

## Jail Reentry Roundtable Initiative

June 27-28, 2006  
The Urban Institute  
Washington, DC

### Jail Reentry and Community Linkages: Adding Value on Both Sides of the Gate

**Marta Nelson**  
**Mindy Tarlow**

Center for Employment Opportunities

**Disclaimer:** This article was prepared under grant number 2005-RE-CX-K148 awarded to the Urban Institute by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Urban Institute.

## **Jail Reentry & Community Linkages: Adding Value on Both Sides of the Gate**

Marta Nelson with Mindy Tarlow

### **Introduction**

*Wayne, a 45 year old man with a long history of drug addiction, diabetes and Hepatitis C, went to his community health center for periodic check-ups and to collect his medication. One week, he failed to show up for his clinic appointment, and later that week, for his addiction group. His case manager was concerned, but figured she knew where he was: in the county jail, picked up for the nuisance crimes he had been known to commit when he got high or was looking for drugs to get high on—criminal trespass, possession of a controlled substance, petty larceny. From her window, she could see the jail where he most likely was. She would have to wait until he came back, however—either after a few days, or, if he had really blown it this time, longer—to help him pick up the pieces and resume treatment and care of his chronic illnesses. As for what was happening with him in jail, she didn't know. She had never received a call from jail, and didn't call there herself. Even though it was around the corner, it might as well be in another universe. He was in the criminal justice system – and the gates were closed.*

*Sharon, a 29 year old woman with a history of drug use, had been picked up on a new petty larceny charge, pled guilty, and was sentenced to 30 days. She saw the same people she usually saw in the jail, and they said to her “Sharon, when are we going to stop seeing you?” She wondered that herself – she was getting tired, very tired of the same thing but did not know what to do differently. At jail orientation—which she could have run herself by this point—there was something different at the end. A civilian she*

*hadn't seen before told them about a new employment program that was available for people with records. They would pick her up from jail and take her to their offices to begin temporary (transitional) work that day while they helped her look for a permanent job. She had been afraid to look for a job before—she didn't know how, she did not have a diploma or any work experience, and she figured with her background, no employer would want her. She wanted to think through whether she was ready for something as big and different as entering a work program, but thought this might be a one shot deal. "Hey" she said to the worker, "I'd like to think about this. Can I write you a letter and you could tell me where to go when I get out?" Writing to them was the usual way to communicate with the community groups in the reference books in the law library or at social services. "No need for that," the lady said "I'll be back next week. I have an office here. You can get a pass to come see me." "Well," asked Sharon, "Do you take people like me?" "You are exactly the kind of person we are looking to help find a job." said the worker. "OK" said Sharon, "I'll come see you next week."*

Today, innovative programs in different parts of the country are taking up the issues presented in Wayne and Sharon's stories. Some focus on bridging the gap between services provided in jail and those provided in the community as illustrated by Wayne's story. Others are bringing community organizations and agencies into the jails to reach people before they get released, as Sharon experienced. These stories also highlight a distinct advantage for community organizations involved in jail reentry versus those that work with a prison population: jails are physically *in* their communities, unlike prisons, which are often far away. For a community group, then, getting to a client—new

or old—in jail should be easier than serving a client in prison. Also, as seen in Sharon’s story, people who are doing jail time are there for short periods, relative to prison time. A service organization can thus either continue to serve an existing client despite the slight interruption of a jail stay, or initiate a service contact in jail and continue that relationship into the community shortly thereafter.

The very transience of the jail experience that makes doing jail reentry attractive for community groups, however, challenges government systems to come up with a value for doing this work. Why do the hard work of opening up one’s jail to outsiders in order to benefit people who come and go? And not only do they come and go, they tend to be in for fairly low level crimes, like Wayne and Sharon. Surely these people do not pose the same public safety risk of people who go “upstate” or “downstate” or “cross state”—i.e. *away*—for more serious crimes, and who can fairly be said to be suitable candidates for rehabilitative reentry services.

These are serious questions that different jurisdictions have chosen to answer in different ways. Some jail systems are so focused on the logistical challenges of processing and housing large numbers of people in detention (complex intake procedures, producing inmates for court, housing and classifying them properly, providing medical services, and generally maintaining a safe and secure jail system) that taking on the challenges of working with community-based organizations, or government agencies with a non-criminal justice focus, is a luxury they cannot afford. This is a legitimate response to the very real challenges of running a local detention center, big or small. Other jurisdictions have the ability, and the inclination, to lift their heads from the day to day challenges of jail administration, and see the merit in engaging in cross-system

collaboration, or in partnering with community groups. These jurisdictions do not always see the benefit of community collaboration in the same way, so there are different types of partnerships to be found at varying levels of involvement and depth. But some value must be found. Otherwise, at the very least, jails will not open their doors to these outside groups, and at the most, will not engage in the sharing of information and staff time that a linkage that will attract and properly serve clients will take.

