



# PHILADELPHIA

Consensus Group on Reentry & Reintegration of Adjudicated Offenders

**THEY'RE COMING BACK:**  
An Action Plan for Successful Reintegration  
of Offenders that Works for Everyone  
**2ND EDITION**

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# FOREWORD

In the year since the Philadelphia Consensus Group on Reentry and Reintegration of Adjudicated Offenders first released this report, the national conversation about reentry has changed dramatically. Not only has “reentry” become the latest buzzword in criminal justice, but with the announcement by President George W. Bush in his State of the Union address of \$300 million to support reentry programs, it can no longer be dismissed as the liberal answer to conservative crime policy. People on both sides of the political aisle have embraced reentry as a common-sense response to the reality of more than 750,000 ex-offenders, including juveniles, returning to communities across America in the next year, unprepared to assume their places in society as law-abiding and productive citizens.

In Philadelphia, the Consensus Group has moved well beyond conversation and into action. Over the past year, the following actions have been taken:

## **NEW INITIATIVES**

**READY4WORK:** Due in large part to the work of the Philadelphia Consensus Group, Philadelphia was chosen as one of sixteen sites in a national reentry workforce development initiative of the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration and Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Ready4Work mobilizes local coalitions to work together for sustainable ex-offender reentry and to improve outcomes for ex-offenders and the communities in which they live. The Philadelphia Consensus Group found that “the achievement of better and more coordinated services, including comprehensive pre- and post-release planning, is crucial for offenders in order for them to successfully reintegrate into their communities.” The goal of the Philadelphia Ready4Work program is to develop and utilize such a coordinated service delivery system.

**JOBS PROJECT:** Philadelphia Prisons has developed a program that utilizes, as essential partners, members of the Consensus Group to develop the soft and hard skills of inmates in the Prisons and increase the likelihood of their finding and sustaining employment upon release.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **PHILADELPHIA ADULT PROBATION & PAROLE DEPARTMENT**

Developed a project in partnership with Intercommunity Action, Inc., a local mental health and retardation center, designed to meet the reentry needs of offenders returning from the Philadelphia County Prisons with co-occurring disorders. A proposal was submitted to, and accepted by, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

Staff in-service training programs for both new employee and current employees now incorporate reentry issues.

**COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES**

Expanded its advocacy work by filing a joint *amicus curiae* against post-incarceration sanctions, including the ban on food stamps, cash assistance and TANF for people with drug convictions.

Provided technical assistance to the Philadelphia Ready4Work project to improve the delivery of services by participating faith-based and community organizations.

**PHILADELPHIA PRISON SYSTEM**

Re-focused its energy and resources to re-entry and community outreach, both of which have become priorities of Commissioner Leon King.

The Deputy Commissioner for Treatment, Consensus Group member Alan Appel, is reviewing each program and service provided by the Prisons to determine how to improve re-entry success.

**PHILADELPHIA FIGHT**

Co-hosted, with other members of the Consensus Group, a highly successful lunch for over 500 ex-offenders.

Agreed to act as a healthcare provider to participants in the Philadelphia Ready4Work project who have AIDS, or who are HIV-positive.

**REST PHILLY AND DEFENDER'S ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA**

As a result of the relationship built during the consensus process, Byron Cotter, Director of Alternative Sentencing for the Defender's Association of Philadelphia, and Dr. Rick McKinney, Executive Director of REST Philly, an ex-offender aftercare program, reached an agreement for REST Philly to serve as an early release program for inmates leaving the Philadelphia Prison System.

The Defender's Association provided technical assistance on the characteristics of successful early release programs, so that Philadelphia Ready4Work can increase options for men and women leaving the Philadelphia Prisons and can improve their outcomes.

**PRE- AND POST-RELEASE SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE PHILADELPHIA CONSENSUS GROUP**

Has begun the ambitious task of collecting data on best practices in pre- and post-release planning across the United States, including a review of the various information systems, as a step toward drafting a model pre-release plan that would be rational, cost-effective and built on the shared databases of the various agencies.

In addition to the achievements listed above, Mayor John Street has solidified the City of Philadelphia's commitment to the issue of ex-offender reentry by appointing a liaison between his office and the Consensus Group. The successful implementation of the recommendations in this report will depend on this and similar partnerships, and we have high hopes that many more of our recommendations will move forward. We invite the reader to track future progress by visiting our website, [www.philadelphiacg.org](http://www.philadelphiacg.org). Today, however, we take the opportunity to celebrate the substantial achievements the Consensus Group has already made.

## MEMBER QUOTES

**LINWARD CROWE, PRESIDENT, PHILADELPHIA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION** “I discovered more compassionate responses from several members than I had anticipated. I carried an assumption into the process that people get hardened by the criminal justice system as they wrestle within it, but I appreciated the commitment and compassion for the welfare of individuals caught up in the system that was exhibited by those who served on the Consensus Group.”

**ROBERT MALVESTUTO, JR., CO-CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER, PHILADELPHIA ADULT PROBATION & PAROLE DEPARTMENT** “People talked and people listened. While many differences among the participants remain, our points of agreement far out number these. The developing blueprint for change that the report represents is an important accomplishment.”

**RAY JONES, IMPACT SERVICES, INC.** “There is no question that the atmosphere has changed around...reentry in Philadelphia. We are slowly moving towards a more collaborative effort.”

**WILLIAM DIMASCIO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY** “I have to say, having been involved with a number of groups like this in the past, I am very impressed that this report hasn't just fallen on a shelf somewhere. On the contrary, it's gathering momentum on active, vital programs to assist ex-offenders.”

**JOHN DELANEY, DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY, TRIAL DIVISION, CITY OF PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE** “There's a lot that we could have disagreed on, but once we aired our concerns, we decided to focus on what we could actually accomplish together to improve the reentry process in Philadelphia.”

**DR. RICK MCKINNEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REST PHILLY** “I really believe that, when you look at Philadelphia five years down the line, you're going to see a lowered recidivism rate, and that you'll be able to point back to a time and place in this consensus process when that began. It will come back to that committee, that group of people pulled together by Search for Common Ground, who identified these issues and who could solve them, and who then went to work on them.”

