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**Offender's Views of Reentry:
Implications for Processes, Programs, and Services**

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About This Series of Papers on RPI

The Office of Justice Programs of the federal Department of Justice has developed a series of system-wide reentry initiatives that focus on reducing the recidivism of offenders. The initiatives include: 1) Reentry Partnership Initiatives (RPI) which includes formation of a partnership between criminal justice, social service, and community groups to develop and implement a reentry process; 2) Reentry Courts which are modified drug courts that focused on the ex-inmate; and 3) Weed and Seed-based reentry partnerships. The RPI and Reentry Courts are demonstration efforts that do not include any funding for programming; OJP has provided technical assistance to the eight RPI sites and nine Reentry Court sites. The eight RPI sites include: Baltimore, Maryland; Burlington, Vermont; Columbia, South Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; Lake City, Florida; Las Vegas, Nevada; Lowell, Massachusetts; and Spokane, Washington. This paper is part of a series on system efforts to address the problem of offenders returning to communities after periods of incarceration.

This series is the result of a formative evaluation of the Reentry Partnership Initiative (RPI) conducted by the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) at the University of Maryland, College Park. The evaluation was conducted to examine how the eight demonstration sites pursued the implementation of RPI, with a focus on the organizational development across agencies to construct new offender reentry processes. BGR used qualitative research methods, including interviews, focus groups, network analysis surveys of stakeholders, and review of documents, to measure the fidelity of the implementation during the early stage of the RPI process. Many of the sites devoted their efforts to one component given the complex multi-faceted aspects of the offender

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processing issues. In fact, many of the sites found that the development of the interagency approach fostered new discussions in areas that had long been considered “off-limits” or limited opportunities including: targeting offenders for services, overcoming societal barriers to reentry, envisioning roles and responsibilities of key agencies and staff, and using of informal social controls along with formal criminal justice agencies. The reports provide an overview of complex organizational challenges that underscore new offender processes. To that end, this series of papers reports on the conceptual framework that the Office of Justice Programs envisioned and the issues that the RPI sites encountered as they began to implement the new model. The papers are part of a series devoted to this end that includes:

- From Prison Safety to Public Safety: Innovations in Offender Reentry
- Emerging Roles and Responsibilities in the Reentry Partnership Initiative: New Ways of Doing Business
- Engaging the Community in Offender Reentry
- Offender’s Views of Reentry: Implications for Processes, Programs, and Services
- Targeting for Reentry: Matching Needs and Services to Maximize Public Safety.

The project team included Dr. Faye S. Taxman, Mr. Douglas Young, Dr. James Byrne, Dr. Alexander Holsinger, Dr. Donald Anspach, Ms. Meridith Thanner, and Ms. Rebecca Silverman. We wish to thank and acknowledge the RPI sites and their staff for sharing their experiences with us and acknowledge their tremendous efforts to craft new processes. We would also like to thank our National Institute of Justice program manager, Ms. Janice Munsterman, for her guidance in producing these series of papers.

Introduction and Overview

The offender returning to the community is confronted with a number of challenges to become a member of the community. The challenges range from economic and psychological obstacles to sociological barriers. Essentially, very little is understood about these challenges to reintegration (Maruno, 2000; Travis, Solomon, & Wiel, 2000; Taxman, Young, Byrne, Holsinger & Anspach, 2001). With nearly 70 percent of offenders returning to prison within three years (Beck & Shipley, 1989), the Department of Justice has fostered a new assessment of reentry processes to improve community crime reduction effects. The focus is on the offender returning from prison back into the community. The question confronting program designers is how to build reentry processes that reinforce the message of accountability and individual responsibility, while also attending to the issues about the offender's regaining legitimacy in society.

The Department of Justice's experiment in the Reentry Partnership Initiative (RPI) is a strategy to develop community-based initiatives to reinvent the process of reintegration. The three stage process of *institutional treatment* → *structured reentry* → *reintegration*, detailed in an earlier paper, presents a framework for constructing a reentry process that addresses public safety needs, but also attends to the psychosocial needs of the offender in the community (Taxman, et al., 2001). Underlying this process is the recognition that reintegration is a process that involves the social, economic, and psychological needs of the offender in a manner that promotes offender accountability for his/her own behavior. Stated simply, a reentry process that does not engage the offender in becoming a productive member of society is likely to be another notation on the chart of "tried" strategies. The offender must be challenged to become a

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contributing member of society. Program developers must target the needs of the offender that are unmet in the current reentry policies and procedures, and how to programmatically address these issues.