This paper focuses on the core values that have enabled some jail systems, community organizations and community-based governmental agencies to form connections. It starts with the overarching values found by the jail or broader government systems and then continues with the values found by community organizations or community-based governmental agencies. The paper next discusses the challenges involved for both stakeholders: from getting and sustaining funding, to the cultural and logistical challenges of non-jail personnel working with a jail system, to defining achievable outcomes when working with a very needy and jail-acclimated population. But, it concludes, the connections are worth making—if a jail system can see beyond the significant operational demands on its systems discussed above—because the numbers say it all—close to 10 million people (sentenced and detained) leave jail a year, compared to 650,000 who leave state prisons. Some of these people will be at an early point in their criminal career, and can possibly be turned from entering deeper into a life of committing crimes. Others will have been in and out of jail, but are ready to make a change, given the right opportunity to receive accessible help in jail and in their communities that they see as worthwhile. Finally, making these connections will create

a more cost-effective and efficient justice system that benefits government and communities alike.

## **II. The Value to Government Systems**

The first issue to examine when looking at the value to government systems of jail/community linkages is *which* government system one is talking about: the sheriff, the jail administration, the community supervision agency, the county executive or legislative body? The simplest way to find the answer to this question is to determine, who, if anyone, is being held accountable for the post-release outcomes of people who have been in jail. In Oregon, for example, state law requires that each county create a Local Public Safety Coordinating Council, with representation from elected officials, the judiciary, prosecution and defense, the police, probation, parole and juvenile justice (together called the Department of Community Justice), citizens, and the schools and that these Councils look at who is entering and exiting the criminal justice system broadly, and confinement more narrowly, and set policy to affect that flow. The two jail/community linkages highlighted here from Oregon were initiated at this Council level and are overseen to a great extent by the community supervision agency, the Department of Community Justice. Similarly, in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, the jail reentry project was started by a county-wide initiative, and overseen there by the Department of Human Services.

When the structure for such county-wide input into entry and reentry from jail does not exist, the benefit of community partnerships for people leaving jail must be sought elsewhere within government. Interestingly, we have found most current

partnerships are instigated by the agency holding the keys to the jail door -- the corrections department, or Sheriff's office, or jail administration.

Two clear motivations for forming community-supported jail reentry programs emerge from our review of existing initiatives. The first involves a series of fiscal and pragmatic considerations that supported a re-examination of priorities, which paved the way for thinking through, and taking on, what happens to people when they go home from jail despite their short stays and relatively low threat to public safety. These initiatives were able to think past public safety alone and think about massive costs of cycling people in and out of jail. All these jail stays cost money in the jail system itself (e.g. housing, security, medical screening), as well as create post-incarceration costs in the community (e.g. all those detox visits, all those Emergency Room visits, all that welfare or disability for people who are not working). And so does the paying of several agencies to work with people coming out of jail as they touch each system independently, without a coordinated service approach. Without paying attention to what services could be provided in the community, and how to provide them the most efficiently, and in a manner likely to engage people, the costs of jail releases will continue to make large dents in the local administration's budget, as well as the state and federal budgets. Initiatives that were catalyzed by fiscal considerations include Allegheny County in Pennsylvania, Multnomah County in Oregon, Cook County in Illinois and Snohomish County in Washington.

The second motivation driving community/jail reentry partnerships comes from a strong vision of a criminal justice administrator. In these cases, the jail or post-release supervision agency head already places a high value on post-release outcomes and finds

ways to execute their vision. Initiatives that fall under this heading are the Montgomery County, Maryland “Reentry for All” Initiative, the Davidson County, Tennessee partnership with community groups, the Essex County, Massachusetts outreach effort and the Jackson County, Oregon continuous service delivery model.

New York City’s jail reentry initiative, the largest by far, occupies its own category. Commissioner Martin Horn was motivated by both fiscal pragmatism and his pre-existing interest in post-release programming when he began New York City’s far-reaching enterprise.

Each of these initiatives is briefly described below:

**A. Fiscal and Practical Considerations Lead the Way to Community Reentry Initiatives:**

*1. Reducing Duplication of Services between County Agencies and Opening the Door to a Comprehensive Jail Reentry Initiative: Allegheny County (Pittsburgh)*

In 2000, Allegheny County’s Chief Executive, James Roddey, issued a report that highlighted the duplication of county services between both county and community agencies for people in jail and after release. The report noted that duplication hampered continuity of care between the jail, community and families, which in turn could be costly because people do not get the coordinated care they need to avoid another cycle through the jail system. In response, the Chief Executive recommended a collaborative effort, The Allegheny County Jail Collaborative—a partnership between the Bureau of Corrections, the Health Department and the Department of Human Services, which oversees employment and training, supported housing, substance abuse treatment, mental health, and the child welfare system. The Collaborative created, among other things, the Community Reintegration Programs, which address duplication by delegating jail-based



reentry programming (life skills, drug/alcohol groups, GED); discharge planning, and community case management up to one year after release to two community non-profits chosen by competitive bid.

