

Recommendations for essential elements of a prison reentry program to help male offenders be successful upon their reentry to society and to reduce recidivism.

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Date: May 4, 2011

Recommendations for essential elements of a prison reentry program to help male offenders be successful upon their reentry to society and to reduce recidivism

A Seminar Research Paper

Presented to the Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Science in Criminal Justice

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May 2011

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my wife, Kim. I am grateful for her patience and support, along with the many sacrifices that she made in order for me to complete this degree. The completion of this degree was challenging and fulfilling, and would not have been possible without her encouragement.

I would also like to thank the faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Your encouragement through the years made learning enjoyable. I am particularly thankful to Dr. Michael Klemp-North for his guidance and assistance with this project. I would also like to acknowledge Mary Kay Sergo, Reentry Director with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, for providing me with a wealth of data and research material.

Abstract

Recommendations for Essential Elements of a Prison Reentry Program to Help Male Offenders Be Successful Upon Their Reentry to Society and to Reduce Recidivism

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Under the Supervision of Dr. Michael Klemp-North

Statement of the Problem

The number of offenders who entered prison for the first time in their life has increased in recent years. Holding offenders accountable is at the very heart of the criminal justice and corrections systems. The reality is that the vast majority of prisoners will one day return to communities across the United States and Wisconsin. The prison population is ethnically and racially diverse and this suggests that the reentry populations will also be diverse. Planning for reentry requires addressing the complexities of the prison population.

The purpose of this paper is to identify essential elements of a prison reentry program to help male offenders become successful upon their reentry into society. The public is best served if offenders are not only held accountable for their actions, but also have the opportunity to become law abiding and successful members of the community when they are released. By improving prisoner reentry, crime can be reduced, there will be a reduction in state and local criminal justice costs, and most importantly, society will have safer families and communities. Unless prisons and corrections systems truly adopt the rehabilitative model while prisoners are incarcerated, society will continue to see higher rates of recidivism among released inmates (Burns, 2009). To accomplish these goals, reentry programs must be implemented for successful prisoner reentries into society.

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I. Introduction

Holding offenders accountable is at the very heart of the criminal justice and corrections systems. Some violent offenders who pose a risk to public safety may need to be locked up for a long time. The reality, however is that the vast majority of prisoners will one day return to communities across the United States and Wisconsin. This is known as prisoner reentry, and it is the process of an offender leaving prison and returning to the community. The question to consider is not when the offender will be released, but how will the offender be released? Will that offender be prepared to reenter society?

A. Current data of the correctional populations

This section will review the correctional populations in the United States and Wisconsin. It will also present statistics on offenders who return to prison after their reentry and review the issues of why these offenders returned to prison.

Incarceration rates in Wisconsin and nationwide have grown rapidly over the past few decades. This growth has been fueled by get tough on crimes initiatives. The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) reports that between 1990 and its high point in 2008, Wisconsin's prison population nearly quadrupled, from 6,533 to 23,341 prisoners (Hall, 2011). The DOC reports that at the end of 2006, more than 8,900 offenders were released from prison to the community. They also listed 24,517 admissions to community supervision (CIPIS Data, 2008). With a few exceptions, most of those offenders who are sent to prison will return to live in the community.

In 2009, there were an estimated 1.4 million state prisoners throughout the country serving time for a serious offense (Total, 2008). Approximately 95 percent of these inmates will complete their prison time and be released to the community (Total, 2008). The majority of

these offenders leaving prison had been convicted of a nonviolent crime, while property offenders and drug offenders accounted for about a third of those leaving prison (Reentry, 2005). Many of these offenders leaving prison will be under some type of post-incarceration supervision, however approximately 23 percent will be unconditionally released, with no post-prison supervision, such as parole (Lynch & Sabol, 2001).

Prisoner reentry is the corrections strategy designed to prepare inmates for a successful return to the community and to reduce their criminal activity after release (Gaines & Miller, 2012). It is the transition from life in prison to life in the community and it may have profound implications for public safety. The public is best served if offenders are not only held accountable for their actions, but also have the opportunity to become law abiding and successful members of the community when they are released (Visher, 2007). To accomplish these goals for offenders, reentry programs have been established within the prison system. Reentry programs primarily hope to increase public safety and reduce offender recidivism (Reentry, 2007). Offenders must be prepared to face the challenges and temptations of society before they are released from prison. Offender reentry is not a hypothetical phenomenon; rather it is a fact of institutional corrections.

B. Statistics on offenders who return to prison

There are many challenges and risk factors associated with prisoner reentry. Statistics on those released offenders who have returned to prison have remained relatively stable since the mid-1960s, although recent data show they have risen. The evidence also shows that the first year after release from prison is the period when most recidivism occurs, accounting for nearly two-thirds of all the recidivism events in the first three years (Petersilia, 2003).

The Wisconsin DOC has conducted a study on offenders who are released from prison during the period of 1980 through 2003. The data showed that more than 38 percent of all released Wisconsin offenders committed a new crime resulting in a new conviction within three years of release from prison (CIPIS Data, 2008). The data also showed that if nothing changes, thousands of these offenders will commit new crimes, create new crime victims, and return to prison at a great cost to the taxpayers. It is estimated that it costs the taxpayers of Wisconsin approximately \$26,000 to house one offender in prison (Dipko, 2007). The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that approximately 67.5 percent of released offenders were re-arrested within three years and 51.8 percent are returned to prison or jail within three years of their release (Recidivism, 2007).

These figures highlight the number of offenders returning to prison after their release from incarceration and show that reentry programs are essential to help offenders with their reentry into society. Reentry programming, which often involves a comprehensive case management approach, is intended to assist offenders in acquiring the life skills needed to succeed in the community and become law-abiding citizens. A variety of programs are used to assist offenders in the reentry process, including prison pre-release programs, drug rehabilitation, vocational training, and work programs. These programs help to increase the chances of offender success and reduce the chances of an offender returning to prison. The fact that many released offenders will be reincarcerated within three years following their release means that society continues to pay for their incarceration. We, as a society, need to invest in proven treatment and work programs that are beneficial in the long run.

C. Review of the issues of offenders returning to prison

One of the largest obstacles to successful prisoner reentry is the fact that life behind bars is very different from life on the outside. The prison environment also insulates offenders. They are not required to make the day to day decisions that depict existence beyond the prison. The day is regimented and completely planned for the offender. There is very little deviation from daily activities. Depending on the length of incarceration, a released offender must adjust to an array of economic, technological, and social changes that took place while he was incarcerated (Gaines & Miller, 2012). Common acts like using a cell phone, ATM, purchasing online or pay at the pump gas stations may be completely alien to someone who has just completed a long prison term. These everyday acts that most of us take for granted could be viewed as obstacles for released offenders. Released offenders need to overcome these obstacles and be able to adjust to society.

Released offenders may also face bias, prejudice or discrimination in society. Treating released offenders as lesser members of society is nothing new (Travis, 2005). There may be restrictions on where the released offender may live or work. His criminal record is easily accessible on CCAP (Consolidated Court Automation Programs). The offender may need to remove the stigma of being a released offender in order to move past the obstacles of reentry. If he is unable to do this, he may revert to his former criminal activity or committing new crimes, and then be returned to prison. This label or stigma may reinforce the offender's self-identity as a criminal and further encourage deviant behavior (Travis, 2005). Offenders will require help removing these obstacles so they will not return to prison. This can be accomplished through a successful reentry program. The aim of an effective approach to prisoner reentry is reintegration

of ex-offenders into the community, which is not simply to reduce recidivism, but active and productive community participation by ex-offenders (Visher, 2007).