As part of the RPI process evaluation, the researchers conducted six focus groups in various sites with offenders in various stages of the structured reentry phases. The focus groups were designed to learn more about the offenders and their experience in transitioning back into the community. The focus groups observed a full range of offenders involved in the reentry process from eight RPI sites. Their mission was to begin framing issues about the reentry processes and the needs of the offenders. The following is a summary of the focus groups with attention to four major issues: 1) theoretical considerations of the transitions from prison to community; 2) offender stabilization and maintenance needs; 3) societal and institutional factors that affect reintegration; and 4) impact on RPI offender processing issues. Essentially, this paper is designed to begin exploring the issues identified in the focus groups and the implications for reentry practice. More work in this area is needed.

A. Reentry: What is it? How does it occur?

The traditional process for releasing prisoners has not changed in the last 20 years--the typical offender is given some token of "daily" expenses (ranging from \$20 to \$200 depending on the state) and a bus ticket. The preparation usually involves the completion of a form identifying where the offender expects to reside--that is typically not verified. Sometimes a list of rental apartments is provided, but the arrangements are generally left up to the offender to determine where to reside and how to pay for basic essentials such as food, housing, and clothing during the first months of return. The

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question about employment is equally nebulous, again left up to the offender upon return to the community. To a large extent, this typifies the process. Offenders are expected to make as many arrangements as they can from prison, with most issues left up to the offender once returning to the community. Few correctional systems have transitional case managers to assist the offender in developing a transition plan with secured housing and employment; few parole agencies have the staff devoted to confirming or supplementing the transition plan. For the 66 percentages of offenders returning to the community with supervised release (e.g., parole, mandatory supervision, etc.), the supervision staff generally monitors the plan (Beck, 2000). Little resources are devoted to the construction and verification of a transition plan.

The current process places the offender accountable for transition in reentry and stabilization in the community. It is built on three basic assumptions: 1) the offender can return to his/her place of residence with ease; 2) the offender can make meaningful arrangements in prison; and 3) the offender can make the transition from being dependent (having all decisions and movements controlled by the prison environment) to independence instantaneously (overnight). The current process derives from the 1980's when parole was viewed as an unnecessary luxury provided by the state for the offender (Burke, 1995). With incarceration periods increasing fourfold during the period from 1970 to 2000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000), coupled with reductions in parole services and supervised release during the initial time period (Petersilia, 1999), the perception was that the offender could "make it" if he/she so desired. The burden on the community and the potential public safety threats that the offender presented were not

part of the public dialogue. Services were viewed as benefiting the offender, not the community at large.

Increasing focus on communities and community justice models have altered the public discourse to recognize that the returning offender is presented with many challenges that will ultimately affect the community. Their prior history and relationship with social and support systems are so fractured that the return is almost synonymous with public safety threats (Taxman, et al., 2001; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). Numerous efforts have evolved which have begun to challenge the perception of "luxurious" transition services for undeserving members of society (offenders) to safety nets for the community (reentry). Efforts like the RPI have used the dialogue among numerous criminal justice agencies (e.g., police, courts, institutional corrections, community corrections, defenders, etc.), social systems (e.g., drug and alcohol treatment, child welfare, etc.), and community (e.g., faith based, neighborhood organizations, etc.) to create processes that promote public safety. In doing so, they have also recognized that the underlying assumption about the offender and his/her position in the community must be addressed through a process of reentry, and ultimately reintegration. These issues are necessary to create "legitimacy" so that the offender is vested in becoming a contributing member of the community.

John Irwin, in the 1970 classic *The Felon*, identified a three-part component of an offender's return to the community. The first part is when the offender begins to "get settled down" or "get on your feet". In general, the returning offender is rather optimistic about his opportunities and freedoms, with the overall expectation that return will be easy. During the initial period of return they realize the difficulties of getting adjusted.

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Normal survival functions like clothing, residence, transportation, employment, and food dominate the offender's efforts. Coupled with this is the initial impact of disorientation, which can be unsettling, as the offender has to "restate" his position with family, peers, and others. The next part is either the "get by" or "make it" phase. After the initial settling down phase, the offender is confronted with the reality of maintaining him/herself. The search for meaning is coupled with frustrations of *re*-establishing the position and becoming satisfied with the new life. The lack of satisfaction assists the offender in transgressing back to old ways and associating with old peers. The last phase is "do good," which is achieved mainly because the offender does not find a crime-free life to be satisfying. During this phase, the offender must overcome the stigma of being an ex-felon, address vocational deficiencies and establish gratifying relationships. Irwin contended that few arrived at the "do good" phase due to the transgressions that occurred during the "make it" phase.