The Collaborative turned to community-based non-profits to do the discharge planning work and post-release follow-up because they were already in the community working with formerly incarcerated people through their other contracts. It did not make fiscal or programmatic sense to try to build this capacity in corrections or in the other partner government agencies-- the expertise already existed.

*2. Focusing on a Particular, Expensive Population: Cook County, Illinois (Chicago), Multnomah County, Oregon (Portland) and Snohomish County, Washington*

Cook County, Multnomah County and Snohomish County also began their initiatives by focusing on resource issues. However, unlike Allegheny County which focused on the total population, these counties developed their community partnerships by concentrating on specific populations that are causing each county to spend increasing resources, and to which they feel a certain obligation to stop the cycle of jail returns. Cook County chose to focus on women, a growing segment of their population with high service needs. Multnomah County chose so-called “frequent flyers,” people who are frequently admitted to the jail system and who are high users of other government systems as well (e.g. welfare and the public health system). Snohomish County chose the mentally ill, partly in reaction to reductions in government resources that had been available for health and mental services for people leaving jail.

In Cook County, the Department of Women Justice Services (DWJS) offers a range of in-jail treatment and community follow-up in partnership with nonprofits, other

government agencies, and a local hospital. In both secure confinement and a day reporting program, a Chicago nonprofit, the Haymarket Center, provides gender-responsive substance abuse treatment, under contract with DWJS. Upon release, women are linked to their local Cook County Bureau of Health Services Ambulatory Care Clinic. DWJS is currently formalizing an additional partnership with Mt. Sinai Hospital on Chicago's West Side to address the long-term mental and physical health needs of DWJS participants. Partnering with local agencies is a key to DWJS's funding strategy (except for Haymarket the community partners come with their own funding) and its rehabilitation strategy. By enlisting providers with services near to where women live in the community, DWJS strives to ensure that the women will use these services to assist in their recovery and to avoid returning to jail.

Multnomah County focused on the "frequent flyers" because this group cost the county a lot of money – and it was relatively easy to rally a diverse set of government agencies to invest in a community reintegration strategy around this "save money" banner. Every two weeks a team of people from the Department of Community Justice, the jail, the mental health department, a Community Justice-contracted transitional housing and employment nonprofit, and drug and alcohol treatment providers meet to review cases and move people out of jail to housing/treatment. The "flyers" under review could either be detained in jail or serving a sentence there. This does not matter: the focus is not on their legal status, but what to do with them when they are out, which will be soon in either case as most people in the jail are serving short sentences. The Director of Community Justice reports that this collaborative system and its emphasis on providing services in the community after jail has required a shift in thinking for the jail

system. “You have to be thinking about where the person is going” after release, she notes, and previously this was not something that the jail staff necessarily paid attention to. But the shift has been made, with reinforcement from the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council that instigated the “frequent flyer” initiative.

Snohomish County’s new reintegration program for mentally ill inmates arose when the County realized it had to be more strategic with its mental health treatment dollars after the state could no longer use Medicaid surplus funds for treatment for people not currently on Medicaid returning from jail and prison. Partnering with the Snohomish County Human Services Department in the fall of 2005, the Corrections Department began a “Jail Services Program Plan” with three elements: daily cross-reference between jail bookings and the mental health administration’s database to coordinate treatment; funding of a service broker to connect people receiving mental health care in the jail to treatment in the community; and providing transitional services in the community to provide short-term treatment and stabilization until a client’s Medicaid case is approved. Although this plan will require spending some money, much of the cost is leveraged from state-wide mental health dollars that are being targeted for use by mental health agencies to manage people returning to the community from jail.

**B. A Strong Vision that Leads, and Catches, the Wave of Jail Reentry by Sheriffs, Correctional Administrations and Local Wardens:**

In contrast to the fiscal concerns that sparked community collaborations in the above cases, a second group of initiatives was largely driven by a criminal justice administrator’s desire to create linkages to the community that would continue after release. Fiscal considerations were never absent, particularly the justification that

community linkages may reduce recidivism and associated costs, but the programs began with a criminal justice administrator saying “I want to do this” and then finding ways to make it happen.

The Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation has been known for years for its non-secure Pre-Release Center, but Department Director Arthur Wallenstein realized that the center served only a portion of people released from the system, and did not touch the direct releases from the Montgomery County jail. In 2005, he instituted “Reentry for All” to create collaborative pre-release planning and post-release services provision between corrections, other county agencies and community service providers. One stand-out in this collaboration has been the partnership between the Corrections Department and the Montgomery County’s Workforce Investment Board (WIB): together they have opened a MontgomeryWorks One Stop Center in the county jail, the first One Stop in the country behind the walls. The One Stop is jointly funded by the Corrections Department and the WIB, with a contribution from the Inmate Council. Under the guidance of an Employment Specialist, people create resumes, practice interviewing, register with the state’s Labor Department database, and search the internet for open jobs (supervised by trained volunteers). Upon release they go to the county’s two community-based One Stops to pick up their job search where they left off.