II. Literature Review

A. Statistics of individuals released to the community

The volume of offenders released from prison has increased dramatically from 1980. The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) reports that over 650,000 people in the United States are released from federal and state prisons annually and a greater number reenter communities from county jails (Reentry, 2007). Many of these offenders are still under some type of community supervision. According to data compiled by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC), between 1980 and 2004, approximately 106,000 inmates had been released from prison. This data represents a steady increase in released offenders, with 1,602 being released in 1980 compared to 7,945 released in 2004 (CIPIS Data, 2008). The data also reports that approximately 55,800 offenders are on probation and approximately 17,000 are on parole or extended supervision within the community. Many of these offenders will receive some programming while they are incarcerated, however many will also return ill equipped to reintegrate into their communities.

The majority of released prisoners are under community supervision. Of the total prisoners released from prison, approximately two-thirds will be under some form of correctional supervision (LaVigne et al., 2008). These offenders will be required to follow specific conditions of release in order to maintain their freedom. These conditions act as a formal expression of the DOC's expectations for post-release conduct. They must remain in contact with an agent from the system while they are under supervision. There are also a good number of offenders who will complete their sentence and be released into the community without correctional supervision. While this population of offenders has more freedom than those who must meet supervision requirements, they also may not receive the needed referrals and

resources that accompany community supervision. This percentage of the released population can be extremely vulnerable to committing a new offense if not properly prepared to enter society. This group is one of many challenges and risk factors associated with reentry (LaVigne et al., 2008).

B. Challenges and risk factors associated with prisoner reentry

There are other challenges and risk factors associated with reentry to include those that have a history of incarceration, offender's race, educational levels, skilled and unskilled, lack of family support, history of alcohol or drug abuse, involvement in gang activity, drug dealing, unemployment and homelessness, and some have a physical or mental disability (Visser, 2007). Many of these offenders have spent weeks, if not months in solitary confinement or even a super maximum prison. They have lacked human contact and prison program participation. Recognizing the unique needs of returning prisoners and the abilities of communities to supervise and assist them must precede any reform efforts (Petersilia, 2003). The prison population is ethnically and racially diverse and this suggests that the reentry populations will also be diverse. Planning for reentry requires addressing the complexities of the prison population. A reentry program must be diverse. It cannot be a "one size fits all" type of program. It must be specifically designed to meet the unique needs of each offender.

From a community perspective, there are other challenges and risk factors associated with reentry. The return of released offenders potentially poses problems for public safety and challenges for reintegrating people into society. There are more violent offenders returning to their communities and more offenders returning after repeated times of incarceration (Lynch & Sabol, 2001). Many of these offenders are released to large urban counties or cities. Many are also concentrated in the poorest neighborhoods in central cities of metropolitan areas. These

offenders are returning to their homes and neighborhoods where most of their criminal activity took place. A geographic dispersion of incarceration and releases is consistent with the spread of drug trafficking throughout metropolitan areas (Lynch & Sabol, 2001). These areas traditionally have lower levels of employment and earnings and high levels of poverty.

Public safety concerns are also raised in relation to the increasing number of offenders released from prison with no conditions of supervision or released unconditionally (Petersilia, 2003). The absence of a probation or parole agent can be a detriment to reentry because the agents can offer help to offenders in locating resources, plus they also keep the offenders accountable for their actions. Supervising offenders in the community and preparing them to return to their communities are critical to protecting public safety (Solutions, 2009). The issue at hand is that supervising officers must balance the time required to manage growing caseloads and the need to provide these offenders with the services that they need to become law-abiding citizens.

Communities must also recognize the validity and importance of the public's concerns about challenges and risk factors associated with offender reentry. The public has the impression that most returning prisoners will commit new crimes, however as the annual number of offenders released from prison has increased, the aggregate crime rate actually decreased (Lynch & Sabol, 2001). This misunderstanding of the crime problem associated with returning prisoners is often shaped by individual, high-profile incidents. A single incident of a crime that has been committed by a released offender will help to fuel this misunderstanding. The challenge, then, is to engage the public in a sustained discussion that begins by acknowledging the reentry reality that they all come back (Travis, 2005). Community groups could help to alleviate some of the risk factors by working with the local police or neighborhood organizations

and insisting on the creation of a safety plan for each offender returning to the community to minimize the risk of recidivism and protect potential victims. Some released offenders will commit new crimes, but all of the crimes that are committed are not committed by released offenders (Recidivism, 2007). Communities must realize that society cannot afford to keep building prisons and incarcerating people. Eventually, most of these individuals will return home. Communities will continue to face a complicated set of problems related to reintegrating offenders.

Released offenders also face many challenges and risk factors associated with their return to the community. They left a life behind once they were sentenced to prison. That life might include children, spouses or intimate partners, peer groups, coworkers, employers, partners in crime, or classmates. These dimensions of community life may benefit or suffer from the prisoner's absence and will be affected upon his return (Travis, 2005). Returning offenders may face issues in their family relationships, work, health, and housing. Policymakers across the country have been developing policies to improve outcomes for people coming back so they are more likely to be reintegrated and less likely to be rearrested (Visher, 2007).

Most prisoners are parents with young children. More than half of the men in state prisons report having minor children. Approximately one-quarter of the prisoners are married (Travis, 2005). When a parent is incarcerated, it may have profound consequences on the emotional, psychological, social, and financial well-being of the children left behind. Most of them have young children who they hope to reunite after release, but in most cases, their children will have infrequently visited them during their incarceration. Continuing contact with family members during and following incarceration can reduce recidivism and foster reintegration (Travis, 2005).

Released offenders can face many hurdles when they return home, however a supportive family can help them overcome those hurdles. A marriage may help to prevent reoffending and married prisoners are less likely to associate with peers involved in crime (Travis, 2005). Families can provide other important supports that returning prisoners need to reintegrate into society such as help with housing, employment, and health concerns. However, not all families are in a position to help and some may not want to help.

Released offenders may also experience social stigma and discrimination, lessened employment prospects, reduced access to housing, loss of family and social ties, negative mental health effects, increased risk of suicide and early death, and difficulties in finding needed services and supports (Visher, 2007). Rather than helping released offenders successfully transition from prison to the community, many current state and federal laws have the opposite effect, interfering with the rights and obligations of full citizenship in nearly every aspect of people's lives. Under the federal law and the laws of every state, a felony conviction has consequences that continue long after a sentence has been served and parole has ended (Petersilia, 2003). These legal barriers may affect public housing, employment, public assistance or food stamps, voting privileges, restrictions on driver's licenses, student loans, and adoptive and foster parenting (Samuels & Mukamal, 2004). While some of these barriers may be necessary for the safety of the public, a number of initiatives are currently underway that will help released offenders who have paid their debt to society become independent, law-abiding citizens, thereby strengthening community safety.

Released offenders may also face discrimination or a social stigma through the public's access to criminal records. Virtually anyone with an internet connection can find information

about someone's arrest, disposition, and conviction history online without that persons consent or any guidance on how to interpret or use the information. Approximately 33 states allow internet access to criminal records and 14 of them make all conviction records available. Six states make available on the Internet records of people who are incarcerated and those on probation or parole holds and 8 post on the internet only records of people currently incarcerated (Samuels & Mukamal, 2004). In Wisconsin, the general public can view this information through the Wisconsin Circuit Court Access. This website (WCCA) provides access to certain public records of the circuit courts of Wisconsin. The information displayed is an exact copy of the case information entered into the Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) case management system by court staff in the counties where the case files are located. The court record summaries viewed here are all public records under Wisconsin open records law. The public can also access information on registered sex offenders in the state of Wisconsin by going to the Wisconsin DOC Sex Offender Registry. In 1997, the State of Wisconsin enacted the Sex Offender Registration and Community Notification Law. This law was created to monitor and track people convicted of sex crimes and to provide access to this information for police, victims and the general public. This web site is designed to enhance public safety by making the information contained in the Sex Offender Registry easily accessible to the public.