# THE MEMBERS

- Alan Appel, Deputy Commissioner for Treatment, Philadelphia Prison System
- Lynne Abraham, District Attorney, City of Philadelphia District Attorney's Office
- Thomas Costello, Commissioner (Ret.), Philadelphia Prison System
- Byron Cotter, Director, Alternative Sentencing Unit, Defender's Association of Philadelphia
- Linward Crowe, President, Philadelphia Leadership Foundation
- John Delaney, Deputy District Attorney, Trial Division, City of Philadelphia District Attorney's Office
- Sharon Dietrich, Managing Attorney, Community Legal Services of Philadelphia
- William DiMascio, Executive Director, The Pennsylvania Prison Society
- W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Director of Faith-Based Initiatives, Public/Private Ventures
- Ellen Greenlee, Chief Defender, Defender Association of Philadelphia
- Press Grooms I, Deputy Commissioner for Policy, Philadelphia Prison System
- Julia Hall, Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice, Drexel University
- Michael Harris, Deputy Director, Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network
- Frankie Heyward, Commanding Officer, Community Affairs Division, Philadelphia Police Department
- Amy Hirsch, Supervising Attorney, Community Legal Services of Philadelphia
- Sylvester Johnson, Police Commissioner, Philadelphia Police Department
- Ernest Jones, President, Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation
- Ray Jones, Director, Fathers at Work, IMPACT Services
- John E.X. Lieb, Prison Program Director, Jewish Employment and Vocational Services
- John MacDonald, President & CEO, IMPACT Services
- Fredericka Massiah-Jackson, President Judge, Court of Common Pleas
- Robert Malvestuto Jr., Co-Chief Probation Officer, Adult Probation & Parole Department
- Sharmain Matlock-Turner, President, Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition
- Dr. Rick McKinney, Executive Director, REST Philly
- Naomi Post, Executive Director (Fmr.), Philadelphia Safe & Sound
- Barry Savitz, Assistant Health Commissioner, Philadelphia Behavioral Health System
- Thomas Sims, Executive Director, People United Together
- Frank Snyder, Co-Chief Probation Officer, Adult Probation & Parole Department
- Boyd Taggart, Director, First Judicial District Information Center
- Joanna Flanders Thomas, VP, Leadership & Training Development, Philadelphia Leadership Foundation
- Julian Thomas, Director of Program Development, Crossroads Prison Ministry
- Gerald Wright, Community Services Director, Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition

## MISSION STATEMENT

To make Philadelphia a better, safer, more financially responsible city, we will develop and promote pragmatic and concrete measures to enhance participation in society of men and women leaving the Philadelphia Prison System. We intend that these measures will encourage accountability, preserve neighborhood safety and ensure that victims of crime are respected, protected and restored.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## THE PROBLEM

They're coming back, whether we like it or not. In a city of 1.5 million people, over 35,000 men, women and youth will go through the Philadelphia Prison System this year and return to our communities.<sup>1</sup> If current trends continue, two-thirds, or almost 23,000 will be rearrested within three years, and over 14,000 will return to jail, having committed new crimes or parole violations. If we could reduce recidivism rates by only 10%, Philadelphia would save over \$6.8 million a year in jail costs alone. In the community, the loss of security and the fear that one could be a victim of crime has a debilitating effect on the quality of life in our city. In addition, the high rate of recidivism speaks volumes about the reentry experience of men, women and youth who, after a period of incarceration, find little hope and even fewer resources to help them change their lives for the better.

## THE GROUP

In March 2002, a diverse group of public and private sector organizations, agencies and individuals met in Philadelphia to address this problem. The group, called the Philadelphia Consensus Group on Reentry & Reintegration of Adjudicated Offenders, was comprised of representatives from the courts and the prison system, the police department and attorneys from Community Legal Services, as well as service providers, and faith-based and community organizations that work in the Philadelphia jails and the community to meet the needs of returning offenders. Our membership also included the unlikely pairing of the District Attorney's Office and the Defender's Association. That this group was able to meet at all was unusual. That we could find common ground on over forty findings and recommendations for improving the current system is unprecedented. While we have substantial differences on criminal justice issues, what we share is a deep commitment to Philadelphia. Early on, we agreed to a mission statement as an expression of that commitment:



## THE PROCESS

The consensus process was initiated by Search for Common Ground — a Washington D.C.-based conflict resolution organization — at the invitation of former Philadelphia Mayor, W. Wilson Goode, Sr.. The process was facilitated by John Good, a Senior Associate of Search for Common Ground, Philadelphia native and seasoned mediator; and Marie Williams, a Search for Common Ground Senior Project Manager. Over the course of a year, we met under agreed upon consensus ground rules. All parties had the opportunity to participate as equals, regardless of organizational influence or status. All interests and concerns were given equal weight, and ultimately, no proposal was approved without unanimous consent. Our approach was to understand our differences, and work on our commonalities. The preliminary result of this consensus process is a blueprint for action for the community.

## THE RECOMMENDATIONS

In the early stages of the process, we identified over sixty significant barriers to successful reintegration faced by offenders, including poor employment skills, drug addiction, homelessness, lack of positive support systems and outstanding legal issues. Our recommendations cover a wide range of issues, grouped into five general subject areas: Personal Responsibility, Pre-release, Legal, Employment, Education & Training and Community Integration. The findings and recommendations are reflected in the following five general principles:

- I.** The Philadelphia criminal justice system must rededicate itself to achieving three related goals: public safety, offender accountability and the development of competencies necessary for successful reintegration of offenders into the community.
- II.** The achievement of better and more coordinated services, including comprehensive pre- and post-release planning, is crucial for offenders in order for them to successfully reintegrate into their communities.
- III.** To achieve the goals of public safety, offender accountability and the development of competencies necessary for successful reintegration of offenders into the community, the Philadelphia criminal justice system must examine and eliminate legal and administrative barriers that unduly inhibit successful offender reintegration.
- IV.** To achieve the goals of public safety, offender accountability and the development of competencies necessary for successful reintegration of offenders into the community, the agencies of the Philadelphia criminal justice system must find better ways to coordinate and cooperate.
- V.** The Philadelphia criminal justice system must engage with members and leaders of the community to assist them in rethinking, and playing a more active role in, the reintegration of offenders.

We understand that these principles, and the recommendations that follow, are only a starting point. It will take the commitment of many more partners, including the community, to bring them to fruition. In that process, we will inevitably face our differences once again, but, as we have here, we can maintain our separate convictions, engage in principled and productive dialogue and find solutions that advance the greater good.

# INTRODUCTION

‘Reentry’ is not a qualitative term, but simply refers to the “process of leaving prison and returning to society.”<sup>ii</sup> While every prisoner released from custody undergoes reentry, not all are successfully ‘reintegrated’. ‘Reintegration’ is a term we use to describe a process “result[ing] in outcomes [that] include increased participation in social institutions such as the labor force, families, communities, schools and religious institutions.”<sup>iii</sup> Unfortunately, in Philadelphia and across the United States, many men and women who reenter society do so with unresolved substance abuse problems, chronic health issues, a substandard education, and a general lack of resources — or a genuine lack of will — to truly reintegrate. Not surprisingly, many will return to jail or prison, often within relatively short periods of time. Still, it is difficult to see how it has an impact on our lives if we do not have acquaintances, friends or family members who have themselves undergone reentry and faced the attendant challenges. In fact, the cycle of reentry and re-incarceration has social consequences that reach far beyond the immediate social circle of offenders, the most obvious being the effect on public safety, and an increase in victimization, as well as fear of victimization. But there are also considerable direct costs that nationally amount to billions of dollars.<sup>iv</sup> Here in Philadelphia, the numbers seem more manageable, but the consequences are the same when the criminal justice system and society do not distinguish between reentry, which is inevitable for the majority of people now in confinement; and reintegration, which is a goal rather than a certainty.

Over the course of 2002, more than 35,000 men, women and youth were cycled through the Philadelphia Prison System, and every day, more than one hundred men and women reenter — returning to communities in Philadelphia from the city and state prison systems.<sup>v</sup> Between 2000 and 2002, there was a 20% increase in parolees to the Philadelphia area. Returning parolees, along with others already in the community under supervision, amount to approximately 51,000 individuals in Philadelphia on any given day with active connections to the criminal justice system.<sup>vi</sup> Of those who were incarcerated, most were unemployed before their incarceration and will remain so once

released. Many have mental and other chronic health problems, like HIV and hepatitis.<sup>vii</sup> Some were homeless, and a significant percentage are addicts.<sup>viii</sup> If these men and women were evenly distributed across the city, it would mean that on every block, at least two persons will have been incarcerated, or will be under community supervision.<sup>ix</sup> But the fact is that there is a concentration of returning offenders and probationers in our most impoverished neighborhoods where crime, unemployment and substance abuse are endemic.