Paul Mulloy, warden of the Correctional Development Center in Davidson County, Tennessee (Nashville) describes the evolution of community linkages in Nashville jails over a 15 year period. In the beginning, when he was a counselor in the jail, he brought in community groups to do substance abuse treatment and referrals without fanfare, hoping that as they settled in to do their work, they would become part of

the fabric of the jail. The strategy has worked and the jail now partners with a number of community players – inside and out. Restaurant chefs and the county Health Department staff come in to teach in the jail’s culinary arts class; community-based batterers’ intervention programs recruit participants from the jail’s own well-respected program; employment, treatment and support groups also provide services. Members of the faith community have set up a “Meet me at the Door” program to escort all interested inmates, regardless of faith, through the gauntlet of alcohol stores and other distractions that face released people in the walk between the jail and the bus stop. The warden has created a fund that community members pay into to subsidize taxi service to the bus stop as well. The local transit authority then picks up the tab for the packet of bus fares given to all people released from the jail. A key to community involvement, the warden has found, is getting jail staff to become active in the community – to volunteer in programs and then invite those programs to go into the jails and recruit, and to talk about the overlap between people in jail and those in the community. The warden himself carries a list of inmates’ zip codes with him and calls out the number of people in jail from the zip codes in the areas that he visits. “That gets their attention” he notes.

The Sheriff of Essex County, MA, Frank Cousins, explains his shift towards building community reentry partnerships by his acknowledgement that “Every inmate is going to hit the street again.” Knowing that this is going to happen, he argues, requires his agency to work with other agencies to try to transform release to the community into a chance to interrupt the cycle of the former inmate’s behavior on the outside. The Sheriff has set about “courting” community groups. His pitch emphasizes how they can help each other: community groups, with client enrollment goals to fill, can get clients from a

central source without having to recruit; in return the jail gets community services that may help reduce recidivism, without paying for it themselves.

As part of his community group recruitment strategy, the Sheriff has made it easier for people to get in the jail – frequent visitors get an ID pass that, like jail staff, enables them to enter without separate security clearances. The jail will also transport clients to the nonprofit halfway houses that will take their clients after release and arrange for interviews before release between the houses and the potential clients. For probation, the Sheriff's office now drops people released from jail with post-release supervision at the courthouse, where they can immediately meet their officer reducing the risk of failing to report later. For police, the Sheriff provides them with names and photos of those being released, so that the police department can keep an eye on them – with the former inmate's knowledge that this is happening.

Jackson County, Oregon's Community Justice Director Danny Jordan has created programming inside a new, residential transition center that seamlessly connects to related services in the community. The transition center serves people stepping down from the county jail and those who have been on community supervision but are struggling and need more structure and twenty-four hour, seven days a week supervision. Two local substance abuse providers deliver a treatment program that runs simultaneously in the transition center and in the county's community supervision office. When people leave the transition center, they can continue treatment in the community without missing a beat, as the classes are on the same cycle as what was offered inside.

**C. Transforming a Fiscal Challenge into a Leader's Vision for Post-Release Services from Community Providers: New York City**

Martin Horn has been known for years as an innovative criminal justice leader who held himself accountable for the outcomes of people leaving his jail and prison systems. As he is fond of saying, “Correction” Departments should be true to their name and offer more than confinement to the inmates they serve.

When Horn was given the post of Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) in 2002 in addition to his position as Commissioner of Probation, he was also told that he had to make cuts in DOC’s budget. Commissioner Horn started to look at the numbers, focusing on people’s length of stay in the city jail system. Fifty percent of all people admitted to DOC custody were gone within a week. Even among the sentenced population, which could serve sentences of up to a year in the city jails, the average length of stay was 31 days; close to 50% were gone in seven days; at 30 days 70% had left. At the time DOC was providing in-jail substance abuse treatment for inmates in DOC-operated therapeutic communities. Horn reasoned that this did not make sense given the short lengths of stay. “The work had to be done in the community,” he said, because it was in the community—not in jail—where people were spending their time. He eliminated the therapeutic community program, saving the money he had been asked to save.