Victims of crime can also access information about criminal cases and custody status of offenders through VINELink. VINELink is the online version of VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday), the National Victim Notification Network. Victims and other concerned citizens can also register to be notified by phone, email, text message or TTY device when an offender's custody status changes. All three of these sites do have notices,

disclaimers, cautions, or warnings discussing the abuse of these sites. The information that is viewed is not to be used to discriminate, injure, harass, or commit a criminal act against the persons named; however it would be curious to know how much of this illegal behavior a release offender actually faces because of society's right to access this public information. This curiosity will probably never be known.

C. Reentry programs that are working

There are many successful reentry programs throughout the country and most of them have a similar theme. Every corrections agency has a system in place to guide how a person is released from prison. Some of these systems are a mere checklist, while others involve extensive documentation of prisoner histories and significant outreach to service providers in the community (LaVigne et al., 2008). These procedures may vary considerably through the agencies, however a succession of release preparation activities can be identified by anticipating the challenges that prisoners may encounter before their release to the community. Reentry programs may have unique features; however the core of these programs should follow the basic vision of effective correctional interventions (Latessa, 2008).

There is a growing national movement in corrections supporting offender reentry. Since the late 1990's, the Urban Institute has hosted a series of reentry roundtables to assess the knowledge of reentry and to publish specialized reports on this topic (La Vigne et al., 2008). In 2001, the U.S. Department of Justice and a group of federal agencies provided a total of one hundred million dollars in grant funding spread across all fifty states to address reentry. The National Institute of Corrections has also launched a significant project to offer assistance and support to a select number of states to transforming their systems governing reentry. In the 2004 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush urged Congress to allocate three hundred

million dollars over four years to support the reentry transition of offenders (Wilkinson & Rhine, 2005).

In a short period of time, efforts have been made at all levels of government and by community organizations to build more effective and innovative responses to the challenges presented by reentry. Effective prisoner reentry programs have gained public support because of their potential to reduce recidivism and ultimately save taxpayer dollars. Studies show that public support for effective programs and rehabilitation remains strong (Latessa, 2008). It is important that corrections, lawmakers, and society continue to develop correctional programs that increase public safety through the effective rehabilitation of offenders.

Reentry programs can be promising for several reasons. These programs provide an opportunity to help change the offender's behavior as they make the transition back to society. They also offer the ability to deal with violations of post-release supervision in a proactive manner. This has become a growing concern because violators are making up a greater percent of the prison population now than they have been in the past (Latessa, 2008). A successful reentry program can also lead to a better and more functional life for released offenders, their families and the communities in which they live.

The Wisconsin DOC has launched a reentry initiative that is a change in philosophy and a change in how they how operated in the past. They start to focus on the offender's return to the community the day they enter prison and not just before they leave prison. To accomplish their goals, reentry programs have been set up within state prisons and in the community. In addition, the DOC Office of the Secretary has a full-time reentry director to oversee efforts department wide (Reentry, 2007).

The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) provides services and programs to address offender's needs to help them with a successful reentry into society. Each facility offers a set of programs and services that vary based on the characteristics and needs of its specific populations. When an offender arrives at an institution, he is screened by staff and assigned to the Admission and Orientation Program where he receives a formal orientation to the programs, services, policies, and procedures of the facility. The BOP has the philosophy that release preparation begins the first day of incarceration and focus on release preparation intensifies at least 18 months prior to release. The release preparation program includes classes in areas of resume writing, job search, and job retention (BOP Inmate Matters). The facility also uses presentations by community-based organizations that help ex-inmates find jobs and training opportunities after release. The BOP also place inmates in halfway houses prior to release to help them adjust to life in the community and find employment.

The BOP offers vocational training opportunities through their prison industries program, known as UNICOR. UNICOR is the trade name for Federal Prison Industries, Inc. It is a government corporation that was established by Congress in 1934 to employ and provide job skills training to inmates confined within the BOP (BOP Release Preparation). They produce goods and services at market prices for sale to the federal government. This is not a business-for-profit, but a correctional program designed to prepare inmates for release. BOP research has conclusively demonstrated that participation in a variety of programs that teach marketable skills helps to reduce recidivism (BOP Inmate Matters).

The BOP also receives grant funding from the Second Chance Act to help prisoners reenter society and stay out of prison. The Second Chance Act was passed by Congress in 2007 to help reduce the U.S. prison populations and increase rehabilitation and reentry programs for

offenders (H.R. 1593). In 2010, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) analyzed the BOP's programs, activities, and initiatives that play a key role in implementing Second Chance Act, and concluded that the BOP has mechanisms in place to address Second Chance Act requirements and is working to implement an initiative designed to reduce recidivism (GAO 10-854R). The BOP intends to measure skills inmates acquired through the reentry programs with the goal of reducing rates of recidivism. This will be a performance-based evaluation of the BOP programs.

Reentry is a major focus of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). The IDOC works with community-based partners and other reentry supports like the Adult Transitional Centers and Day Reporting Centers, to help offenders transition into the community. A major challenge facing IDOC was a huge cut-back in their budget; however through a partnership with service agencies and community-based organizations, IDOC was able to reduce recidivism to 51.3 percent, down from 54.4 percent in 2003 (John Howard, 2009). This compares to the national recidivism average of 67.5 percent (Recidivism, 2007).

The Illinois Crime Reduction Act of 2009 encourages the various components of the criminal justice system to take an integrated approach to crime risk and punishment (SB1289). This reform package basically reshapes the criminal justice delivery system by using best practices that are based on a continuum of risks and needs assessment instruments. These assessments will help with the reentry plan and also reduce the risk of re-offending. The assessment will identify the resources and services needed such as job placement, substance abuse programming, determining education level, skills and attitudes of offenders (John Howard, 2009).

The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) is actively working on reducing offender recidivism through the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI). This initiative began in 2003 when the MDOC realized that nearly half of the offenders found themselves back in prison within three years after their release (Progress Report, 2010). This initiative is a partnership with state and local agencies to implement a plan of services and supervision for each offender. It begins on the day that the offender enters prison and continues through their transition, reintegration and aftercare in the community. MPRI reports that strong parole supervision is a key to successful outcomes. The parole agents work closely with police and are able to intervene early when problems arise. The number of Michigan parolees has dramatically increased since 2005, however there is also less crime and recidivism. This is a savings to the taxpayers because MPRI claims that parole supervision costs approximately \$2130 a year compared with more than \$34,000 to lock someone up in prison (Progress Report, 2010). MDOC has invested this savings into the support and supervision that makes the MPRI work. MDOC states that the number of returning to prison for new crimes fell from 2,020 in 2006 to 1,836 in 2010. Approximately 2,800 fewer paroles have returned to prison than would have been expected prior to the MPRI (Progress Report, 2010). Before MPRI, one in two parolees returned to prison within three years. That number has improved to one in three thanks to a successful reentry program.

In 2001, the Urban Institute conducted a study of the prisoner reentry programs in four states, including a pilot study in Maryland and full research studies in Illinois, Ohio, and Texas. The study involved an analysis of pre-existing corrections data to describe incarceration and reentry characteristics in that state, as well as a detailed review of state laws and policies

regarding reentry (Visher, 2007). The study was not an outcome evaluation of a specific policy, but a study focusing on reentry policies at the national, state, and local levels.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) conducts research about the effectiveness of reentry efforts. They have funded five long-term evaluations and four short-term studies since 2003 to expand knowledge and improve reentry initiatives and policies (Reentry, 2005). Since most of the evaluations are still in progress, NIJ cannot say with certainty what works in the field of reentry.