In many ways, the last 30 years have not advanced our efforts in reintegration. While little has been done to understand the *prison*→*community* pathways for the offender, much has occurred to add to the steps to becoming a member of the community. Our understanding of the pathways, with its various twists and curves, has been affected by the punitive landscape of the 1980's, which has dictated a focus on undeserving members of the community. In recent years, there has increasingly been some literature to discuss the perils of returning offenders in many different domains (Tonry & Petersilia, 1999), and academicians have focused on understanding the processes of desistance or the process of ceasing from involvement in criminal behavior (Bushway, et al., 2001; Fagan, 1989). Maruno (2000), in his new book, *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts*

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Reform and Rebuild Their Lives, presents some of the issues related to transition from a sociological and psychological perspective of the offenders. As noted by many, part of the dilemma is the societal expectation that the offender will reform themselves instantaneously, and that the offender will lead a life that society will consider law-abiding. This assumption is limited in that it does not take into consideration a process of change or the different pathways that offenders climb through to become part of society. As noted by Maruno, instead of thinking about the dichotomy between “going straight and being crooked,” society would be better to consider reintegration as one of ‘going curved’ or ‘straight enough’ (Maruno, 2000:43; Leibrich, 1993) to make it possible for offenders to find satisfaction in a “do good” phase.

“The situation facing recidivist offenders is something like a brick wall. It is surmountable but is enough of an obstacle to make most turn around and “head back.” In this scenario, “back” refers to back to crime, back to the lives they are familiar with, but mostly back to prison—where recidivists offenders seem to go again and again... The ex-offenders in this sample need a logical self-survey to help them deal with their own feelings of culpability, external stigma, and the potential emptiness and void of their lives. Sample members face the stigma not just of having offended but also the stigma of growing up poor and failing to achieve Horatio Alger—like achievements by their own bootstraps. They face internal questions of shame, blame, guilt, and culpability for their offending and also for the state of their lives. Finally, like everyone else, they struggle to fill their lives with some pursuit that is worth living for.” (2000:55).

The reentry process from prison to community can be perceived as a behavioral health management perspective, which supports more of a curvilinear Trans-theoretical process. Prochanskia and DiClemente (1992), in their seminal work on how people change, have a five-step process that might be useful in understanding the efforts to assist an offender's move along a continuum of reintegration. The reintegration process is one that involves making connections without falling into the same old traps of the past. The question is "how does an offender obtain making good?" The process of change, which is believed to be circular and not linear, is one that deserves some consideration in programming for the reentry process when the emphasis is on increasing the safety net to protect the public, and in understanding the issues that offenders will confront as they move from an institutional setting to independence in the community.

Table 1 presents a conceptual framework as it relates to reentry. The offender must be in charge of decisions about his/her life but it is part of the process of adaptation. To fully understand this position, the process of change has three major themes that are critical in the offender assuming responsibility for his/her actions: self-awareness, self-diagnosis, and self-management. The model builds on the offender's decision-making skills. When applying it to the process of reentry, the stages of change must comport with the offender being proactive in understanding the various needs as he/she progresses through the transition and stabilization periods. Prochaskia and DiClemente's model provides a means to understand the different processes that the offender must undergo to adjust to society. Using the reentry process described by Taxman and colleagues (2001), the stages of change can be accommodated during these stages to redefine how the offender can partake in mainstream society. The model is also adaptable in that it can

provide the framework for adapting to the environment and making life decisions about residence, peers, and relationships that affect stability in the community. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that addressing the unmet needs of the offender that affects community safety maximizes public safety issues.

Table 1: Building Components to Promote Public Safety

Reentry Stage	Stages of Change	Constructs	Offender's Needs
Institutions	Precontemplation	Beginning to consider that a noncriminal lifestyle is possible	Begin to motivate the offender to change his behavior
Institutional/ Pre-Release	Contemplation	Offender begins to contemplate changes in his lifestyle	Offender defines areas that are likely to be threat to public safety such as housing, support network, employment
Pre-Release/ Post Release	Action	Offender lays out a plan to make changes in different components	Certain areas (e.g., employment, leisure activities, family, etc.) have been defined as contributors to negative behaviors
Post Release Reintegration	Maintenance	Offender establishes plan to stabilize the situation	Establish a noncriminal network to support the prosocial lifestyle through financial independence

B. Survival Needs: The Driving Factors Affecting Behavior

The purpose of transition is to lay the groundwork for the offender's reentry into the community as a productive member of the community. Transition should be designed to address those areas affecting public safety. Most critical is enhancing the offender's ability to be self-sustaining which will decrease involvement in antisocial activities. Institutional corrections and parole agencies have processes and procedures that fit within the available staffing and service resources. That is, the services are configured in such a manner convenient to bureaucratic agencies like institutional corrections and parole agencies. In many states, these services include a social worker or parole agent to assist the offender in developing a "plan" to return home. Most often the plan includes the address where the offender plans to reside. Few states have a process in place to verify that the offender returns to the address listed on the plan. The next step is for the offender to find employment, preferably in a job that can sustain him/her self. The question program developers must be concerned with is what are the needs of offenders and what *should* be in the plan? A related question is what type of issues is the offender likely to confront as he/she begins to assume a responsibility in the community, and how do these issues affect public safety?