Drawing on his conviction that doing the work in the community was most important, Horn redirected DOC’s program resources towards discharge planning. A good discharge planner could take a person’s short length of stay, “strip [planning] down to what matters and get busy.” Moreover, with fewer resources, he narrowed the focus of discharge planning to sentenced inmates only, whose release dates were certain, and to whom he felt a greater obligation, as they had been committed to the City’s “correction”

as part of serving their sentences. Horn turned to community-based organizations to do the discharge planning within the jails, followed by engagement in the community. His decision here was made easier by the fact that New York City has several organizations that work explicitly with people leaving prison and jail, and in whose work he had developed trust over the years – before directing the city system Horn had, among other things, been the Director of Parole for New York State. But he also recognized the simple fact that Allegheny County’s Collaborative also acknowledged by contracting with CBOs for discharge planning and community follow-up – the groups are already out there, doing the work and connecting with people in a way and a location that jail personnel cannot. In terms of making sure the community groups had the resources to take on a large bit of work—NYC released 33,000 sentenced people in fiscal year 2005—New York City’s legislative body, the City Council, had already funded three community-based providers to provide in-jail services through DOC contracts. Horn restructured those contracts to require the providers to do less work in jail—discharge planning only—and more in the community with people once they were released. These contracts became known collectively as the Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement, or RIDE, program. In addition the Commissioner added DOC funds and involvement to a partnership between the City’s Criminal Justice Coordinator, Economic Development Corporation, Department of Small Business Services, and Workforce Investment Board to fund a nonprofit, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), to offer immediate transport to paid transitional work and job placement assistance for sentenced inmates leaving the City jails.



Three years later, the RIDE program continues to provide discharge planning to sentenced inmates who want it, and follow up for 90 days after release, with payment to the providers premised on making sure people stay engaged in the programming in the community. While CEO does not have a direct service contract with DOC, its efforts on Rikers were placed under the umbrella of the larger RIDE initiative. CEO worked with DOC to establish the operational details of the CEO program. The bus-to-work model complemented the new direction in programming DOC was taking. As a result, the RIDE partners at Rikers also came to offer transportation off the island as a component of their services. RIDE staff (including CEO) have offices in the sentenced facility for their program recruiters and discharge planners. The DOC staff role has been restructured to work closely with community providers to provide them access to the inmates, and to work closely with other governmental agencies that are also increasing their presence on Rikers Island in order to link people leaving jail to the services they offer in the community. Services include substance abuse treatment, food stamps, disability, Medicaid, and veterans' benefits.

#### **D. The Role of Research in Executive Decision-Making about Community Linkages**

No Commissioner, Sheriff, Warden, or County Executive in the jurisdictions above decided to pursue community linkages because of research that showed that such linkages work – i.e. reduce recidivism, or create other evidence-based outcomes. Nor have they done so in the face of research that conclusively shows such linkages do *not* work. Nor have we found research that specifically addresses the effects on recidivism from linking people leaving jail to a known type and quantity of community programming. This situation will soon be rectified, at least for two programs – the Center

for Employment Opportunities' employment program is being evaluated by Public/Private Ventures, and the University of Pittsburgh is evaluating the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative. Both evaluations should be out at the end of 2006.

Two recent research studies do raise important considerations for government systems thinking about the amount—or “dosage”—of community services to offer after release, and about the extent to which they should be involved in monitoring the performance of community service providers.

From 1993 to 2003, the Hunter College Center of Drugs, AIDS and Community Health operated Health Link, a program that provided discharge planning and case management in the community for male adolescents and women leaving the New York City jails. Mathematica Policy Research Group evaluated the program in a random assignment design and found no difference in recidivism between clients who got discharge planning only and those who got discharge planning plus community case management.<sup>i</sup> Clients did not receive many hours of case management: an average of 6.5 hours of time with a Health Link case manager over a year for women and 9.5 for the adolescent males. Nor was it clear how much community programming either group got outside of case management: the goal of the case managers was to link people to community programming, but the type and intensity of these services was not tracked. So while this study does not say anything about whether community services themselves impact recidivism, it does imply that light doses of case management do not, at least with a population with a history of heavy drug use and other behavior that puts them at high risk for re-arrest.

Government decision makers might also want to review a recent report by the Vera Institute of Justice on a pre-release program, Project Greenlight, for people soon to be released from state prison.<sup>ii</sup> While prison reentry programs face significantly different challenges than jail reentry programs, the research stemming from Project Greenlight is nonetheless illuminating. Project Greenlight provided a range of intensive in-prison programming 60 days before release; it also sought out community groups that work with people with criminal records in the community, and invited them to the prison to meet with people before release. Many groups took Greenlight up on their offer, came in on a regular basis, handed out business cards and made post-release appointments. In fact Greenlight participants were more likely than members of a randomly assigned control group to have an appointment with community groups after release, and to make initial contact with these groups. However, Project Greenlight's participants did not have improved outcomes over the control group; in fact, they did worse. The Vera Institute, which operated Project Greenlight in partnership with the New York State Department of Correctional Services and the Division of Parole, has not been able to determine why Greenlight participants had worse outcomes, but one theory is that people were disappointed in a lack of follow up on the ambitious plans they made as part of an extensive release planning experience. Greenlight did not fund, or otherwise track, community providers' work with participants after release, and did not know whether the groups were able to follow through on the services they discussed with participants. Greenlight's findings suggest that, if one is looking for a positive effect from community contact, a pre-release program has to do more than introduce participants to groups. It needs to know whether there has been follow through in the community, and track and

encourage that community engagement. Greenlight showed, at the least, that spending money before release without community follow up is not money well spent, and may even suggest that a participants' unfulfilled expectations of a discharge planning program can cause disappointment and perhaps even a return to former patterns of offending.