D. Elements of a successful reentry program

The reentry process must begin at the time the offender is sentenced. When an offender is admitted to the prison system, the DOC conducts an assessment and evaluation to identify the offender's program and treatment needs, including education, clinical, medical, and social needs. This occurs while the offender is housed at the Dodge Correctional Institution in Waupun, Wisconsin. Based on the information received through the assessment and evaluation, the offender will then be placed into one of the department's institutions. Approximately every 12 months, the DOC reviews the offender's institutional placement and makes adjustments as needed.

The Wisconsin DOC estimates that 46% of adult inmates lack a high school diploma or its equivalent, 49% read below the ninth grade level, and 73% perform math below the ninth grade level (Carmichael & Bauer, 2008). As a result of these findings, educational programming has focused on basic skills for inmates. According to the DOC 2006 Education Report, there are 240 educational staff in its prisons and correctional centers. Over 70% of these individuals provide

academic instruction to offenders, while the remaining provide vocational services. Academic skills training, to include adult basic education and general equivalency diplomas are essential to help an offender with a successful reentry (Petersilia, 2003). Vocational skills training, which teaches how to acquire and maintain employment in order to fulfill financial obligations, must be implemented in a successful reentry program (Travis, 2005).

The DOC has estimated that approximately two-thirds of the offenders admitted to prison have been identified with AODA problems (Carmichael & Bauer, 2008). AODA programming is generally provided by state-certified departmental social workers or by a contracted community treatment provider. According to the DOC, substance abuse treatment services use a cognitive/behavioral treatment model and are generally provided closer to an offender's release date in order to better facilitate continuing treatment in the community. Providing this treatment too early in the offender's sentence may not be beneficial to him. This AODA treatment may involve long-term residential programs, short-term residential programs and aftercare services. A growing body of research shows that prison-based drug treatment, especially when coupled with treatment in the community, can reduce the levels of drug use and criminal behavior among program participants (Travis, 2005). The low level of treatment for prisoners with drug and alcohol addictions represents a particularly acute policy failure in any reentry program (Petersilia, 2003). With an increase in the number of offenders who receive AODA treatment, the DOC opened the Chippewa Valley Correctional Treatment Facility in 2004 to address AODA treatment for offenders prior to them leaving prison.

Mental health care has also been a major focus in the DOC. Individual mental health needs are addressed by licensed professionals working within the institutions. Approximately

eight to ten percent of the offenders are seriously mentally ill, with conditions such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and major depression and approximately 24 percent of the inmates are on clinical monitoring for mental health needs (Carmichael & Bauer, 2008). Mental health treatment, coupled with a strong system of community supervision and the continuation of mental health care is essential when inmates return to the community. The Department is also working with the Social Security Administration, other state agencies and county governments to connect eligible offenders with critical AODA and mental health services following release (Reentry, 2008).

The DOC provides a cognitive intervention program that is based on the principle that how an offender thinks determines how they act. If offenders can control how they think, they can control all aspects of their lives that might seem beyond their ability to control (Carmichael & Bauer, 2008). This is a 30 lesson program that is divided into two phases. In the first phase, the offenders focus on discovering how they think and then determine how their thoughts may affect their feelings, behaviors, and the consequences they experience as a result of their actions. During the second phase, offenders continue to identify and evaluate their personal beliefs, attitudes and thinking patterns that have been associated with their behaviors that led to trouble in the past. Cognitive skills programs, which focus on engaging in solving problems effectively and maintaining self-control, have been found to be effective in prison rehabilitation programs (Petersilia, 2003).

The DOC also provides a cognitive-behavioral programming designed for offenders who have shown a pattern of violence or abuse to their partners. This programming helps offenders identify their own reasons why they have justified violence toward their partners and also teaches

skills to change their thoughts and beliefs that led to their abusive behavior. Anger management treatment may be incorporated into this cognitive approach to help reduce violence and aggression. This treatment is designed to help offenders change their actions that may have led to dysfunctional behavior. The goal is to substitute those behaviors with behaviors that are more adaptive, constructive, and socially appropriate (Carmichael & Bauer, 2008).

Sex offender treatment programs are provided for all sex offenders. This treatment lasts 6 to 12 months and addresses issues including offense disclosure, denial and minimization, victim empathy, cognitive distortions, criminal thinking, and re-offense prevention. Long-term treatment is more intensive and may last from two to five years. Research reviews have generally found that sex offender interventions, especially cognitive restructuring that teaches the offender to control himself, to be effective (Petersilia, 2003). This is extremely important when it is time to find public housing for the released offender. The pressure to exclude released sex offenders from public and private housing markets is high due to the fact that society will not accept the fact that the offender may have been rehabilitated (Travis, 2005).

Employment training services provided by the DOC vary based on the individual offender's needs, skills, and abilities. This training can include vocational assessments, work adjustment training, resume development, pre-employment/job search training, job development/job placement services, work release opportunities with local employers prior to an inmate's release, and subsidized employment upon release (Carmichael & Bauer, 2008). Employment after release provides the offender with a source of funding for his basic needs. It can also increase feelings of self-efficacy and self-sufficiency, while building confidence in released prisoners that they can support themselves without needing to resort to criminal

activities (La Vigne et al., 2008). Employment remains one of the most important vehicles for speeding up offender reintegration and helping them to discontinue a life of crime. There is fairly strong evidence to indicate that an individual's criminal behavior is responsive to changes in employment status (Petersilia, 2003).

The Urban Institute (2008) has published a document that describes what they consider to be the key components of a release plan. They believe that the most immediate of these needs involves the clothes on one's back, followed closely by some minimal amount of cash on hand to cover immediate expenses like transportation or temporary housing (La Vigne et al., 2008). They view these two items as essential because they will be needed on the day of release and believe that these basic necessities are often overlooked by prisons. They continue with an explanation of other components that are also needed. In order for a release offender to obtain more permanent housing, they will need photo identification, leads on employment, vocational classes, or perhaps more remedial education and training such as literacy and life skills programs. Those exiting prison with AODA issues and mental health conditions will also require connections for treatment, medication or ongoing health care in the community. They also recommend that a positive support system be in place at the time of release. This will help to encourage a healthy lifestyle, demonstrate positive behaviors and self-sufficiency. These challenges are ultimately linked to the others, and are considered essential elements of a prison release program.

There are several key components of an effective prisoner reentry program. To be effective, reentry programs must apply the four principles of effective corrections interventions (Latessa, 2008). Those principles include: targeting high-risk offenders; focusing on crime-producing factors, antisocial attitudes and substance abuse; using a cognitive-behavioral

approach; and implementation of the program must closely replicate the original design. Latessa (2008) states that the programs should be targeted to high-risk offenders. He believes that placing low-risk offenders in intensive programs might actually increase their recidivism rates. He also feels that boot camps are ineffective because they target factors unrelated to crime and it also gives offenders an opportunity to bond. He is a strong advocate of a cognitive-behavioral approach which he states has been shown to reduce recidivism by an average of 10 percent. He feels that this approach teaches offenders new skills through modeling, practice, and reinforcement. He believes that all programs for offenders be evidence-based. Reentry programs must have unique features; however the core of these programs should follow the basic tenets of effective correctional interventions (Latessa, 2008).

Reentry programs need to deliver with integrity. The programs should include both external and internal quality assurances. Activities need to focus on examining outcomes, performance measures, and meeting milestones. It is imperative that programs are delivered as designed. A poorly implemented program can do more harm than good (Visher, 2007). Many reentry programs are evidence-based. Staff who are involved with reentry programs need to model appropriate behavior. They should be well trained and qualified, and they need to be well supervised. All programs and activities need to be monitored to ensure the appropriate amount of treatment is provided. Promising programs can fail if implementation is not monitored. Effective release planning is not an easy process. Corrections agencies must assess and incorporate an inmate's strengths, weaknesses, and needs into on comprehensive document that the inmate can both understand and follow (La Vigne, et al., 2008).