Most offenders are consumed with making arrangements to basically "reappear" in the community. The offenders indicated that there is a lot of "pressure" during this early entry stage, mainly because they were unsure of how they would be received by their family and friends, where they would live, and how they would have enough money to pay for essentials.

“I went to a social worker; I stop past her office and explain my situation. I had family out there that didn’t want me to come stay with them. So she said she was going to help me out...She made phone calls to get me into another program but they said I had to go to a 28 day detox program but I was trying to find a place because I was about to be released. She said she couldn’t do nothing for me, she was telling me that I had to get someone to call for me who from the outside and I didn’t have anybody from the outside. I couldn’t really find anyone from the outside that could really handle it for me. (an offender in one site)”

To a large extent the reception by family drives a number of important issues including housing, supports, and connections to the community. In this case, the offender had few options. No family or support system was available to provide the necessary support to make the arrangements for the offender—he was left up to his own recourses to find a suitable place to live and to make other arrangements such as clothing, employment, and connection to the community. While this offender appears to have the skills to search out assistance within the prison, many offenders lack these self-advocacy skills. And then there is the problem of few prisons having case management services to offer to offenders.

Family and relationships with loved ones consume the offender—from fears to expectations to regrets. The offender is, for the most part, trying to determine his place within his family, and the degree to which the family welcomes the return. Very little is known about the offender and the family, although other programs have found that families tend to stick by their folk more often than not (Young, Taxman, & Byrne, 2001;

Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001). Offenders describe tremendous pressure in trying to second-guess how the family is going to react, and how they will be received.

“See me, it's sort of a scary thing, the last time my son seen me I was strung out on drugs and he was seven years old but he still loved his daddy and gave me my respect and I gave him his respect and I haven't talked to him since he was seven. That's been six years now, he is thirteen, I don't know how he is going to except me or he is going to feel - oh my daddy just up and forgot about me. It makes me feel bad but it also encourages me as an individual to get myself right get me together in that way I will be able to do those things that I have always wanted to do for him because me being on drugs and me being in the frame of mind that I was in I wasn't doing anything to help him. I was hurting him because when he would see me and our friend would see me, it would be like look at that old drug addict - he had to see me as his father figure. He would get upset that my dad your talking about and he would be ready to fight and that would make me feel bad that he would grow up seeing me do the things I did so I withdrew myself away. I left and didn't come around anymore. That's why he hasn't seen me since then because I am like if I don't get myself together ain't no use of me being around him.”

Many offenders tell of expectations that upon release the offender is expected to “pay back” for clothing, goods, etc., that were provided while in prison. In other cases, the offender is required to contribute to the household funds immediately. The uncertainty of how the offender will be received leaves many anxious to the degree that they postpone asking the family for assistance because they are afraid of rejection or undue pressure.

A related concern has to do with the changed offender that does not desire to return to the family. In the Baltimore City site, the Reentry Partnership (REP) project provides transitional housing for interested offenders. In the first few months of the project, nearly half of the offenders elect to go to transitional housing (Heirs, 2001). Many offenders have a family or support system to return to, but during the pre-release programming the offender contemplates life at home. The decision to reside in transitional housing is often made because the offender desires distance from the family, particularly the pressure on becoming a contributing member upon return. The transitional housing accommodates the needs of offenders through a process that reinforces the changes process. The offender lives in the transitional housing for up to 90 days without any fees. The housing provides a safe haven in that it requires the offender to take part in a community of returning offenders that have a structured day. During the first 30 days the offender is not allowed to go anywhere except work without a companion. The companion shields the offender from the lure of the street; by reducing the movement of the offender a higher standard is held. One offender told us that the companion "saved" him many times from the young men selling drugs on the street corner. The offender and his companion felt comfortable moving from one side of the street to another side of the street. He could also walk past the street dealers comfortably by engaging in conversation with his companion. Additionally the transitional housing works with the advocate to ensure that the offender is participating in necessary self-help groups, educational/vocational training, or other groups.

The value of the safe housing is greater in that it provides for the offender to interact with family and friends within their own spatial timing. The timing is based on

when the offender is ready to present himself as well as address family issues. One offender informed us that he deliberately did not tell his family that he was back because he needed the time to get established. When he accidentally ran into his sister on the street, the meeting was more on his terms, instead of being compelled to address the family issues related to drug and alcohol use, problems with siblings, etc. Most importantly the MD REP model allows the offender to dictate his own reintegration plan. Offenders are allowed to live in the transitional housing for up to 90 days at no cost and at any time after that for a nominal rent charge. The flexibility gives the offender the ability to determine his own course, which is critical in making the transition from dependency to independency.