### **III. The Value to Community Providers in Partnering with Jail Systems**

Working with jail systems offers one clear value to community providers: the ability to recruit clients. Most community groups are at least partially evaluated on the number of clients they serve. Finding clients who want to work with them, however, and recruiting them into the program can prove difficult. Clients have to be motivated to seek out help, and may walk past the provider's door in their neighborhood because they are too distracted with living their lives, or do not think that they have a problem, or that an agency can help them with their problem. Things can look different from inside a jail cell. The problems that seemed manageable or nonexistent before, have gotten sticky. The lost opportunities—to get a GED, to get a job—loom larger. There are also fewer distractions on the inside. A presentation from a service provider can appear fairly inspiring, compared to another game of checkers, or an episode of “Oprah” in the dayroom. Thus, a community provider in need of people to serve can find in a jail population just the “captive audience” they have been looking for to bring into their program.

Another value to providers in working within the jail system is to provide a continuity of service to a client, or to a population of clients, whom they are already serving on the outside. This motivated neighborhood clinic providers in Hampden

County, Massachusetts to seek out a working relationship with the Sheriff's office. Ten years ago, the clinics were treating community members for HIV and noticed that clients would occasionally disappear. Upon inquiry, they determined that the clients were not far away; they were in the local jail. Concerned that their patients' treatment was being interrupted, which could cause these serious health conditions to deteriorate, the clinics worked with the Sheriff's Department so that the jail would be treated as another health care site. After all, they were community health care providers, and the jail was in the community. The groups worked together to restructure health services within the jail, allowing clinic staff to work at both their clinics and at the jail. Jail time actually became the entry point into the community-based public health system for a population that has high incidences of chronic disease, and that often went to emergency rooms for treatment.

Sometimes groups partner with jail agencies because they have been asked to do so: because they offer a service that is of interest to government, but that is of a nature, or a scale, beyond what a jail system can do on its own. This is the genesis of the CEO program in New York City. The daily drop-off point for people leaving custody after completing sentences is at Queens Plaza in Long Island City, Queens. This area was rezoned by the City in 2001 to allow for more commercial and residential use. As they created plans for the district, the City's Economic Development Corporation soon learned that negative perceptions of public safety in the Rikers drop-off area were deterring development opportunities. As a result, the City's criminal justice officials turned to the Center for Employment Opportunities and collaborated on an idea to divert people away from Queens Plaza while simultaneously addressing their employment needs: CEO

would bus inmates directly from Rikers Island to a transitional job site, reducing the number of people released at Queens Plaza. This idea spoke to two goals: improving economic development prospects in Queens and providing former inmates with an opportunity for success on the outside.

#### **IV. Challenges for the Collaborations**

a. *Getting and Sustaining Funding* Jails exist to keep law breakers, or accused law breakers, off the streets and under county control. Jail systems are judged, first and foremost, on whether they fulfill that goal. All the rest, including how many people they transition to the community, how well they do it, and with whom, is secondary. When the New York City Council passed a local law mandating that the City provide discharge planning for sentenced inmates (a measure that codified what the Department of Correction was already doing), the Mayor of New York turned to Commissioner Horn during the bill signing ceremony and said “Lost any today?” Not losing any—keeping people who should be in, in—is what ultimately matters to the public officials accountable for the jail, and this priority is reflected in funding for discharge planning, not to mention resources for community groups or other government agencies to do the planning and provide follow-up services in the community. Funding programs that are seen as “extra” to the fundamental mission of jails, however dear they are to some jail administrators and however much they may be part of an overall streamlining of county services, will always be a challenge.

A system can turn to outside funding—federal or state grants, foundation money—but these solutions are usually time limited. The grant runs out, the foundation program officer changes her portfolio, and the collaboration is over. This was the fate of

the Hampden County Life Skills and Employment Collaboration, a partnership between the Hampden County Sheriff's Office and a local nonprofit to provide a community-based employment program for people who were released from jail without having gone through work release. The Collaboration was funded by a grant from the United States Department of Education's Office of Correctional Education. After the grant ended, so did the collaboration. Allegheny County's Jail Collaborative is facing the end (in 2008) of their state grant and private foundation funding for discharge planning and community follow-up. The Collaborative's funding plan involves having the county assume these costs.