If Philadelphia's experience is consistent with national trends, the influence of the environments to which most return, and other obstacles to successful reintegration, will result in at least 63% being rearrested, 47% reconvicted and about 41% re-incarcerated within three years.<sup>x</sup> Though their re-incarceration could mean that they violated a technical requirement of probation or parole, it could also mean that they committed a new crime, contributing to the diminution of quality of life, increasing fear, and aggravating the costs of crime response, prosecution and incarceration. Other costs include those related to enforcement, loss or destruction of property, medical care, loss of productivity and state responsibility for the care and maintenance of minor children. And there are other indirect costs, like the additional 'tax' imposed on all Philadelphians when businesses and industries pass on to consumers the cost of prevention and protection in the form of security guards, alarm systems and anti-theft devices. If, as a community, we recognize the importance of reentry and take an active role in shaping how it happens in Philadelphia, we will reap both fiscal and social benefits.

If, for example, through effective reintegration programs, the inmate population were successfully reduced, we would in effect be reducing the cost of incarceration in the Philadelphia Prison System. Currently, PPS has an average daily head count of 7,637 prisoners at a cost of about \$75 per day for each prisoner; using those figures, incarceration costs the city about \$572,775 every single day.<sup>xi</sup> And if each of those prisoners were to stay for the average 76.1 days, it would mean spending \$43.6 million for a period of just over ten weeks. To reduce the average daily population by just 10% would be a cost avoidance of over \$1.3 million for that same period, or \$6.8 million annually. This sum could be redirected to other city services, schools, parks, education, culture or other quality of life expenditures. And this is only one tangible cost. Beyond their emotional scars, the economic loss to victims of crime is also considerable, with the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimating an average loss of \$524 in missed time from work, medical and other expenses. Multiplied by the 98,000 instances of criminal victimization that occurred in Philadelphia in 2000,<sup>xii</sup> that means there was an economic loss to victims in the neighborhood of \$51.3 million. Again, a mere 10% reduction would mean significant avoided costs; in this case more than \$5 million.

Successful reintegration also benefits the community and individual in ways that cannot be measured in dollars. The social value of reintegration is measured by a formerly incarcerated person's ability to contribute to the support of their family, provide a healthy environment for their children and enhance the positive human resources

in the community. To accomplish these ends, we as a community must examine and implement effective interventions that could help them on the path to productive citizenship.

Effective interventions are those that develop a plan for dealing with substance abuse issues and other dysfunctional behaviors, treating physical and mental health problems, enhancing workforce participation and finding and maintaining affordable housing. For returning offenders, such interventions can mean the opportunity for positive self-empowerment and personal growth. For their families, it can mean having a parent, child or spouse who contributes, rather than detracts from their financial and general well-being. To victims, it can mean freedom from fear of further victimization. For our city's leaders, it can mean the opportunity to direct additional resources toward enhancing the positive aspects of urban life rather than at efforts to counteract the negative. And for all of us, it can mean a better, safer and more financially responsible Philadelphia. It is our hope that as you read the recommendations in this report, you will begin to identify the ways that you as a Philadelphian and a taxpayer, or that your organization or agency, can play an active role in helping to realize these goals.

**FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS OF  
THE PHILADELPHIA CONSENSUS GROUP  
ON REENTRY & REINTEGRATION  
OF ADJUDICATED OFFENDERS**

## PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT, RESPONSIBILITY & RECONCILIATION

The Philadelphia criminal justice system must rededicate itself to achieving three related goals: public safety, offender accountability and the development of competencies necessary for successful reintegration of offenders into the community.

As currently organized, most criminal justice systems tend to concentrate on the punitive and incapacitative aspects of criminal corrections. While these are certainly valid and necessary goals for corrections, they often make reintegration difficult to achieve. In order for men and women leaving jail to take responsibility for their lives and reconcile with their families and communities, they must feel a sense of positive self-empowerment, a value that is difficult to inculcate in the penal setting. These findings and recommendations in the area of personal responsibility and reconciliation address the need for offenders to receive this inculcation while they are in jail, and also from service providers and the community once they reenter. In order for reintegration to succeed, there must be a transformation of the offender through alteration of attitudes and behaviors, and the development of constructive life skills. Further, in order for this transformation of the offender to occur, there must likewise be a transformation of the criminal justice system in ways that permit him to develop personal responsibility and the means to reconcile with his family and community.

### FINDINGS

**I.** Criminal justice agencies, including police, courts, corrections and parole, do not emphasize offender empowerment and the acceptance of personal responsibility. Guilty pleas, sentences, fines and court-mandated restitution are formal sanctions that may not get to the level of personal awareness and accountability necessary to alter criminal behavior patterns. While formal sanctions can help communicate to the offender the gravity with which the community and the criminal justice system view their criminal

act(s), they do little to guide offenders through a process where they arrive at their own realization about what these acts have cost the community and themselves.

2. Victims and the general community expect offender accountability and evidence of acceptance of responsibility for their criminal offenses. While many offenders may view their incarceration as having “paid their debt to society”, seldom is that view shared by society itself. Instead, the expectation shared by victims and the general public that offenders’ actions post-release reflect a continued understanding and awareness of the impact of their criminal acts is misconstrued as an effort to perpetuate punishment, and stigmatize them, for their past.

3. Correctional agencies, families and the community may not understand, or may underestimate, the importance of their role in offender responsibility and reconciliation. There is a tendency to view the offender as being solely responsible for bringing about positive change in his own life by taking responsibility for his actions, or reconciling with family and community. And while it is true that the responsibility is primarily his, correctional agencies, the community and the household to which the offender returns also have a great deal of influence on whether or not that change will occur.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Offenders should be empowered to reach the level of self-realization necessary to produce change in their own lives. Whenever possible, but particularly during incarceration, offenders should be empowered to become the predominant actors in their own transformation, and to take charge of a process that will result in restoration, redemption and change.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Expand or introduce programs in the Philadelphia Prison System that emphasize the replacement of negative self-empowerment (through criminal behavior and the victimization of others) with positive self-empowerment and -improvement.*
  - *Assist offenders in recognizing and accepting full responsibility and making amends to crime victims and the community. This assistance could include utilization of volunteers from the faith-based community, community-based victim-offender mediation programs, parole advisory boards, ex-offenders and/or ex-offender organizations and treatment programs.*
  - *Coordinate and conduct offender self-empowerment programs with the full support of parole and probation officers.*
  - *Encourage offenders to take charge of their lives by developing behaviors that promote their health and reduce the likelihood of their contracting life-threatening diseases.*
  - *Establish new, or reinforce existing, health education programs inside the jails to educate inmates and to address the needs of those prisoners with HIV, hepatitis-C virus and other illnesses.*

2. The Philadelphia Prison System should take responsibility for the training of corrections personnel that includes methods to assist the offender toward responsibility. The nature of incarceration is such that it often reduces inmates to a level of dependence on correctional officers that discourages personal empowerment and responsibility.