A companion piece for the survival is employment with livable wages for the offender. Getting a job is not generally the issue; the more important component is getting a job that can support the offender. For many offenders, they are looking for employment that offers some potential for the future, as well as benefits like others in society. Many of the offenders are clearly aware of the importance of benefits, and desire to have health insurance, vacation time, and sick leave. More importantly they equate such jobs as those that show respect for their role in society as a productive member of the community. The lower level jobs are those that are considered just getting by, and do not command the same position in the community. Plus, they do not provide the offenders with an opportunity to demonstrate that they have repaid society for the harm they have committed, one of the key components of restorative justice. In the end, as one offender in the Florida system asked, how does an offender get his respect back except for employment and being responsible. But if the workplace and others do not afford an

offender such opportunities, then it is unlikely that the offender can make that transition from offender to responsible member of society. The offenders in Florida pointed to the limited work options, the restrictions in public housing, and the pictures of the offenders on the web as visible evidence that their "slate is not clean". Beginning with barriers in the workplace, the offenders appear to need some psychological safety to support their value as a member of society.

C. Societal And Institutional Factors That Affect Reintegration

Being an offender in society carries with it a number of restrictions on civil liberties as well as access to mainstream society. These restrictions have evolved over time, especially in the 1980's when a more retributive philosophy dominated the sentencing landscape (Petersilia, 2001). The tendency has been to add more civil liberty restrictions as a means to dissuade citizens from engaging in criminal activities such as drug trafficking. The premise is that citizens will think about the potential for lost privileges before becoming involved in criminal behavior. These civil liberty restrictions are couched in terms of reducing access to benefits that are reserved for deserving members of society that have a potential to make a significant contribution to society. The number of restrictions in the last several decades grew to include the following: 1) electoral voting restrictions; 2) public housing restrictions for offenders with a prior felony offense; 3) workplace limitations; 4) child support payments including the required payment of child support while the offender is incarcerated; 5) notification of return to the community; and 6) public access to criminal histories including internet based access. The underlying premise is that each of these restrictions enlarges the safety net to protect citizens from criminals who prey on society. It also reinforces the message

as to who has access to societal benefits. At the same time, the restrictions serve to impose a penalty structure after the offender has theoretically repaid society.

In the focus groups we conducted, the discussion seemed to earmark concerns about “wiping the slate clean”. Many of the offenders acknowledged their misdeeds but identified issues about being betrayed by society for not allowing them to get rid of the burden of having made mistakes. The scarlet letter emerged as a symbol of their status in society. The question that many offenders raise is whether their incarceration time (and any subsequent parole or supervised release time) allows them to repay their debt to society. One offender clearly identified the issue:

“I know I did bad things but I paid the price for five years by being in these walls. I want to go back and start over but how do I do that. They won’t let me forget and they have my picture around. I am a changed man but they won’t let me be changed. I want to show my son that you can make a mistake and still be ok. But I don’t know ‘cause no one will let me move on.”

Theorists on retributive justice have struggled with the question about cleaning the slate for offenders (Von Hirsch, 1976; Morris & Tonry, 1990). Von Hirsch (1976; 1986) in describing the just deserts model discusses how the punishment should be proportional to the crime. Once the offender fulfills the conditions of the punishment, society has been repaid. The slate is then considered clean. However, retribution theorists have struggled with the concept of collateral penalties that may interfere with the retributive nature of the penalty structure. While American society searched for new methods to increase the general deterrence of the penalty structure, the concept of just deserts still affected many sentencing schemes in the 1980’s. Simultaneously, a growing number of collateral

penalties crept into being. These collateral penalties were designed to dissuade the public at large from participating in criminal behavior. The goal was to affect decisions to partake in crime by influencing the ability of the person and/or their family in where they can live, the type of jobs that they can hold, and their position in the community. These collateral penalties therefore affect the ability of the offender to have a clean slate. This issue is one that will require considerable discussion to determine how to balance the needs of society with the penalty structure imposed by policy makers and legislators that are not included in the realm of criminal sentences.

Gary LaFree (1998) discusses how these and other structural issues contribute to the sense of a loss of legitimacy in a society that builds on the disenfranchisement from mainstream values and opportunity. From the focus groups that we conducted, these and other issues were raised as barriers to integration, and walls that had been built to reinforce the offender's perspective that they cannot thrive in mainstream society. The question that arises is how does the impact of civil restrictions affect the offender's ability to integrate into society. The following will review some of the major themes that were raised by the offenders in the focus groups we conducted as they began to consider their role in society.