In making the argument to the county to take on funding community services for released inmates, the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative may find the funding structure for the New York City collaboration with CEO and for the city's discharge planning/community case management programs (RIDE) instructive. The CEO initiative is funded by a blended stream of revenues from the different agencies that can be said to benefit from the project in some way. The Economic Development Corporation benefited by having people taken off of Rikers Island to an employment site, instead of being dropped off daily with no purpose at a location that EDC was looking to develop as a new site for corporate back offices. The Federal Workforce Investment Act funds job training and placement, and the program did that. The Department of Correction put up its own money, to give dollars to its expressed value of enhancing services that will, theoretically, reduce returns to jail. Finally, the City Council, which requires discharge planning of all sentenced inmates, provides funding to assist with such planning, resisting the all too easy urge to create an unfunded mandate.

Some collaborations are built on community providers bringing their own money to the table, be it grant money or revenue streams from other government agencies. Examples of this are the Nashville jail/community relationships, the Essex County, Massachusetts linkages, and the Cook County Department of Women Justice Services/Mt. Sinai Hospital partnership. This funding model can get linkages off the ground, and the enticement of finding clients to fill existing client slots goes some way towards making the model “pay for itself.” However, to do a project that asks providers to significantly add to what they are already doing—to take on 50, 100, sometimes thousands of new clients—will require some new resources. Generally, a linkage cannot operate at any scale, or for an indefinite period of time, without an investment of money from the agency or agencies that derive value from it.

*b. Getting In (and Out) of Jail and Understanding Each Other Once There*

Another partnership challenge is getting community-based providers inside the jails and out again without losing hours of staff time, and staff equilibrium. This challenge is only slightly less daunting than funding. Jails, as noted above, are designed to keep people inside them; they are not designed to let people other than those in a correctional officer’s uniform enter and exit freely. Jails will issue “gate clearances” for specified visits – but these require an advance request of up to several days, and paperwork and proof of identity, often several forms. The gate clearances then have to be given to the front desk staff so that they know to let a person in, and even in a well-run system this step often seems not to happen, requiring the visitor to make several phone calls to locate the paperwork and have it delivered to the front gate staff. The operating assumption behind



the gate clearance application process and the actual delivery of the clearance is that people coming into jail who are not inmates, visitors, or staff, are a rarity.

Yet in a jail/community partnership such visits become the norm, not the exception. Therefore systems have to be developed to allow staff from community partners to enter and exit in a streamlined manner. The Essex County jail system has its frequent users ID program, and the New York City system has the “EZ-Pass” system, nicknamed after the scanning system that charges customers electronically so cars can go through the toll gate quickly. Such streamlined systems whereby steady staff, who have undergone security checks, can enter and exit without separate gate clearances and without extensive stopping and questioning are essential to good jail/community collaborations. If community-based staff have to struggle to get in and out of the jail, they use up the emotional energy that they need to recruit or otherwise work with clients, and this will surely have a negative impact on their attitude. Also, a difficult entry process sours providers on their correctional partners—a natural reaction to someone who is holding you up from doing what you are there to do—leading to an “us against them” mentality which affects cooperation and information sharing.

The cultural differences between social service providers and correctional officers are known, and apparent. With exceptions on both sides, providers tend to think people can be changed, or that all that is standing between them and change is the help they offer. Officers, who have seen inmates leave and return, over and over again, and who see them behave at their worst, as people do when they are in the unnatural state of being an inmate, are not so sure that change is possible. Working together with “do-gooders” from the community, who do not understand how hard it is to maintain order and safety

in a jail, often seems foisted upon them from the top. Correctional staff may wonder why inmates are getting all these attention and services, while they or their children, who may be from the same neighborhoods and same socio-economic circumstances, are not.

It is the work of the correctional administration to explain to their line staff the purpose of the collaboration, and what value it brings to the jail – a hope for reduced returns to jail, a consolidation of services that is meant to save money for the county, or a way to stand out from peers and make a mark. But in the end, it falls to the service providers who recruit or deliver services in jails to understand where their correctional colleagues are coming from, and not be condescending or dismissive of their perception that inmates are difficult to work with, or that they are prone to coming back. The correction officers base this perception on their experience, on the reality of what they have seen. It will take hard work to change that reality – work that the providers have been asked to do, but that the officers often have not been consulted on. That is not to say that they cannot come around to supporting the work of the providers; most officers do not want to see the people who leave jail return to jail, still in trouble, still causing problem in their neighborhoods. Also, they know the inmates personally from repeated jail stays. If treated with respect, and if given input into aspects of program design in which they have some expertise—e.g. the best time to meet with people in their cell block, the kind of message they think might appeal to them—they may buy in to the process and the culture clashes will decrease.

*c. Setting Realistic Expectations for Working with a Jail Reentry Population*

Some community providers will have experience with precisely this population before entering into a partnership with the jail system, adding to their value as a partner. Others

will have served this population as part of the greater mix of clients they have on the outside—people with substance abuse problems or homelessness, for example, where people with a jail background are just a portion of the group. Others, like CEO, may be veterans of reentry programming, but for a prison, not a jail population. Providers that have not worked precisely with this population, or for whom this population did not make up a large part of their client base, need to develop expectations that are specific to this population, because jail reentry is a different experience, with a different clientele, than prison reentry, or the experience of working with disadvantaged poor people generally.