Inmates perform most of their daily tasks at the direction and under the supervision of correctional officers. This is often necessary for purposes of custody and control. There are, however, some instances where personal responsibility can be encouraged and incorporated into law enforcement roles without conflict.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *The Philadelphia Prison System should explore correctional methodologies that encourage positive personal empowerment and personal responsibility without compromising the safety of correctional officers.*
  - *The Philadelphia prison system should, where practicable, make modifications to the training of correctional officers and to institutional culture to accommodate offender empowerment and responsibility in conjunction with custody and control.*

3. A mechanism should be established to encourage, coordinate and facilitate volunteer and contracted service providers that operate in the Philadelphia Prison System. These service providers may include those providing victim-offender mediation services, domestic violence counseling and parenting programs, as well as referrals of offenders to resources available to them both during and post-incarceration. In addition to social workers operating in the jails, there is a wide array of service providers, many of which operate in the Philadelphia Prison System with the consent, but not under the direct supervision of, the authorities.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Increase resources to encourage and coordinate volunteer and contracted services.*
  - *Organize volunteer and contracted services so that inmates have a single source of information where they can be apprised of all the options available to them.*

4. A mechanism should be developed to utilize community resources to assist Adult Probation and Parole in facilitating the successful reentry and reintegration of ex-offenders. One of the most valuable partners that Probation and Parole could have in working with the returning offender population is the community. In other parts of the country, Community Advisory Panels have been successfully utilized. In Philadelphia, parole or probation officers lack the resources, particularly in the form of time, to provide offenders with the comprehensive services they need in order to successfully complete their period of community supervision.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Explore Community Advisory Boards or panels in other jurisdictions to find efficient and replicable models for Philadelphia.*
  - *Research and identify other options for community-based entities that could perform a case management function by providing gap services that many offenders need, including providing referrals to agencies, and information about services and benefits of which parole and probation officers may not be aware.*

5. To increase community acceptance of returning offenders, the need for victim and community impact statements should be reinforced. Where the court is prescribing penalties in the form of restitution or other court-mandated restorative devices, these statements are useful tools that may help offenders fully appreciate the impact of their



criminal acts. All too often, the communities and individuals most affected by criminal acts feel as though their stories are left out of the criminal justice process. This can result in a heightened sense of resentment toward offenders returning to the community, and increased stigmatization. Where courts have already prescribed restorative penalties for an offense, impact statements would serve the purpose of giving the community and/or victim(s) an opportunity to be heard, as well as giving the offender an opportunity to hear the human element of the effect of their crime.

**ACTION STEP** • *Reinforce the efficacy of statements from victims and the community to begin to heal the rift that criminal acts cause between offender and community, and to restore that offender as a member of the community, rather than to inflame passions or influence sentencing.*

6. Current programs in the Philadelphia Prison System that encourage personal empowerment, responsibility and reconciliation should be expanded to include more inmates. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these programs leave offenders who have participated in them with a sense of remorse for their criminal acts, but also a feeling of empowerment to make different choices once they are released.

**ACTION STEP** • *Programs operating in the Philadelphia Prison System – particularly those that encourage personal empowerment, responsibility and reconciliation – should be evaluated for their impact on successful reentry and reintegration of offenders who participate in them. To properly evaluate the programs' impact, a larger number of inmates should be permitted to participate and rigorous follow-up studies performed.*

## CHAPTER TWO

### PRE-RELEASE

The achievement of better and more coordinated services, including comprehensive pre- and post-release planning, is crucial for offenders in order for them to successfully reintegrate into their communities.

Although “reentry” is a single point in time when an offender is released, “reintegration” is a process that begins long before the actual date of release. If viewed as such, any concern for reintegration must take into account the pre-release stage of incarceration. Pre-release as conceptualized by the Consensus Group refers not to the period immediately prior to release, but rather, to the period that begins immediately upon incarceration. Particularly in the Philadelphia Prison System, where the average inmate stay is less than three months, to wait until release is imminent would be to squander what is, for offenders and the service providers who wish to help them, a golden opportunity for intervention. Issues and problems of all types that may have contributed to the crime, or behavior that resulted in the incarceration, could be identified and possibly addressed at this stage. With proper follow-up and aftercare, offenders are less likely to re-offend, and at a minimum have significantly more options available to them. Also, comprehensive pre-release planning can provide men and women leaving jail with the basic tools they need to lead productive and fulfilling lives.

#### FINDINGS

**I.** Virtually all of the individuals who are incarcerated for several weeks or months have a daunting list of issues that need to be addressed for successful reentry. Many have unrealistic self-assessments of their employment skills, no connection to suitable employers and have burned bridges to family and friends. They may have lost their housing, become ineligible for benefits or have outstanding legal obligations to the civil or criminal courts. Access to services and programs is made more difficult due to chronic use of aliases or lack of official documentation, such as birth certificates and

drivers' licenses. Some parents face mounting arrears in child support payments, while others face the prospect of losing custody of their children. And for many, treatment and support may be needed for drug and alcohol dependency, mental illness or disability.

2. Incarceration could provide the time, the resources and the incentive for offenders to begin addressing some of the aforementioned issues and to develop strategies for dealing with the rest. This potential is largely unrealized, however. Most inmates feel helpless rather than empowered, and therefore take no steps to prepare themselves for reentry. There is no routine, systematic pre-release planning for every inmate in the Philadelphia Prison System to address these barriers and issues.

3. There is currently no routine and effective mechanism to share or coordinate pre-release assessments and pre-release plans across agencies. Assessment and pre-release planning does occur for some inmates, carried out by public employees and non-profits operating in the jails, the Defender's Association, the Courts and Adult Probation and Parole, but there are no formal arrangements that guarantee the transfer and sharing of that information among them.<sup>xiii</sup> For many incarcerated persons, including some that are incarcerated for several months, little or no assessment of post-release issues is conducted.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institutional capacity should be developed to measure and report progress both on the achievement of the specific recommendations in this report, and also on the long-term goal of increasing successful reintegration of adjudicated offenders into the community.

**ACTION STEPS**

- *Explore the possibility of an Office of Reentry and Reintegration at the state or county-level.*
- *Create a Reintegration Report Card for reporting to the community annually on the progress toward the recommendations made by this Consensus Group.*

2. The community, criminal justice agencies and offender assistance organizations should set as a goal, empowering every person who is incarcerated to develop a strategy for successful reintegration prior to actual release. With the exception of those incarcerated for very short periods of time, every incarcerated person should be encouraged to develop a strategy for their own reintegration which would be separate from the pre-release document or post-release plan produced for or by criminal justice agencies.