E. Reentry programs that are not working

A large body of research has indicated that correctional services and interventions can be effective in reducing recidivism for offenders, however not all programs and interventions are equally effective (Visher, 2007). This is an area where some agencies fail with their reentry programs. Programs need to target those offenders with a higher probability of recidivism. Higher risk offenders need to be provided with more intensive treatment than lower risk offenders. These two groups should not be in the same program. Intensive treatment for lower risk offenders can increase recidivism (Latessa, 2008). Low risk offenders may learn antisocial behavior from higher risk offenders which could increase their failure rate. Due to budget cuts, these two groups of offenders are often placed in the same programs.

Prison populations are ethnically and racially diverse, with various needs. This suggests that the reentry populations will also be diverse. Planning for reentry requires addressing the complexities of the prison population. There are a number of reasons for the overrepresentation of racial minorities in prison and the U.S. stands alone where the minority disproportionality is most evident (Petersilia, 2003). The needs of this diverse group of offenders must be met while they are incarcerated to help them become successful when they return to society. Programs must be diverse to meet these needs. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Recidivism Report (2007), black males were more likely than white males to be rearrested (72.9% versus 62.7%), reconvicted (51.1% versus 43.3%) and returned to prison with a new sentence (28.5% versus 22.6%).

Correctional facility need to objectively evaluate all of the programs that are being used. Without an assessment, they run the risk of getting false-positive or false-negative results. It is also possible that an offender may fail because the facility may be referring the wrong person to

a good program or a good candidate to the wrong program. Additionally, a program must not be judged simply on the number of people who complete the program requirements. A program that will accept anybody and everybody must be viewed with a degree of skepticism (Basile, 2002). Output and outcome measurements must be in place to review the success or failure of a program.

Prisoners often do the work that keeps prisons running, like preparing food, laundry, general cleaning, light maintenance, and mail sorting. While incarcerated, they can develop specific work skills that can be useful in securing work after release. Making licenses plates is not a rehabilitative skill that will help them obtain employment once they are released (Travis, 2005). Sometime prisoners work under conditions that have rightly been described as cruel and inhumane, such as chain gangs. Prisoners should work in more positive settings that would encourage learning a skill that will help them in society. They can develop constructive work habits by participating in prison industries, which will help them prepare for work on the outside.

Conclusion

If a reentry program is to be successful, it must target those offenders with a higher probability of recidivism. The program must be designed differently for higher and lower risk offenders. It must also address the ethnically and racially diverse population, along with their various needs. The correctional facility needs to evaluate all of the programs to determine success or failure of a specific program. The program must include vocational skills that will help the offender prepare for work on the outside. Programs that are shown to work need to be reinforced and expanded, while the ineffective ones are discarded and not allowed to drain the limited resources.

III. Theoretical Framework

Criminological theories attempt to explain the reasons why individuals commit deviant or criminal behavior. They are models that have been tested and furthered our understanding of human behavior. This paper will incorporate social bond theory, routine activities theory, and general strain theory in an attempt to explain why offenders may commit new crimes once they have been released from prison. These theories will provide additional support for recommendations in creating successful reentry programs.

A. Social Bond Theory

According to Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory, weak social bonds increase the risk of being involved in criminal behavior. Individual's relationships, commitments, values, norms, and beliefs encourage them to not break the law. If moral codes are internalized and individuals are tied into, and have a stake in their wider community, they will voluntarily limit their propensity to commit deviant acts (Hirschi, 1969). Individuals are not forced into criminal behavior, but choose to commit crime because they lack ties to conventional social bonds. This theory proposes that people who engage in delinquency are free of intimate attachments, aspirations, and moral beliefs that bind them to a conventional and law-abiding way of life (Conklin, 2007).

Social attachments, in the form of a relationship, marriage, family, friends, a job or schooling will help an individual refrain from being involved in criminal behavior. Forming secure bonds to other human beings fosters traits like empathy and friendliness. These secure bonds will also counteract the pressure to break the law. If a person is able to experience empathy, that person will be far less likely to engage in criminal acts that would result in someone being harmed (Hirschi, 1969). A securely attached individual is more likely to

understand the concept of respect. The understanding and implementation of respect is a social control that discourages disrespectful deviant behavior (Conklin, 2007).

One institution that is basic to all societies is the family. Maintaining positive family relationships is essential to assist offenders with reentry. Research on crime and delinquency points to the crucial role of the family for supporting the offender upon his release into society (Conklin, 2007). These connections are also important for the children, and they can give the incarcerated parent the hope and a reason to be successful upon their return to the community. One study indicates that approximately 71 percent of inmates are expected to live with their family upon their release (La Vigne et al., 2008). In many cases, family members are not in a position to provide support when individuals return home. Some of these families may be struggling with limited finances. Meeting the needs of the released offender may still be a challenge even in cases where the families are able to help the returning individual. When an offender returns to the community, he will need a positive support system in place that encourages a healthy lifestyle, positive behaviors, and self-sufficiency. The family social bond is essential to ensure a successful reentry of the offender into the community (Report, 2003). This bonding or re-bonding process with the family must be a part of every reentry program and it must start on the day that the offender enters prison. The majority of former prisoners believe that family support has helped them avoid a return to prison (La Vigne et al., 2008).

The social bond is important with the offender's peer group. Hirschi (1969) finds that delinquents are more likely to have delinquent friends than non-delinquents are. Individuals who have weak relationships with their families tend to have weak relationships with their peers. Attachment to peers does not necessarily produce attitudes conducive to delinquency, however those who are more delinquent and more likely to have delinquent friends are less likely to say

their friends are worthy of respect (Conklin, 2007). Those individuals that have a stronger bond with their family will also have the greatest number of close friends. These close friends can be an essential tool in the reentry process. If the family bond is not present when the offender is released from prison, he may turn to his former delinquent friends for the support and acceptance that he is looking for.

The social bond is also important in other aspects of the offender's reentry into society. One example is in commitment to conformity. Hirschi (1969) believes that few would deny that men on occasion obey the rules simply from fear of the consequences. This rational component in conformity he labels as commitment. The idea is that the offender invests time, energy, and himself in programs or activities to be successful upon reentry. He is committed to conforming to the rules of society. When or if he considers deviant behavior once he is released, he must consider the costs of this behavior and the risk he runs of losing the investment he has made in conventional labor (Conklin, 2007).

A second example where social bond is important in other aspects of an offender's reentry includes involvement. Involvement in conventional activities is often part of a social bond theory. The assumption, widely shared, is that a person may be simply too busy doing conventional things to find time to engage in deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Involvement can include appointments, deadlines, working hours, and plans, so the opportunity to commit deviant acts can be lessened. To the extent that he is engrossed in conventional activities, he cannot even think about deviant acts, let alone act out his inclinations (Hirschi, 1969).

One bond that could prevent delinquency but was not incorporated in social bond theory is membership in organized religion. Hirschi (1969) does discuss a belief system and common values system, but he does not specifically list a faith-based system. The theories that do not

mention beliefs or values, and many do not, may be assumed to take this approach to the problem (Hirschi, 1969). Religious activities are especially effective in inhibiting criminality because regular involvement in such activities exposes people to moral proscriptions and makes real the threat of sanctions by enabling the close monitoring and sanctioning of waywardness (Conklin, 2007). Religion is one of many influences on delinquent behavior (Johnson et al., 2000). It interacts with the influence of the family and the peer group to inhibit or cause delinquency. It is also a conventional activity. A review of research on the relationship between individual religiosity and criminality concluded that there is strong support to show that frequent church attendees have lower crime rates than infrequent or non-attendees and those individuals who believe in an afterlife with divine punishment for sins have somewhat lower crime rates than persons who lack such beliefs (Ellis, 1985). Religion may be an important aspect of social bond theory and it should not be overlooked as part of the reentry program.