We argue, based on CEO's 25+ years of experience with a prison reentry population, that leaving jail after completing a short sentence there does not create, in itself, the same motivation to participate in a life-altering program (in our case, transitional employment leading to permanent employment) as release from prison does. Short stays in the local jail are so integrated into the lives of some people leaving jail that going back is not seen as something to be feared, or even avoided. While not pleasant, a stay in jail does not involve separation from one's life or habits on the outside on any profound level. As such some people are not as motivated to engage in the providers' programs, or to stay the course, in order to stay out of jail.

Also, as made clear in Nick Freudenberg's work on the needs of the jail population, people going in and out of jail repeatedly—what Multnomah County calls its “frequent flyers”—often have drug abuse and health issues that make sticking with a program, or a work routine in the case of CEO, difficult.<sup>iii</sup> This is important to note in setting expectations. While people going in and out frequently may be perfect clients to target for recruitment in jail/community programs for cost reasons—the cost of

incarceration, health, welfare, disability, etc.—they may be the people least able to succeed in a program originally structured for a prison reentry clientele, or for a population that has fewer barriers.

This does not mean that reentry organizations or organizations used to working with a general population in the community should not enter into linkages to serve a jail reentry population. It means that programming may need to be adjusted to best engage a group of people who do not have the potent motivator to avoid another long prison sentence. It also means that content of services may need to change to deal with multiple, deep-set challenges to employment, or to sobriety, or education, or housing, or whatever challenges the provider is working on. And it means that realistic outcomes have to be set that fit this population, not the state reentry population, or the general population in the community that the provider may have experience working with.

## **V. Still Worth the Effort? We Think So**

On balance, we believe that jail reentry partnerships are worth the effort. Jail reentry programs have the potential to stop serious criminal careers before they get started, and to break the cycle of incarceration for those that have been in and out of jail, but are ready to make a change, given the right opportunity. Further, the sheer numbers of people served in jail suggest that small improvements in process or outcomes can have significant impact on system costs. It all gets back to the observation made at the beginning of the paper: jails are located in the community, and the people incarcerated there will return back to the community, and soon. This simple set of facts suggests a sensible strategy for providing reentry services – pay attention to the community programs or governmental agencies that are there to engage with people when

they get home, find ways for them to connect with clients while they are in jail, and work with them to offer a chance for change in the lives of these community members.

Marta Nelson is the director of the Center for Employment Opportunities' Learning Institute. The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) is a large New York-based nonprofit corporation that provides employment services to men and women returning from prison and detention to New York City. The Learning Institute provides analytic and problem-solving expertise for the organization and designs, operates and evaluates demonstration projects to test new ideas within CEO. Before joining CEO, Ms. Nelson was a Project Director at the Vera Institute of Justice from 1999 to 2005. She directed Project Greenlight, an intensive pre-release program operated in partnership with the New York State Department of Correctional Services and the New York State Division of Parole. She also directed a team of Vera employees to help New York City's Department of Correction develop systems to begin discharge planning at intake into the city jail system. Prior to joining Vera, Marta was a lawyer at the Brennan Center for Justice and the Prisoners' Rights Project of the New York Legal Aid Society.

Mindy Tarlow is the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of CEO. Ms. Tarlow began her association with CEO as a Program Director at the Vera Institute of Justice in 1994, where she managed the successful spin-off of CEO from Vera. Prior to joining CEO, Ms. Tarlow spent close to ten years at the New York City Office of Management and Budget where she rose from Senior Analyst in 1984 to Deputy Director in 1992. Ms. Tarlow guided many criminal justice projects during her tenure in government including co-authoring the Mayor's Safe Streets, Safe City Omnibus Criminal Justice Program.

This article was prepared under grant number 2005-RE-CX-K148 awarded to the Urban Institute by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

---

<sup>i</sup> Karen Needels, Susanne James-Burdumy and John Burghardt, "Community Case Management for Former Jail Inmates: Its Impacts on Rearrest, Drug Use and HIV Risk", Vol. 82, No. 3 *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* (2005). Correspondence: kneedels@mathematica-mpr.com

---

<sup>ii</sup> James A. Wilson, Yury Cheryachukin, Robert C. Davis, Jean Dauphinee, Robert Hope, Kajal Gehi and Timothy Ross, *Smoothing the Path from Prison to Home: A Summary and A Roundtable Discussion on the Lessons of Project Greenlight* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2005)

[www.vera.org/publication\\_pdf/319\\_590.pdf](http://www.vera.org/publication_pdf/319_590.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Nick Freudenberg, "Coming Home from Jail: The Social and Health Consequences of Community Reentry for Women, Male Adolescents and Their Families and Communities," *American Journal of Public Health* 95, No. 10 (2005): 1725-1736