**ACTION STEPS**

- *Provide pre-release counseling and assist each offender upon incarceration with creating a strategic plan to help them obey the law and avoid the pitfalls that resulted in their incarceration, including developing strategies for dealing with issues such as employment, housing and substance abuse.*
- *Ensure that offenders are given information about the resources available to them and know where to seek additional help once they are living within the community.*

3. For each adjudicated offender released on parole, a written post-release plan should exist that is designed to protect the public, hold the offender accountable to the victim and the community, and identify for the offender, necessary support services and

organizations. Post-release planning should include a strategy for the individual to address all of his or her outstanding issues with civil and criminal courts.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Supply each person — before release — with information and the opportunity to deal with any issue that would prevent him or her from obtaining a driver's license or state-issued identification card.*
  - *Begin early post-release planning for those inmates with health issues, so as not to compromise continuity of care.*
  - *Create or reinforce programs that link providers in the community and responsible authorities in the Philadelphia Prison System.*

4. To the extent permitted by law, the agencies and organizations that provide assessments, pre- and post-release planning, training and support should develop and implement plans to share information among themselves, the individual inmates and Probation and Parole. Limited information-sharing among agencies means that many are duplicating assessments and work previously performed by others. This results in delay, waste of resources and inefficient responses to the needs of offenders and the communities to which they return.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Develop efficient channels to share information among agencies to expedite and maximize services to help offenders accomplish the goals of their pre- and post-release plan.*
  - *Give offenders access to information in their pre- and post-release plan, so that they may use it to secure services and expedite requests for official documents.*



# CHAPTER THREE

## LEGAL

To achieve the goals of public safety, offender accountability and the development of competencies necessary for successful reintegration of offenders into the community, the Philadelphia criminal justice system must examine and eliminate legal and administrative barriers that unduly inhibit successful offender reintegration.

It is commonly – and mistakenly – assumed that if one has served a period of incarceration in jail or prison and been released, all legal issues will have been resolved during that period as a part of “paying a debt to society”. In fact, many men and women leave the Philadelphia Prison System with a number of unresolved legal issues, usually civil in nature. These issues may not be of the type that would result in an offender being re-incarcerated, but they often require a knowledgeable legal compass to resolve, such as when an offender wishes to regain custody of his/her children. Other legal problems may be related to civil disabilities created by law that offenders are currently powerless to combat, like prohibitions on employment in certain sectors, or the receipt of public benefits. What these legal barriers share, however, is the ability to effectively derail the most well-intentioned of offenders seeking to develop a new, crime-free way of life.

### FINDINGS

1. Legal issues often remain unresolved when a person leaves jail or prison. These legal issues may include obligations to the victim and community, child support, outstanding warrants and accurate personal identification. These unresolved legal issues can hinder successful reentry, especially when a lack of identification prevents receipt of public benefits or obtaining employment, or when unmanageable child support arrears accrued during imprisonment cannot be satisfied from the person’s wages.
2. The law creates civil disabilities that are imposed because of a person’s offense, not as part of his or her sentence. Referred to by some as “invisible sentencing” or “invisible

punishment”, these civil disabilities may include prohibitions on employment in specified fields and ineligibility for public benefits. These civil disabilities can also hinder successful reentry, such as by limiting the person’s access to needed services, an income or an opportunity for employment.

3. Administrative and legal barriers limit access to services that address medical issues, which may include addiction, mental illness and physical illness. Many incarcerated persons face life-threatening diseases such as HIV and HCV (Hepatitis C), chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma and cardiac conditions, and/or face serious mental health problems including major depression, bi-polar disorder or schizophrenia. These persons need special services while incarcerated, transition discharge plans and linkages to responsible health care and community-based agencies upon release. As a result of their incarceration, many offenders have difficulty accessing medical benefits and experience significant delays receiving medical benefits for which they are eligible. This is particularly troubling when one considers that among the returning offender population, there is a greater likelihood of finding individuals who have chronic or acute health problems that make these benefits crucial, in some cases for their very survival.

4. Some incarcerated parents believe that they are/were unable to participate, or participate effectively, in child welfare proceedings during incarceration. Although the Family Court and the Department of Health and Human Services have safeguards in place to ensure that incarcerated parents are given the opportunity to participate in proceedings involving the placement or permanent custody of their children, many incarcerated parents believe that they were denied this opportunity. Others acknowledge that they were offered the opportunity but claim an inability to participate effectively given their incarceration. This has resulted in many offenders — particularly mothers — returning from jail to find that a court has made a final determination that their parental rights be terminated; a determination that is rarely reversed.

5. There is no routine, systematic pre-release planning to address legal barriers and issues. The legal advice that offenders receive while incarcerated is usually limited to that which is relevant to the case or occurrence that resulted in their incarceration. In addition to receiving other pre-release planning, such as that related to finding employment and housing, offenders have a significant need for civil legal assistance and information far in advance of actual reentry. Such civil legal assistance and planning could identify, and begin to address, the issues preventing successful reentry and reintegration.

6. There is no routine, systemic post-release planning for those offenders released from jail without the opportunity for pre-release planning. In those cases where offenders are paroled from the courtroom, Adult Probation and Parole and the Philadelphia Prison System may not have had sufficient time to assess their needs. This could mean that Parole has only enough information as would permit a parole officer to perform their enforcement function. While this is extremely important, it denies the parole officer supplementary information that would allow them to anticipate assistance the offender might need in other areas. Post-release planning for offenders such as these,

done immediately after release, could identify and begin to address the issues preventing successful reintegration.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1.** Pre- and post-release planning should be done for every offender before parole, or expiration of their sentence. Where pre-release planning is impossible, post-release planning should be done immediately after release. This plan should also take into account the need to protect the public, to hold the offender accountable to the victim and the community and to enable the offender to be a responsible, productive member of the community.

**ACTION STEP** • *The pre- and post-release plan should be embodied in a document or central case file that should be accessible by every department in the city of Philadelphia with which the offender comes into contact for official purposes, including those responsible for assisting the offender with accessing benefits for which he/she might be eligible.*

**2.** The pre- or post-release plan should include the identification of all relevant issues, including legal issues, and a detailed plan for addressing each issue. Legal issues may include, among others, lack of proper identification, outstanding warrants, modification of and compliance with child support obligations and meeting obligations to the victim and community.

**ACTION STEP** • *Develop a system so that where outstanding legal issues exist, the plan will be transmitted to the Defender's Association of Philadelphia, Community Legal Services or other organizations with the resources to address these issues.*

**3.** The pre- or post-release plan should include the identification of administrative and legal barriers to medical care and a detailed plan for addressing each issue. Necessary medical care may include, among others, a treatment plan for addiction, mental illness and/or physical illness.

**ACTION STEP** • *Develop a system so that where such medical issues exist, the plan will be transmitted to the Department of Health and Human Services or other such organizations and agencies with the resources to address these issues.*

**4.** The success of systems responsible for ensuring the effective participation of incarcerated parents in child welfare proceedings should be examined and, if necessary, adjusted. To the extent that there are some parents who claim that they were denied the opportunity to participate, or participate effectively in child welfare proceedings, this evidences either a failure of the system that ensures that participation, or of the parents themselves to take advantage of the opportunity.

**ACTION STEPS** • *Family Court, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Philadelphia Prisons must examine existing safeguards to ensure the participation of incarcerated parents in child welfare proceedings.*  
• *These agencies must coordinate their efforts to affirmatively encourage and facilitate incarcerated parents playing as active a role as is practicable in child welfare proceedings. This*



*must be done to assure the best interests of the children, and to encourage accountability and responsibility by the offender.*

5. The legislative ban on public benefits for offenders convicted of drug felonies should be rescinded. The ban on public benefits for offenders convicted of drug felonies has had several unintended consequences, among them, preventing offenders with substance abuse problems from receiving treatment, making it more difficult for them to obtain affordable housing and other necessities (e.g. food, using food stamps) and ultimately increasing the likelihood that they will resort to extra-legal means of support.

