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City of Wilmington improves data management and boosts community outcomes

When Dr. Debra Mason began as Community Public Safety Initiative (CPSI) coordinator for the City of Wilmington, Delaware — a position to which she was appointed by the city's mayor — she had no hesitation when selecting a case management solution. Debra had used Bonterra Impact Management successfully at her previous organization, so when she began her new role for the city in January 2023, she had no hesitations about making the move. Just seven days passed between Debra's call to Bonterra and her first day of implementation.

Debra had a proven track record of overseeing successful outcomes using Bonterra Impact Management at her previous community agency, Wilmington HOPE Commission. With the aid of Bonterra Impact Management, Debra established many fruitful relationships at the HOPE Commission with partners throughout the area. The HOPE Commission provided many social services to the

community, from virtual GED services to regular health and wellness checks.

After seeing her success growing the HOPE Commission, Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki appointed Debra to lead a new progressive initiative as CPSI coordinator for the city. As CPSI coordinator, Debra is responsible for bringing together community organizations to improve safety through collaboration. What better way to elicit community-wide collaboration than with Bonterra Impact Management.

In a recent conversation with Debra, she shared more about the CPSI program and the role of Bonterra Impact Management. The story of Debra's work with CPSI in Delaware's largest city is both inspirational and practical. Read on for the full Q&A.

Q&A

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Tell us about the CPSI program and its goals.

DR. DEBRA MASON

The CPSI was formed to predict and pinpoint problems that often lead to crime and to determine ways to help prevent criminal activity. CPSI pulls together different organizations in the community that deal with the impending issues facing Wilmington neighborhoods. They interact with adults in the justice system, juveniles who are having issues in school, individuals living in low income neighborhoods stricken with violence, and much more.

The CPSI leads the vision, and the community organizations collaborate to drive the impact. All the while, Bonterra Impact Management brings them together to achieve a common objective and to improve the community from the ground up. The goal is to pull all of our resources together and address the problem as a group effort versus a siloed approach in order to figure out the most effective way to collaborate and solve problems together.

> " When they said I could bring over a case management software to use for the entire organization, I knew without a doubt, hands down, it was going to be Bonterra Impact Management."
>
> — Dr. Debra Mason, CPSI coordinator, City of Wilmington

What did you like about your previous experience using Bonterra Impact Management and why did you bring it with you to the City of Wilmington?

One of the things that I really love about Bonterra Impact Management is that you can access it from anywhere, whether you're on your phone, a tablet, or a laptop. You don't have to be in your office on your desktop computer to access information that you need. This is helpful for our type of organization because our staff can easily input information into the system in real-time while they are in the field. I was a probation officer for 10 years and that line of work required me to go out in the field and collect data, but without a cloud based tool, I would have to go back to my office and spend time entering that information after the fact, which ate up a lot of time and reduced accuracy. It's not like that with Bonterra Impact Management. Our team can sit in front of a client, take down notes directly into Impact Management while in the field, and be confident in the fact that the data is stored safely and accurately.

The process of inputting data and retrieving this information through Bonterra Impact Management is also extremely intuitive. This further helps reduce errors and gives time back to staff because they are spending less time doing administrative tasks and have more time to focus on the mission at hand.

I also love that it's very easy to make Impact Management your own on your own. Unlike other software where you have to depend on somebody else to develop custom programming, Bonterra lets us make the system work for us.

Someone on my team will come to me and ask me if we can add a feature or a tool to the interface, and within seconds, I can drop it in and use it immediately.

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> "I can't say enough about this program. I promote this program to every organization across the board. If you are using any other data collecting web-based tool, switch to this one, because, once you get the hang of it, it's a piece of cake."
>
> — Dr. Debra Mason, CPSI coordinator, City of Wilmington

How will you use Bonterra Impact Management to further your mission at CPSI?

We will first be using Bonterra Impact Management to enable the community organizations we work with to collect demographic information from the people they serve.

We'll then use some of the data we've already collected to get a better understanding of areas in need. We're not asking our partner organizations to collect much more data than they already do, but rather, we want to add more context to the information we already have. We want to take qualitative data and make it more quantitative. This will help guide more informed decision making throughout the community and allow us to articulate our successes.

Additionally, we want to start collecting information on staff members, including how long they're interacting with members of the community, how much of their time they're spending on certain things, and what resources they need and use the most.

One great aspect of Impact Management is that we can do all of this work in a very private and respectful way. Our client's personal information is kept private and protected.

This is important for us as we work to ensure we're serving people with integrity.

How will Bonterra Impact Management help you measure success?

The biggest way that we're going to measure success is by tracking crime in designated areas. We have succeeded when crime has decreased. We have a close relationship with the Wilmington Police Department, and we'll work with them to track crime rates, examining crime in all public safety criteria, from burglaries to homicides.

We want to become an integral part of the community, and so we want to find ways to stop crimes before they happen. We'll do this by indicating areas of need and then providing the right services to the right people at the right time.

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What will be the potential impact of the new program on the City of Wilmington?

Wilmington's community is dedicated to seeing a continued reduction in crime and that will depend on initiatives like CPSI to connect the dots.

Over my 15 years working in the criminal justice system, I've learned that people tend to feel like the only solution to a problem is crime — a way to get money, retaliate, etc. But we want to shift that mindset for people.

For example, if a family's electricity is shut off, that might prompt their 18-year-old son to go out and commit theft to get the money to keep their lights on. But if we could work with community organizations that can help the household pay their bills and keep their lights on, we could prevent that crime from happening in the first place.

Some programs we're working on are organizational readiness assessments for participating community organizations so we can identify the current level of infrastructure and organizational health and readiness for community violence intervention work. We also are going to assist with building organizational and programmatic readiness, as well as provide participating organizations with coaching on topics such as financial management,

operational protocols, workforce development, relationship/partnership management, services to gun violence victims, fundraising and identifying federal funding opportunities. Lastly, we'll be facilitating intervention peer-learning between selected intervention organizations in Wilmington and established community-based public safety organizations in other cities to share experiential knowledge and best practices. All of these activities will rely largely on the data-driven functions of Bonterra Impact Management to be successful. With the assistance of Bonterra, we can work efficiently toward change for the people of our community by making informed, data-driven decisions that put an end to crime and violence in our city.

Ready to create lasting social change?

Get in touch today

> " Bonterra Impact Management made my job easier. It's made my staff's job easier. It's an easy tool to use, and you can use it anywhere. It's just a great program."
>
> — Dr. Debra Mason, CPSI coordinator, City of Wilmington

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