Voting Disenfranchisement Laws. States vary considerably in terms of the loss of the right to participate in a democratic society through voting. All but four states prohibit inmates from voting while serving a felony sentencing, 32 states prohibit voting while on parole, and most prohibit voting while on probation for a felony offense. In over 25 percent of the states, felony offenders lose their right to vote forever with varying rules and regulations. As noted by Mark Mauer (1999), an estimated 3.9 million

Americans--or one in 50 adults--have their voting rights affected due to a felony conviction, with over half of these offenders already completing their sentence. Mauer estimates that three in ten of the "next generation of black men" can expect to be disenfranchised during some part of their life, and nearly 40 percent will ultimately lose their right to vote. Due to some of the issues raised in the 2000 Presidential Election, a commission by former Presidents James Carter and Gerald Ford noted that society must address the issue of voter disenfranchisement among the ex-offender population.

The potential disenfranchisement of voters in a democratic society has serious implications. The collateral "civil" consequences that occur after the offender has completed his sentence have a damaging psychological effect on the returning offender to the community. The loss of one of the fundamental rights in a democratic society to elect representatives and to vote on new laws is one that needs further consideration.

Offenders in the focus groups expressed concerns that they could not partake in their fundamental rights even after they had completed their position in society.

Housing restrictions in public housing. The rapid growth of the drug trafficking business in the 1980's resulted in the creation of a series of civil based penalties in many arenas in society. One area in which creative solutions were lauded occurred in public housing. Public housing communities were allowed to restrict felons or families that allowed drug dealing in their apartment from residing in a public housing community. This provision was designed to protect the law-abiding members of those communities from the harmful behavior of other residents. The impact of these restrictions on residents has not been fully researched but it clearly has limits on the potential residence of returning offenders. The restrictions can affect one of the most

fragile components of the release process—the place that the offender is likely to reside. Offenders have a difficult time locating a place to reside, and the limitations in public housing can exacerbate this problem. Finding a place to reside is generally one of the first difficulties offenders confront as they return to the community, thus prompting many of the national Reentry Partnership Initiative programs to include housing as a potential partner in their initiative.

Workplace Restrictions. As noted by Petersilia (2001), workplace restrictions are an outgrowth of the “get tough” movement of the 1980s. Felony records can temporarily, if not permanently, disqualify employment in some licensed or professional occupations. The varying occupations included law, real estate, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, education, pharmacist, and some skilled trades (e.g., telecommunications, electrician, etc.). Variations occur across the states in terms of the formal restrictions that occur prohibiting offenders to work in different professions. A number of informal restrictions occur as a result of the stigma that offenders carry regarding the willingness of employers to hire people with criminal records. Many large corporations (e.g., cable television, manufacturing, etc.) have restrictions on hiring ex-offenders, which are part of the corporate policy. The area of workplace restrictions is caught between the vague gray zones of the offender’s perception of how their record influences their prospects, and formal policies or legal restrictions that place employment barriers. These barriers, whether they are perceptual or realistic, are part of the structural issues that offenders must confront. The added restrictions in the workplace are yet another collateral consequence that severely limits the ability of the offender to be a productive member of the community. Many of the legitimate jobs, particularly those

with benefit packages, are not open to offenders. The jobs that remain open are often low skilled jobs that feed into the offender's plight that society does not place a value on the offender.

Child support payments. Unpaid child support has been a large political issue for many states in an effort to ensure that parents fully contribute to the welfare of their children. Federal legislation set up the Child Enforcement Support mechanism to ensure that noncustodial parents pay for their children. In many states, the offender is required to make the payments, even when they are incarcerated. This places a burden on the offender because the payments accrue when the offender is incarcerated, leaving the offender in financial arrears when they return to the community. The financial burden on offenders to pay unpaid child support payments immediately upon return to the community places further burden on the offender. The financial burden adds to the family related pressures that many offenders acknowledge, and places unrealistic expectations on the offender to be an immediate contributor to the family.

Little attention has been given to this issue in terms of the realistic ability of offenders to assume financial support immediately upon release. Some states have limited the accrual of child support payments in a fashion much like student deferment of loan repayment—to delay the financial arrears until after the offender is released. Then the payments continue. States have actively pursued different ways of addressing this problem including the use of deferrals and “loans” to the offender (in the form of payment to the family) when the offender is incarcerated.

Notification of Return to the Community. Mainly as a result of Megan's Law, states have moved to put in place a series of processes to notify the community and/or the

victim of returning offenders. These strategies were undertaken as a result to ensure that the victim is kept fully informed of the offender's whereabouts as a means to repair harm to the victim. The movement of the criminal justice system to attend to victim-related issues has been pursued as it became apparent that the criminal justice system tended to be offender oriented. Megan's Law and other state related efforts to alert victims of the offender returning home have been premised on addressing the safety of the community and keeping the victim aware of the location of the offender. The benefits to the community have been notified as reducing the anonymity of the offender in the community for the purpose of public safety. That is, the returning offender is considered a potential threat to the community, and therefore the community is being marshaled to protect itself from the threat. While the notification process marks significant progress for victim rights, some of the impacts on the returning offender have not yet been addressed. The potential for vigilante groups to be orchestrated in certain communities has occurred, the more likely scenario is that the offender will internalize the process as a form of anomie. The message from the community is one of alienation from society instead of being an active member.