B. Routine Activities Theory

Cohen and Felson's (1979) routine activities approach deals with the factors that influence the range of choices available to individuals. They believe that people make choices, but they cannot choose the choices available to them (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). Some people are more likely than others to confront situations where the benefits of crime are high and the costs are low. This approach focuses on three elements: motivated offenders, target suitability, and guardianship. Central to the routine activities approach is the claim that crime is likely to occur when a motivated offender and a suitable target come together in the absence of a capable guardian (Conklin, 2007).

Society needs to keep these released offenders from becoming motivated to commit new crimes. Motivation can be in the form of employment, programs or community service work.

Maintaining a job is a way of securing income for one's self and keeping a distance from negative influences and opportunities for illegal behavior (Travis, 2005). Most large cities throughout the country have employment programs that provide services to their residents. These programs that seek to improve employment outcomes for hard to employ populations will invariably find former offenders as part of their clientele. One possible problem is that these agencies do not operate employment programs specifically designed to target individuals as they leave prison. This is another reason why reentry programs must include job training skills as part of their reentry initiative. Without any type of job training, these released offenders may become frustrated and then motivated to commit new crimes.

The routine activity theory also stresses that the absence of capable guardians will also motivate offenders to commit new crimes. Capable guardians are those individuals or groups who effectively discourage crime and prevent it from occurring. They can include social and civic groups or probation and parole agents supervising a released offender. Supervising offenders in the community is critical to protecting public safety and preventing crime (Solutions, 2009). Released offenders need structure in their lives to help with their reentry. That structure should include some type of mandatory supervision. While many released prisoners are under supervision, this policy varies widely state by state (La Vigne et al., 2008). The argument here is that unless a state requires a period of mandatory supervision, there is no way to impose conditions on these released offender's behavior following their release. These offenders will not be supervised by capable guardians and possibly placed at a high risk of committing a new crime. Some type of extended supervision should be part of every reentry program.

Routine activities theory can explain a wide variety of deviant actions by individuals. It is valuable because it complements traditional crime theories in a fundamental way. It focuses on the opportunities for crime on the premise that even when a motivated offender is present, no crime can occur if no opportunity is available (Cohen & Felson, 1979). A supervised and structured individual may not have that opportunity to engage in criminal activity. Lack of structure makes more time available for deviant behavior, the presence of peers makes deviance easier and more rewarding, and the absence of an authority figure reduces social control (Conklin, 2007).

C. General Strain Theory

According to Agnew's (1992) general strain theory, people engage in crime because they experience strains or stressors. Strains refer to events or conditions that are disliked by the individual. For example, they may be desperate for money, or been mistreated, or become upset because of a range of negative emotions. Crime may be a way to reduce or escape from strains. Individuals may also be able to cope with their strains and negative emotions through crime. Agnew proposes that a general strain theory should focus on at least three measures of strain: the actual or anticipated failure to achieve positively valued goals, the actual or anticipated removal of positively valued stimuli, and the actual or anticipated presentation of negative stimuli (Agnew, 2006).

Strain theory can be applied to several elements of a successful offender reentry programs. Our country is currently facing some economic down times. It is difficult for individuals without criminal backgrounds to find employment, let alone those that have been incarcerated. Obtaining employment represents one of the greatest barriers to an individual's successful reintegration into the community (Latessa, 2008). Reentry programs need to address

the element of strains and discuss how the released offender will cope with the strains of such a depressing economy and the possibility of limited employment opportunities. Many of them may have been gone from society for several years and do not realize the magnitude of the problem. The ultimate goal is for them to find employment. Regardless of their ability to find employment, released offenders must still be able to value themselves positively and be able to cope with the strains of the way that they feel society may be treating them. Building confidence in released prisoners that they can support themselves without needing to resort to criminal activities serves as a protective factor against future criminal activity (La Vigne et al., 2008). Agnew (2006) proposes that strain is most likely to lead to crime and delinquency when it is perceived as unjust and produces pressure to cope by breaking the law. These anticipated strains may continue into the offender's future or he may be experiencing new strains of reentry. Individuals, who cannot achieve status through conventional methods such as employment or education, may join criminal gangs because the gang makes them feel important, respected, and/or feared (Agnew, 2006).

A second element to consider in the strain theory is the removal of positively valued stimuli. In the case of a released offender, the removal of his support network could make him extremely vulnerable to be involved in new criminal activity. Whether individuals respond to strain with crime is said to depend on several factors, such as the level of social control and whether the individual associates with criminal peers (Schmalleger, 2007). Social control refers to the treatment by conventional others, like parents, spouses, families, or employers. If this treatment is negative and ongoing, it could reduce the emotional bond to the conventional others. When this happens, notable strains increase the likelihood that individuals may retreat from

conventional others and join or form criminal groups with delinquent or peer groups (Agnew, 2006).

Strains directly increase the likelihood that individuals will come to view crime as a desirable, justifiable, or at least excusable form of behavior (Agnew, 2006). Many strains involve the unjust treatment by others. This treatment may foster the belief that crime is justified since it is being used to make right an injustice that was done to them. However, not all offenders cope with strains through crime. Many can cope within legal methods and avoid criminal coping because the cost of crime is too high for them. They want to be successful and do not want to return to the life of crime. For those that cannot cope, Agnew (2006) suggests that criminal coping is most likely to occur when individuals lack the ability to cope with strains in a legal manner because of their individual traits, like intelligence, social and problem-solving skills, and personality traits. These individual traits must be addressed in an offender reentry program so these individuals will be able to cope with the strains that they will most likely face once they reenter society. Strategies for reducing the likelihood that individuals will respond to strains with crime include improving conventional coping skills and resources, increasing social support, increasing social control and reducing association with delinquent peers and beliefs favorable to crime (Agnew, 2006).

Conclusion

In reviewing Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory, arguments can be made that support the theory when it is applied to a prisoner reentry program. Social bonds are extremely important for an offender who is reentering society. Social bonds can provide positive role modeling and support to offenders. Social bonds may also provide financial support and a stable environment

for the offender. They will help the offender commit to conventional values and lifestyles and may weaken the propensity of crime and deviant behavior.

Cohen and Felson's (1979) routine activities theory supports the belief that lifestyles contribute significantly to an offender's reentry into society. Offenders need to be motivated in a positive manner so they will not choose to commit crime. Motivation can be found in several forms to include employment, programs or community service work. The theory also argues that the presence of capable guardians will also motivate offenders to not commit new crimes. These guardians may be in the form of some type of extended supervision for the offender after he has been released from prison. Released offenders need structure in their new lives outside of prison. That structure must keep the individual busy and also keep him under some type of supervision so he does not commit new crimes.

Agnew's (1992) general strain theory suggests that strains or stressors may cause released offenders to resort to crime if those strains are not adequately addressed in a reentry program. Those strains may be caused by a lack of employment, a lack of positive stimuli or the feeling of being treated unfairly. Strains may justify an offender's thinking and give him an excuse to commit new crimes. Committing a new crime may be his way to cope with strains. Strategies to reduce strains must be addressed in every reentry program.

These theories attempt to show that there is a strong correlation between positive social bonds, structured activities, strains or stressors and prison reentry programs. All of these elements need to be addressed in a reentry program so offenders can be successful upon their reentry into society. I will incorporate these principles into my recommendations for prisoner reentry programs.