**ACTION STEP** • *The Philadelphia Consensus Group should support efforts to have the ban rescinded, as a measure that has the unintended consequence of making it more difficult for well-intentioned men and women leaving jail and prison to improve their lives. This may include forming partnerships with organizations and initiatives that are already trying to accomplish this goal.*

6. The Consensus Group should join with others to examine the utility of employment bans for offenders convicted of specified offenses, and other civil disabilities created by law. The private sector, including offenders, would benefit from clarification of those areas of law where offenders are banned or restricted in ways that the general population is not, for example, employment in certain healthcare industries.

**ACTION STEP** • *Examine these civil disabilities and others to determine whether they advance the goals of preserving public safety, encouraging offender accountability and assisting men and women leaving jail in the quest to become responsible and productive citizens.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION & TRAINING

To achieve the goals of public safety, offender accountability and the development of competencies necessary for successful reintegration of offenders into the community, the agencies of the Philadelphia criminal justice system must find better ways to coordinate and cooperate.

Support of oneself and one's family is considered in American society to be among the most basic requirements of responsible citizenship. Taking responsibility for providing for one's own basic needs is central to fostering a positive self-image. For many offenders, feelings of self-worth are already in short supply, so the ability to get and keep a job becomes even more important. Unfortunately, many employers are somewhat averse to hiring offenders, with studies showing that they may be more reluctant to hire them than workers from any other disadvantaged group. The reasons that employers shy away from hiring offenders are varied – concerns for safety, skill deficiencies, fear of liability, and simple lack of information. Each of these reasons represents an obstacle, but by no means are these obstacles insurmountable. At the same time, employment is one of the single most influential predictors that an offender will remain out of jail or prison.

#### FINDINGS

**I.** A criminal record is a significant barrier to employment, and obtaining and retaining employment is a crucial factor in the successful reintegration of adjudicated offenders. Given the choice, most employers would choose not to employ individuals with criminal records, even where the nature of their conviction bears little relationship to the position sought. In addition, a period of incarceration can result in significant gaps in an offender's employment history, making it less likely that they will receive an offer of employment regardless of whether or not they possess the skills necessary to perform the job. Inability to find a job is one of the most influential predictors of whether or not an offender will recidivate.

2. Offenders often need help gaining skills and getting a job. Even when there are willing employers, most offenders have a sporadic work history and little experience that translates into marketable job skills; a problem that is only exacerbated when one has a history of incarceration. Also, apart from the lack of employable skills, many offenders lack the life skills that would enable them to seek out potential employers and present themselves in a manner that is likely to result in a job offer.
3. There are inadequate resources to effectively identify jobs for adjudicated offenders before they are released. Both in terms of time and money, the Philadelphia Prison System and other agencies — both public and private — lack the resources to identify employers for offenders while they are in jail. This tends to be the case whether or not the offender possesses employable skills. There is quite simply very little money or manpower to seek out jobs for offenders.
4. There is a lack of a long-term strategy to secure commitments from employers to train and hire adjudicated offenders for employment upon release. Even where social workers, service providers or employment counselors are able to identify jobs for offenders before they are released, this generally occurs on an ad hoc basis. There is currently no strategy to identify employers who would be willing to employ offenders en masse or enter into agreements with the city to train offenders to perform jobs on the outside once they are released.
5. Points of contact with adjudicated offenders are underutilized for the purpose of providing training, employment counseling and job referrals once they are released. In the period immediately following their release, offenders have at least one obligation which is usually that they visit their parole or probation officer. They may also need to visit Human Services or the courts for other purposes. In those agencies where offenders are required or likely to be present, few if any measures are currently being taken to encourage them to seek assistance in finding a job.
6. Work release<sup>xiv</sup> is a unique and underutilized opportunity to prepare adjudicated offenders and employers for post-release employment. One of many criteria for a good work release candidate would be that they pose a minimal risk to the community. In the Philadelphia Prison System, 63.5% of inmates — or 4, 850 men and women — were held at either the minimum custody level, or in community corrections centers in fiscal year 2002,<sup>xv</sup> but only 554 inmates participated in work release programs. Work release can provide offenders with a sense of purpose, responsibility and pride preceding their reentry into the community. This mechanism is one of the best opportunities at the disposal of the criminal justice system to ease the transition from incarceration to full participation in the community, but it is not utilized on a wide enough scale for non-violent offenders who, in some cases, might be good candidates for a program that prepares them to reenter as members of the workforce.
7. Lack of adequate transportation resources is a significant barrier for adjudicated offenders seeking employment, as well as for those who have secured employment in areas remote from their place of residence. Some offenders who are otherwise

employable are restricted by a lack of transportation to the job pool in the immediate vicinity of their place of residence, or to places accessible by public transportation. Likewise, employers who may be willing to hire offenders are unable to do so because they lack resources to take workers to distant or remote areas to work. A majority of offenders in the Philadelphia Prisons return to residences in the metropolitan area and most would be unable to gain access to jobs outside of that area without incurring significant expenses to do so, thus rendering it impractical for them to take these jobs if they offer low or minimum wages.

8. Employers are largely unaware of the benefits, including tax credits, available to those hiring offenders. The federal government provides employers with tax credits for hiring certain groups of disadvantaged workers, including offenders. The government also provides bonding for employers of offenders. Many employers are unaware of these benefits and mistakenly assume that there are no incentives for taking what they perceive to be the increased risk of hiring men and women who have been in jail.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Resources for employment and training of offenders should be increased, and existing resources should be better coordinated. An increase in resources would mean that every incarcerated person, with the exception of those held for too short a period of time, could receive at a minimum, an employment skills assessment that would help link the individual to opportunities for employment and appropriate job readiness and training programs both while incarcerated and after they are released.

**ACTION STEPS**

- *Identify and advocate for funding from all available sources, including the state and federal government, to train offenders.*
- *Include employment assessments as a part of the post-release plan of every offender.*

2. The employment counseling function in the Philadelphia Prison System should be reorganized.

**ACTION STEPS**

- *Separate the distinct functions of securing employment for individual offenders, and securing long-term commitments from prospective employers to hire adjudicated offenders.*
- *Facilitate coordination between these functions to ensure that there is a direct link between the inmates and employers willing to hire recently released individuals.*

3. Employment counselors should be placed in the Adult Probation and Parole Department and other agencies as additional points of contact where adjudicated offenders can receive assistance securing a job. In those public and private agencies that offenders are likely or required to visit, employment counselors should be available. Many parole and probation officers would like to be able to offer job placement assistance to the offenders under their supervision, but are unable to do so in any meaningful way because of the size of their caseload.