Several of the RPI projects have addressed this message by having guardians or community advocates inform the offender that he or she is "welcome" to return and that the community is concerned about his/her well-being. The message from the guardian/advocate is that the community wants the offender to return, but they do not want the offender to engage in criminal behavior that harms the community. The RPI sites that have used this strategy have basically found a programmatic method to ensure

that the offender is not isolated from the community while also working to increase the offender's prosocial role in the community.

Public access to criminal histories. With the expanding internet and more concern about public notification, one of the innovations of the 1990's was the access to criminal histories through the internet. Several states used this strategy as a means of general deterrence, to basically ensure that the offender's past is never hidden. In the Florida Department of Correction web site, public access is to be provided regarding any offender that has been incarcerated in the state or under the supervision of the parole and/or probation officials. The purpose is to provide the citizens with more information about the histories of offenders including criminal activities, characteristics of the offender, and other pertinent information that may be useful. The public access is a further statement about public notification. From the offender's perspective the public access is a very visible means to alert someone to the person's past, and to ensure that the slate is not clean. Offenders in several of our focus groups were ashamed to have their record so public, where anyone can easily access their records and reference their past. It is part of the stigmatizing that many offenders feel, and that is reinforced through the institutions. The use of a very public vehicle such as the internet raises questions about the balance between the civil rights of the offender and public safety needs. Alternatively, the question is how to help offenders understand that the public access is not meant to keep the offender "down," but rather to allow society the ability to protect itself. The balance between private and public information, which is a current debate concerning many internet accesses, provides a forum to engage the offender in the reintegration process. Part of the reintegration process is the offender having the ability

to manage his/her own behavior with a better understanding of the rationale and needs of others.

D. Programmatic Issues Related to Offender Perceptive

The balance between the individual and society underscores the challenges of offenders returning to the community. Reentry processes, particularly towards the integration of the offender into mainstream society, will need to focus on the message to the offender. These messages will be critically important because they can relay the concerns of offenders that they are unwanted members of society. More importantly the processes must support the psychological and social needs of the offender by reinforcing the importance of being a contributing member of society. The focus groups have identified a myriad of issues that deserve attention programmatically to strengthen the focus on integration into society. It is also apparent that much of the needs of the returning offenders cannot be addressed by the correctional system by itself. This is where the Reentry Partnership Initiative, outlined by the Department of Justice, provides a model for creating consensus-building partnerships structured to provide the necessary resources along the different components of a reentry process. The following discussion will highlight the key components of a reentry process that serves to foster integration.

Institutional Treatment (from incarceration to 90 days before release). Many of the offenders lack basic skills to be contributing members of society. Further, many of the offenders are not necessarily committed to a crime-free lifestyle. Prisons are confronted with a large percent of idle time for the offender, which can be more effectively used by providing necessary educational, vocational, and clinical intervention services. The challenge of offering services within the prison setting are well

documented (Farabee, et al. 1999; Taxman & Bouffard, 2000), but research tends to support the value of prison-based programming, although it is clear that the long term effectiveness can be enhanced through the continued provision of services in the community (Simpson, Wexler, & Inciardi, 1999).

For program developers, the key to institutional programming is bifold: to determine the goals and to link the programming to transitional planning. Given the needs of offenders, the goals of the institutional programming should be very clear. In two of the RPI sites, the team decided that the focus should be on motivation to change. The emphasis on motivation to change prepares the offender for the return to the community with a mindset to seek a crime-free lifestyle. Other correctional departments elected to focus on case management principles of getting the offender to identify resources in the community but have not programmed to prepare the offender psychologically for taking advantage of these resources. Others have merely tapped into the scarce correctional resources such as existing drug treatment and educational programs.

A key question regarding institutional treatment is whether corrections should be the provider of the service or whether community-based agencies should be responsible for the services. The answer to that question has to do with the nature of the intervention as well as the location of the prison facility. The closer the facility is to the community, certain advantages occur if the provider can begin to work with the offender prior to release. However, as shown in prior studies of continuum processes, the success of this technique is dependent upon whether or not the provider changes its practices with a focus on transitioning the offender from one programming to another, and reducing some

of the intake processes that occurs. That is, no programming strategy is foolproof if the correctional institutions and providers do not agree on systemic processes that reduce the barriers for offenders and meet their psychosocial needs (Taxman & Bouffard, 2000).