IV. Recommendations

Preparing offenders for the challenges that they will face outside of the prison is a difficult task. This preparation must start when the offenders enter prison. The two previous sections discussed the challenges and risk factors associated with prisoner reentry. They also reviewed the theoretical aspect of specific elements that are essential to an offender's successful reentry. This section will look at addressing the needs of incarcerated individuals from the moment of admission through the day of their release. Corrections agencies must prepare exiting prisoners for this period and work with community service providers and agencies to ensure that offenders receive the needed resources and guidance after their release. These efforts may make the difference between recidivism and a successful transition to the community.

A. Specific goals and objectives of a reentry program

The purpose of this section is to recommend the specific elements that need to be included in an effective reentry program. Correctional facilities should incorporate these elements into their release planning process. This section will also discuss the importance of generating cooperation between correctional facilities and key stakeholders. The successful reentry of an offender into society must be borne by many parties.

When a person is released from prison, their immediate needs will be for transportation, clothing, and a minimal amount of money. They will need transportation to their new home or residence. For those individuals who do not have family, they may need to depend on public transportation. This may be an issue for those individuals who are incarcerated in areas where public transportation is limited or lacking, such as in a rural community. The vast majority of DOC's surveyed by the Urban Institute (2008) assist inmates with securing transportation from the prison to a specified drop off location (La Vigne et al., 2008). Many also provide pre-

purchased bus tickets, while others provide gate money for the amount needed to take a local bus. It is recommended that correctional facilities should assess an individual's access to transportation to locations as mandated by their release plan prior to the release date, and then have a plan in place to arrange transportation if needed. Released offenders cannot be left at the main entrance to the facility and expect to find their own transportation. This needs to be pre-arranged.

Released offenders will need to have civilian clothes to wear and additional clothing for the upcoming days or weeks. They will need suitable clothing for seeking housing, employment, and for applying for services within the community. The clothing must also be seasonally appropriate. Having clothing is one of the many resources that help inmates become reintegrated into the community. The Wisconsin DOC provides prisoners with a list of resources from which to obtain inexpensive clothing prior to release (DOC, 2010). Offenders need suitable clothing on the day and at the time of their release. They should not have to worry about trying to obtain clothing on the date of their release from prison. They may not have the transportation available to take them to clothing outlets. It is recommended that offenders have access to suitable clothing before their release date. Offenders should not be released in their prison uniforms. This is a negative stigma that will not help the offender.

Released offenders must also have enough money to pay for their basic needs during their first few weeks or month outside of prison. Some of these offenders may have their own funds that they have saved while incarcerated, however agencies should review how much of these funds can be used to pay for fees or restitution that have been sanctioned against the individual. Offenders typically do not have sufficient resources to pay off these financial obligations immediately upon their return to the community. For those offenders who do not have their own

funds, the Urban Institute (2008) recommends that exiting offenders be given the amount of money sufficient to obtain food, transportation, lodging and any other immediate needs in the first 24 hours after release (La Vigne, 2008). This amount will vary by city and state. It is also recommended that funds are given in the form of cash, since cashing a check may be another issue for released offenders. Many offenders may rely on their families for financial support in the days after release and this information needs to be verified if in fact the families are able to provide the financial support.

Stable housing is a fundamental need for all returning offenders. It is an essential factor for an offender's success within the community. Offenders with stable housing and support systems are more likely to stay gainfully employed, and less likely to commit new crimes (Reentry, 2007). Some offenders will be released to the community without any type of additional supervision, while many will be under some type of supervision or may be temporarily housed in transitional living facilities. If a suitable housing placement cannot be identified prior to release, then it is recommended that temporary housing options be in place to prevent the offender from becoming homeless. Offenders who are homeless are more difficult to monitor, more likely to go underground, and more likely to engage in high-risk or criminal behaviors (Reentry, 2007). Homeless shelters are not the answer to the problem. They offer short-term options and many may not be conducive to clean and sober or crime-free living. It is recommended that all offenders be released to some type of transitional housing 30 to 90 days prior to their release to the community. Prisoners should ideally make the transition from prison to the community in a gradual, closely supervised process. This process of graduated release permits offenders to cope with their many post-release problems in manageable steps (Petersilia, 2003). This can be accomplished through transitional housing. This transitional housing would

provide the necessary supervision for the remainder of their sentence and also give the offender the opportunity to arrange for appropriate housing, something that may be difficult to do within the institution. It will also allow the offender to actively seek employment or to apply for needed services or benefits once he is released. Transitional housing can offer a variety of support services to assist clients in achieving self-sufficiency (La Vigne et al., 2008). It also would permit the staff to initiate early and continuing assessments of progress under actual stresses of life. The research clearly shows that transitional housing is imperative to the successful release process of an offender (Petersilia, 2003). Offenders should have this form of extended supervision to help guide them into a successful reentry into society.

Proper identification is necessary for a released offender to assist him with finding housing, opening up a bank account, applying for benefits, and to prove eligibility for employment. Securing documentation such as a birth certificate, social security card, or other papers may be necessary to apply for state or federal benefits. Some offenders may view the cost associated with obtaining these documents as a barrier while others may lack the initial documents needed to obtain other papers or identification. Correctional facilities must recognize the need for inmates to have a state-issued identification card upon their release. Many facilities have partnerships with other state agencies to facilitate the acquisition of state identification cards. Approximately 44 percent of agencies surveyed provide exiting prisoners with a DOC identification card that they may exchange for a state identification (La Vigne et al., 2008). Correctional facilities should ensure that offenders have a state identification card or provide them with an identification card that they can exchange for a state identification card. The Wisconsin DOC is developing the Inmate ID program, which is a partnership with the Department of Transportation to streamline the process of obtaining a state ID card for offenders

who are close to their release date (DOC, 2008). Having a state identification card is critical upon an offenders release to obtain services or resources. Delays in obtaining an ID card can also mean delays in services, benefits, housing or employment. Transportation to the DOT may also be an issue for some offenders. It is recommended that the offenders have their state ID card on the day of release. This may also provide a sense of being part of the community.

There is a positive correlation between the educational gains of offenders while incarcerated and their success upon returning to the community (Petersilia, 2003). Recidivism is higher among offenders who have not completed educational and vocational programs while in prison. To improve the chances of success, offenders are encouraged to complete educational and vocational programs, as well as institution work assignments prior to reentry. The reasons for a released offender's lack of employment are many. Some individuals do not possess the proper skills, work experience, or education to secure employment. This training will provide the offender with the basic skills needed to help secure employment once he is released to the community. Many released offenders are able and qualified to work, but they may not have the proper educational credentials needed to demonstrate employment eligibility. Corrections facilities should ensure that the appropriate assessments, educational requirements, and vocational skills are documented in order to provide this information to the appropriate workforce development or other community-based agency. The research shows that education and vocational programs are essential for a successful reentry into society (Petersilia, 2003). It is recommended that correctional facilities stress the need for offenders to take these classes. The Federal Correctional Institution in Oxford Wisconsin offers various certificate programs through the University of Wisconsin, Madison Area Technical College, and Fox Valley Technical College (Occupational, 2006). These programs assist offenders with job skills to prepare them

for reentry. It is also recommended that state correctional facilities partner with the University of Wisconsin or the technical colleges in their area to offer similar programs to better prepare state inmates with the skills that they will need for reentry.