**ACTION STEPS**

- *Place employment counselors in the Adult Probation and Parole Department so that offenders who did not receive employment counseling while in jail may receive such*

*counseling while under community supervision.*

- *Organize this function to be independent of Adult Probation and Parole and other agencies so that offenders will more likely utilize the service.*
- *Form a task force to identify federal or other funding sources to pay for the organization and development of this function.*

4. The current work release system in the Philadelphia Prisons should be examined and, if necessary, expanded. In this process, special inquiries should be made into the following issues: whether work release should be expanded and reorganized; the need for enhanced security and supervision; the adequacy of integration with in-prison training programs; and community preparation for placement of work release centers.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Integrate work release assignments with in-prison training programs.*
  - *Explore possibilities to create opportunities for adjudicated offenders to learn and utilize technological skills and highly specialized trades.*
  - *Include a community service component in work release programs to facilitate positive contributions by adjudicated offenders and to foster public receptivity to the process of reintegration.*
  - *Develop an education and awareness campaign to inform the public about the relative rewards of facilitating successful reintegration of offenders through employment in general, and work release in particular.*

5. An assessment of the need for a transportation plan for offenders should be performed. Such a transportation plan would assist offenders who need access to places of employment remote from their residence, as well as assist employers willing to hire adjudicated offenders. The creation of a new employment transportation resource will be attractive to employers who are interested in recruiting and retaining good employees who might not otherwise be able to participate in their workforce.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Explore the creation of a workforce development transportation coalition that may have as members Chambers of Commerce, community-based organizations, local employers, service providers, and county transportation authorities, all of whom could help develop the program and/or subsidize costs.*
  - *Explore eligibility for federal funds that may be available for programs that have a welfare reduction purpose and effect. This goal might be accomplished by including in the plan accessibility for other underprivileged workers.*

6. A targeted education campaign should be launched both to explain to employers the financial incentives available to them for hiring adjudicated offenders, and to help them take advantage of these benefits.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Publicize incentives available to employers who hire offenders, like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit for hiring disadvantaged workers.*
  - *Address employer concerns related to the hiring of adjudicated offenders, including, but not limited to, concerns about supervision of offenders and drug testing.*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

The Philadelphia criminal justice system must engage with members and leaders of the community to assist them in rethinking, and playing a more active role in, the reintegration of offenders.

Offenders face a number of tangible obstacles in their quest to become full and functional members of society after their incarceration, but they also face intangible obstacles, particularly the overwhelmingly negative light in which they are viewed by the vast majority of their community including, in some cases, their own families. Community integration refers to the need to recognize men and women returning from jail as members of the community, and to develop mechanisms that assist the offender with those aspects of reintegration that go beyond the development of mere subsistence skills. A focus on community integration means heightening public awareness and building political will in favor of supporting, rather than merely controlling, offenders.

#### FINDINGS

1. The reintegration process is currently viewed as commencing upon the release of offenders into the community rather than at the time of incarceration. This limited view of reintegration results in a significant gap in transitional and adjustment services for the offender and the community upon release. For many offenders, particularly those who were not incarcerated for long periods of time, there are few, if any, services to assist them when they return to the community. It is likely that many of these men and women will need transportation, housing or resources to meet other basic subsistence needs. By viewing reintegration as a process that is triggered by the release from jail, there are, and will continue to be, many missed opportunities to intervene in the lives of offenders and bring about positive change.

2. There is a general lack of understanding about the transitional period experienced by both the offenders and the households to which they are returning, often resulting in their being unable to access or adequately take advantage of resources to meet needs that arise during that period. Men and women returning from jail often return to households where family members or partners and children are wary (and weary) of them. The offenders themselves may experience fear and disorientation after a period of incarceration and are likely returning to households where needs that existed before they were incarcerated have been aggravated during their absence. In these situations, the offenders, as well as their households, would benefit from a solid support system that will both smooth the transition and mobilize the resources necessary to meet those needs. A greater understanding of the transitional period as it is experienced by both the offender and their household would make it easier for organizations with those resources to provide them to the offenders and their families most in need.

3. For reintegration to succeed, there must be an adjustment of the public attitude toward adjudicated offenders, as well as an adjustment of the offenders' attitudes toward their communities. Among the many barriers faced by offenders are the fear and distrust with which they are generally viewed by the public. Conversely, many offenders view their criminal background as an insurmountable obstacle that permanently excludes them from full membership in their communities. The weight of the stigma that both offender and community attach to a criminal record makes it difficult for them to recognize and reap the mutual benefits of successful reintegration.

4. Community, religious and business leaders do not currently have an active awareness of the practical benefits of reintegration of adjudicated offenders. Reintegrated offenders mean productive citizens, dependable workers and, generally, positive contributors to Philadelphia. From a purely fiscal standpoint, this means fewer crimes being committed, lower costs related to law enforcement and crime response, more people paying taxes and fewer being supported by tax dollars while in jail. Community, religious and business leaders who are aware of these facts are more likely to support programs and initiatives that will bring about effective reintegration.

5. The public is largely unaware of the success stories of offenders, and this is detrimental to other offenders who are attempting to successfully reintegrate. Unfortunately the public has an all too keen awareness of the failures of men and women who were incarcerated. The media and our culture seem to generalize these failures and consider them a certainty, in part because they are largely unaware of the many success stories that exist here in Philadelphia and around the country. For almost every offender who has returned to jail or prison, there is one who seized whatever opportunities existed and turned their life around. The public should be made aware of these stories so that their view of reentry — and the people who reenter our society — will be more balanced.

6. The role of families is not adequately recognized and utilized in the reintegration process. For example, the failure, or in some cases the inability, of offenders to participate or participate effectively in child welfare proceedings while incarcerated, presents a significant obstacle for parents who wish to assume responsibility for their

children upon release. Numerous studies and anecdotal evidence show that offenders who return to stable family environments are more likely to remain out of jail or prison, and are more likely to lead productive, crime-free lives. By facilitating the development of functional and healthy family units while offenders are incarcerated, including encouraging positive steps to take responsibility for minor children, we can increase the likelihood that their reintegration will be a success.

7. The role of faith communities is not adequately utilized in the reintegration process. While many faith communities in Philadelphia are involved in counseling and providing services for incarcerated persons, too few maintain active post-incarceration involvement. Prison ministries do a great deal to help offenders recognize the significance and impact of their crimes, as well as develop positive self-images and take responsibility for their actions in the future. All too often, however, many ministries curtail or cease contact with offenders upon release when their need may be greater, particularly where there is no positive family or other support system in place. Faith communities should expand the breadth of their involvement to take into account the effect of abrupt cessation of contact with offenders during the vulnerable reentry period.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Research to demonstrate and quantify the public safety, fiscal and other benefits of successful reintegration should be conducted. This research will contribute to community and political acceptance of initiatives that help and empower men and women leaving the Philadelphia Prison System. The success and failure of individual reintegration programs and of the criminal justice system as a whole are largely measured by anecdotal evidence. Even where there are common terms, such as ‘recidivism’, there are no standard measures of what these terms mean.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *The City of Philadelphia or other appropriate authorities should seek funding for research to produce standard measures, verifiable statistics and other information that presents a comprehensive picture of whether, and how, reintegration works in Philadelphia.*
  - *Review and evaluate independent programs operating both inside the jails and in the community that purport to assist returning offenders.*

2. Efforts to include the community in the reintegration process should begin upon incarceration so that offenders are made aware of what can be accomplished during this period and can maintain meaningful ties to the community that will assist them upon release. With few exceptions, incarceration is a period of ‘empty time’ disconnected from the community and bearing little relationship to what happens on the outside.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Encourage community groups to help offenders create a plan for what will happen to them post-release.*
  - *Assist community groups in the dissemination of information to offenders about employment, housing and services that may be available post-incarceration.*



3. An organized initiative is necessary to educate community and business leaders and the faith community about reentry. One way in which this might be accomplished could be to engage these communities in dialogues and action plans to assist in the successful reintegration of offenders for the benefit of the offenders and the city.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Organize and facilitate a public statement from community leaders that identifies successful reintegration as a priority, and calls for action to further the collective interest in enhanced societal participation for, and accountability of, returning offenders, public safety and financial responsibility for the City of Philadelphia.*
  - *Organize collaboratives within the faith community to increase awareness, and educate and strengthen those groups in the community that are willing to actively engage in this work.*

4. Community events should be organized to raise awareness about reentry and reintegration and to reaffirm the need for positive community support systems for returning offenders. Faith communities in Philadelphia could take the lead by recognizing returning offenders as prodigal sons and daughters, encouraging outreach by their congregations in ways that take safety and other concerns into account.