Institutional/PreRelease (from 90 days before release to release day). The prerelease stage is the transition period that begins the process of the offender making plans regarding the community. Most importantly are the housing and employment plans for the offender to address basic survival needs. Many correctional departments have started to develop procedures for offenders to obtain necessary identification (e.g., drivers license, social security card, Medicare coverage, etc.) that will make it easier to be settled in the community. Priority should be given to the concerns that offenders raised which generally fall into the categories of survival needs—a place to live, a place to work, food on the table, and people to love. The attention to these basic details will soothe the concerns of offenders. But, given the structural changes in the community it is equally necessary to alert the offender to changes in the community. For example in one of the RPI sites the local police department alerted the offender to the change in style of policing that has occurred while the offender has been incarcerated. The police department also reports to the offender that police officers are well aware of who has returned to the community, thus reducing the anonymity of the offender. Alerting the offender to these and other socio-political changes helps the adjustment process. As illustrated in several studies on procedural justice, providing explanations of the processes increases the person's acceptance of the policies and procedures.

Post Release (from release day to 30 days). The issues at the post-release phase depend on the emphasis during the pre-release phase. If the reentry process has a pre-

release phase that develops a reasonable plan for the offender, then the purpose of the post release phase should be to stabilize the offender through making sure that more attention is paid to the quality of life issues. If no prerelease phase occurs, then the focus of the post release plan should be on securing and stabilizing the offender in the basic survival areas of home, work, and extracurricular activities. More attention will need to be paid to the offender's survival need and determining how these impact the offender's ability to maintain a crime-free lifestyle.

Integration (from 30 days after release for up to two years). Maintenance and crisis management is the core component of the integration phase. In the integration phase the emphasis should be more on incremental advancements in different important components of the offender's life. During a recent exit orientation in one site, one of the offenders asked whether they are allowed to have fun as part of the process. The question lead to a discussion about the important of "love, work, play" in having a full life—to a large extent integration will be determined by the degree to which the offender finds a balance in all three arenas. Integration will occur as the offender fulfills a role in the community that is both personally rewarding and fulfilling. The goal during reintegration is to strengthen the resolve of the offender to be crime (and drug) free.

Conclusion

The transition from prison to community is one that is complex, intertwined with balancing the needs of society with the needs of the individual offender. Society at large is concerned with safety first and foremost. They look towards public agencies to ensure that the returning offenders are "safe" and will not commit violent acts in their communities. The immense concerns about safety are founded in the past two decades

which found decay and blight heightened by criminal activities of drug dealers and random acts of violence committed by offenders under parole supervision. While sentencing structures were enhanced with more emphasis on incarceration and "truth in sentencing", the incarcerated offender is removed from society for longer periods of time. Similarly a number of collateral consequences were introduced to send messages to the citizenship about the consequences of engaging in criminal behavior or condoning it among relatives. Many of these initiatives occurred for federally funded benefits--housing, education, and employment opportunities--but states were equally vigilant at looking at different mechanism to deter involvement in criminal behavior. The advent of the internet and the ability to use this as a tool has enhanced many states to broadcast the identify of offenders.

While the needs of society to protect itself are evident, the returning offender is placed in a web ensnarled with social, economic, and psychological needs. The increased period away from the community, and the network of support systems, only intensifies the web. The focus groups revealed the fragility of many offenders, as well as the need for systems to assist with transitional issues. The acceptance of the offender's support system is probably the biggest issue--the degree to which the offender has a support system will partially determine the degree to which transition can occur with ease. Otherwise, transition is synonymous with the offender trying to make arrangements to address the basic needs of survival (e.g., food, employment, housing, love relationships, etc.), with minimal resources. Often these arrangements are made inside the prison, only to fall apart upon reentry. Other times, the arrangements are made and

then the offender feels uncomfortable in the presence of family members, feeling pressured and unwanted. This only exacerbates the process of "making good".

Reentry is a process that balances the needs of society and the offender. The current focus on public safety, with attention to how offenders transition, is a step in the direction of trying to develop a process of transition. The focus group with offenders illustrated that "falling off the wagon" may have as much to do with the ability to survive in the community as with the personal failings of the individual. If the safety net were expanded to ensure that basic survival needs were addressed during the early periods of time, it might be possible to prevent the recidivism of offenders. The early support can provide that safety net for the offenders to reposition themselves in society, while addressing the many family obligations that they have not been a party to due to incarceration. Reentry, perceived as a process, can support the successful transition of the offender to further the ability to "make good". The new RPI partnerships that are addressing the processes offer opportunities to change the land minds in corrections where transition is solely left up to the offender. As we have seen, leaving it up to the offender basically places the community at risk. RPI processes can minimize the risk while also achieving community safety.

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