Everyone should have access to affordable health care; however the need for medical care can be difficult for those offenders who have been released from prison. Many of these individuals have physical and mental health problems. They may be able to apply for some type of state medical care, but mental health care can be more difficult. They individuals will need to go to their county mental health facility to receive treatment. Many of these facilities require an appointment which can be weeks or months away. Correctional facilities need to address the continuity of medical and mental health care, and any AODA treatment for offenders prior to their release. The offender should be provided with contact information of a health care facility or provider in the community in which they plan to live. For individuals with a history of mental illness or substance abuse, the facility should schedule an appointment with a counselor in the community prior to release. They should also examine issues related to medication upon the offender's release. Offenders should be given a 45 day supply of medication at their release. This time period is derived from estimates that it takes an average of 45 days for benefits to be reactivated (La Vigne et al., 2008). It is not feasible to give the offender a prescription that he made need to fill because this could put a financial burden on him at a time when he may have limited resources.

Maintaining positive family relationships is essential to assist offenders with reentry. When an offender returns to the community, they will need a positive support system in place that will encourage a healthy lifestyle, positive behaviors, and self-sufficiency (La Vigne et al., 2008). Correctional facilities should encourage visitation with family members throughout the

offender's entire time of incarceration. Prison may place huge burdens on families, and visitation may help to lessen the impact of the incarceration on the family. Family members should also be included in the offender's release plan. To further improve family ties, many facilities are enhancing the parenting education for offenders and expanding the fatherhood programs. Maintaining these connections is important for the family. Prisoners who are approaching their release date are optimistic that their families would be supportive during the reentry phase (Travis, 2005). A support system can be an invaluable resource for an offender, especially at the time of release. Maintaining parent-child contact during a period of incarceration may be difficult. Distance between the institution and the home may be a barrier for some families. Some prisons have strict visiting policies, especially when minor children are involved. Others narrowly define the family members who are granted visiting privileges. Telephone calls can be costly to make and many families may not be able to afford the costs for collect calls. It is recommend that prisons implement programs designed to overcome the barriers of distance, visiting practices, and costs that reduce contact between prisoners and their families. These programs will demonstrate that with a little creativity and a fair amount of commitment, corrections facilities will find ways to foster ongoing, constructive relationships between incarcerated parents and their children (Travis, 2005). It is imperative that reentry programs assist the offender with maintaining or rebuilding a positive family relationship. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition among corrections professionals that paying closer attention to family issues might have long-term benefits, not only in terms of decreasing the likelihood of recidivism to crime and prison, but also in decreasing the likelihood of the intergenerational transmission of crime (Eddy & Clark, 2010).

Conclusion

Correctional facilities need specific goals and objectives in order to make the reentry initiative a reality. A successful reentry program will assist offenders with their rehabilitation process and will also help them to be law abiding citizens in the community. The rehabilitation of offenders will occur through the various efforts and programs within the facilities. This process must start on the day of entry into prison and continue throughout the offender's sentence. Rehabilitation seeks to bring about the fundamental changes in offenders and their behavior. This is accomplished through education and treatment. In the case of criminal offenders, a failure in the rehabilitation efforts will result in nothing but a return to criminality (Schmallegger, 2007).

B. Key stakeholders involved with reentry

Just like many private or public programs, there are usually key stakeholders involved with the programs. In the case of a reentry program, there are also key stakeholders and they need to be identified. These stakeholders may be law enforcement agencies, community or faith-based groups, victim advocacy organizations, State Legislature, treatment providers, or the Department of Workforce Development. On the state level, it may be relatively easy to identify lead authorities from specific agencies; however it may be more difficult to identify these individuals at the local level. Some of these key organizations and agencies, at both the state and local level, might recognize the value of participating in a prisoner reentry initiative. Some may have already addressed the issue. These individuals need to get together and help with analyzing the problem. It is important to encourage collaboration among key stakeholders and engage them in a joint venture regarding prisoner reentry (Report, 2003).

Assembling a broad range of stakeholders to diagnose existing problems regarding prisoner reentry is an essential first step to launching a reentry initiative. One agency cannot accomplish community safety on its own and that is why the state has enlisted the help of critical partners and built upon these relationships to accomplish reentry goals (Reentry, 2007). The stakeholders will need data which can provide a base of knowledge and understanding of the issue. Once this data is obtained, they can develop a plan for moving forward.

It will be useful to engage some leadership in the reentry effort. It is important to appeal to someone who is both interested in prisoner reentry and who will exercise influence over the staff, organization, or agency. A state legislature can play a role by creating an oversight commission for a reentry initiative. Through the bipartisan support of the Legislature, the Wisconsin DOC has increased its commitment to resources, enhanced programming and implemented innovative strategies to strengthen its reentry initiative (Reentry, 2007).

Seen from one perspective, reentry is a governmental process. The institutions that define the contours of prisoner reentry are principally government agencies (Travis, 2005). Many of these decisions reflect government policy. Government policies may determine reentry preparation, but the reentry process also involves offenders, their families, and extended social networks. Their actions can significantly influence the realities of reentry. The end result of the reentry process reflects decisions that are made by a variety of individuals. All of these individuals or agencies are key stakeholders in a reentry program.

Conclusion

There must be collaboration between correctional facilities and key stakeholders to make a reentry program successful. This underscores the point that the responsibility for release

planning should not rest exclusively with the corrections system. These outside agencies should have a vested interest in ensuring an offender's success in the days following his release. These agencies need to be aware of the challenges and risk factors that are associated with reentry and they need to help with removing these barriers.

The key stakeholders need to assist with providing appropriate clothing for the offenders to wear upon their release. They need to work on locating and providing stable housing within the community. State and local agencies need to help the offender with obtaining proper identification and with arranging medical, mental health, and AODA care. Technical colleges need to help the offender with completing his GED if it has not been completed while he was incarcerated. Effective reentry planning is a complex task and it will only be successful with the cooperation of key stakeholders.

V. Summary and conclusion

Prisoner reentry is not a new concept. Prisoners have been released from prison for more than two hundred years; however reentry is currently very different from only a few decades ago. The changing nature of prisoner reentry has made transitions from prison to community more challenging. Correctional officials have begun to recognize the challenges and difficulties in the prison to community transition, and reentry programs have been developed and expanded to ease the transition. They have also changed their core mission and the way their staff perform their jobs.

Reentry is more than just a program or set of organized principles. It is an entirely new conceptual framework for thinking about the processing of criminal offenders, from the day they enter the institution, until the day that they are released. Reentry is defined as the process of leaving incarceration and returning to society, and includes all activities and programming conducted to prepare ex-convicts to return safely to the community and to live as law-abiding citizens (Petersilia, 2003). This philosophy is essential to the successful return of released offenders into the community.

Wisconsin's prison population has decreased for the second year in a row, dropping dramatically in 2010 by nearly 14 percent (Hall, 2011). Corrections officials credit the reduction to a system wide push that began five years ago to prepare all prisoners for reentry into society. This initiative aimed to reduce the number of offenders who return to prison, either for violating terms of their release or by committing new crimes. Reentry programs work. They need to be supported and continuously evaluated. These programs need to be able to handle the growing number of offenders who are returning to the community.

Reentry programs are promising for a number of reasons. They provide an opportunity to shape offender behavior while transitioning back to their communities, thereby reducing recidivism rates. They can facilitate a successful reentry that can lead to better and more functional lives for former offenders, their families and communities. They can also offer the ability to proactively deal with offenders who are on community supervision and reduce prison populations.

A successful reentry program will address the needs of incarcerated individuals from the moment of admission through the day of their release. The program must consider the immediate needs of the offenders at the time of release. Those needs include: transportation, clothing, a minimal amount of money, stable housing, proper identification, educational and vocational programs. It should also address affordable health care and assist with maintaining positive family relationships. There are solid reasons for providing in-prison programs that help offenders get a high school diploma, teach them job skills, and provide treatment for their addictions. Research clearly shows that some programs, alone or in combination, work for offenders (Travis, 2005). Investing in reentry programs is a necessary ingredient in the successful reentry of offenders to their communities.

VI. References

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