- ACTION STEP**
- *Organize a public relations campaign to balance the threatening image of returning ‘criminals’, with a more positive image of men and women with unharvested potential coming back as positive contributors to the community.*

5. Community outreach should include identification of public and private sector organizations that could make commitments to participate in the training and/or education of offenders while they are incarcerated. This outreach should highlight the benefits to be reaped from these commitments; for example, tax benefits to employers and providing alternatives to crime for returning offenders. Outreach will have several benefits. It will mean that more offenders could use their time productively while incarcerated and have the benefit of a skill once they are released, and it could provide employers with a pool of candidates that are trained and ready to work.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Seek commitments from employers to participate in the training of offenders while incarcerated.*
  - *Explore training programs that can be completed in relatively short periods of time, taking into account the average inmate stay in the Philadelphia Prisons. (For instance, A+ [computer technician] Certification training can be completed in as little as 12 weeks, and on average pays a starting salary of \$25,000 per year.)*
  - *Identify similar training and education programs that are amenable to the average Philadelphia jail inmate while being competitive in the current labor market.*

6. Community outreach should include identification of faith communities and secular organizations that would provide services or assistance to offenders during the transitional period immediately following incarceration.

- ACTION STEPS**
- *Explore subsidization by faith or secular organizations of transitional housing for offenders that requires them to perform community service as payment.*

- *Give offenders the opportunity to correspond with members of the community or groups of concerned citizens or congregants willing to offer inmates counsel on any issues about which they wish to reach clear thinking.*<sup>xvi</sup>

7. Upon release, offenders should have available to them a “one-stop” service organization that acts as a repository of information about resources available in the public and private sector to assist them in their reintegration. After release it is not uncommon for offenders to be overwhelmed with a host of responsibilities in order to comply with the requirements of parole or probation, as well as to meet their own needs for housing, employment and health care.

**ACTION STEP** • *Explore models for, and creation of, a one-stop service organization to increase compliance with community supervision requirements and increase the overall likelihood of successful reintegration. Such an organization should be separate from, but work closely with, the Adult Probation and Parole Department and other criminal justice agencies.*

8. Whenever practical, legal and appropriate, victim service agencies should be consulted and included in the reintegration process, including providing the opportunity for offenders and victims to participate in restorative justice programs should they so desire. Since it is a fact that many men and women returning from jail and prison have victimized others in the community, efforts to assist the offender must be balanced against the right of these victims to be assured of their safety. To this end, victims’ rights advocates should be given the opportunity for input and comment on initiatives — including those recommended in this report — that may affect their interests. This recommendation should not be construed as curtailing or otherwise abridging the privacy rights of individual offenders.

# ENDNOTES

- i Philadelphia Prison System Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2002. Although the term ‘prison’ usually refers to penal institutions managed and controlled by state or federal authorities, the Philadelphia Prison System (PPS) is in actuality a ‘jail’ system, i.e., a penal system controlled by county authorities.
- ii Jeremy Travis (with Amy Solomon and Michelle Waul), *From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry*, Urban Institute, Washington, DC, 2001.
- iii Ibid
- iv Ibid
- v Source: PPS Annual Report, 2002 and Pennsylvania Prison Society.
- vi In 2001, an average of 327 defendants were paroled per month. Since January 2002, the average has increased to 338 defendants. Source: Philadelphia Adult Probation and Parole Department.
- vii PPS does not have mandatory testing for HIV or AIDS, so accurate statistics are not available for these diseases, but if PPS is consistent with the national trend, it would mean that the rate of HIV infection and AIDS among prisoners could be as high as 4 times that of the general population. In pretrial admissions to the PPS, an estimated 16% of inmates identified as having a serious mental disorder, including bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or major depression. In 2001, there were on average 1,462 inmates receiving psychotropic medications, and 1,910 emergency psychiatric applications were processed.
- viii One substance abuse treatment program that operates in the Philadelphia Prison System, the OPTIONS (Opportunities for Prevention and Treatment Interventions for Offenders Needing Support) program, reported attendance of 3,539 at group therapy sessions in 2002. The waiting list for admission to this program is more than several hundred at any given time.
- ix Based on U.S. Census 2000 figures: Philadelphia population of 1,517,550 and 17,315 census blocks, 87.6 persons per block; and Adult Probation and Parole estimates of 51,000 in community corrections.
- x Based on the largest study on recidivism of prisoners released from state prisons, performed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and published in 1989. These percentages are based on national trends. See, e.g., Jeremy Travis (with Amy Solomon and Michelle Waul), *From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry*, Urban Institute, Washington, DC, 2001. *From Prison to Home – The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry*, Washington, DC, 2000.
- xi Source: PPS Annual Report, 2002.
- xii Source: 2000 FBI Uniform Crime Reports, Washington, DC, 2001.
- xiii The Forensic Intensive Recovery (FIR) Program, directed by the Coordinating Office for Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs (CODAAP), may be an exception. In this program, inmates are sentenced, as a condition of parole, to drug and alcohol treatment in lieu of incarceration.
- xiv The Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes 42 PA. C.S. §9755 provides for the intermediate sentence of “partial confinement” and does not refer to “work release” as this sentence is known colloquially. Partial confinement is generally prescribed for those for whom probation would be inappropriate but total confinement is not required. Sentencing guidelines at 204 Pa. Code §303.11 provide this option for non-violent offenders who may have numerous less serious offenses, including drug dependent offenders (Level 2) and serious offenders including those with numerous prior convictions, all of which permit a county sentence (Level 3). In actuality, offenders under partial confinement may have any number of permissible activities that make their confinement partial rather than total, including work, drug treatment, school and others.
- xv PPS does not maintain figures for how many of the lowest risk inmates are post-trial/sentenced (and thus possibly eligible for work release), but what is clear is that more post-trial inmates are in the low risk custody levels than pre-trial inmates. This may mean that for sentenced inmates, 554 participants in work release over the course of a year represent a gross underutilization of that resource.
- xvi ‘Clearness Committees’ are one such mechanism that has been utilized in other parts of the country. These groups correspond with inmates on a number of issues, including issues pertaining to family relationships, substance abuse, matters of faith, concerns about employment, housing and education. These committees are unrelated to any official entity and simply offer a unique point of connection between inmates and the communities to which they will return, before actual reentry takes place.

**PHILADELPHIA CONSENSUS GROUP ON REENTRY  
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