local lawyers, and the greater judicial community giving basic information about the program purpose and contact information for interested individuals.
3. VOA will meet with potential Community Service Sites to give a preliminary Orientation.
4. VOA will meet with Penobscot County judges and clerks (both District and Superior) to gain their support for the ReFinement program and to obtain recommendations regarding reporting and sentencing.
5. VOA will meet regularly with the Penobscot County Sheriff's Department as well as Sheriff Ross to provide orientation, training, and regular updates of information and client/program performance.
6. VOA will include monthly statements on program performance in the Monthly Written Report.
7. VOA will attend city council meetings to promote involvement in the ReFinement program.