Effective Partnerships for Family-Focused Reentry Services
Findings from Urban’s Reentry Research Portfolio
Webinar Housekeeping

- All participants are muted
- Type your **questions** into the chatbox to “Urban Institute Webinar Questions”
- Webinar is being recorded
- Slides will be sent out after the webcast
Session Overview

- Unpacking the importance of partnerships for family-focused reentry services
- Exploring partnership types, opportunities, and challenges
  - Spheres, structures, and mechanisms
- Building, maintaining, and sustaining effective partnerships
  - Lessons learned from the field
- Q&A
Importance of Partnerships for Family-Focused Reentry Services

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Incarcerated/formerly incarcerated persons have a range of service needs.

- Needs vary considerably; some have significant service needs while others have fewer needs
- Many of these service needs are related to reentry success or failure (i.e., risk of recidivism)
- Needs cross several different service domains/agencies
- No one agency provides all of the services an individual may need
- Desire for reunification or family support is another reentry need, which has also been found to be related to reentry success or failure
Families are partners; families can make reentry programming more or less successful.

- Use a broad definition of family, to include biological family members and an individual’s broader support network.
- Family context is important, whether narrowly or broadly defined.
- Program staff must have a realistic assessment of an individual’s family/support networks; family can strengthen or undermine an individual’s reentry.
- Family as partners can take various forms (e.g., engagement, planning, leverage, direct service delivery).
- Critical to be thoughtful about family engagement and family partnerships.
Families also have a range of service needs.

• Comprehensive services should include or at least acknowledge/recognize the needs of the family

• Family members are often insufficiently prepared to provide reentry support services (though they provide them anyhow!)

• Formerly incarcerated are usually expected to assume their former role within their biological family as providing both financial and emotional support quickly after release

• Reentry programs may have different abilities and interests (and funding) to serve families directly, but important they recognize families’ central role
Lack of service coordination and collaboration hinders reentry success.

- A reentering individual has to navigate a complex “system” of postrelease services, including:
  - Correctional departments/facilities
  - Community corrections authorities
  - Community-based providers—nongovernmental and governmental
  - Private providers
- There is no service delivery “hub”
- Agencies may have conflicting policies and procedures that hinder them from working together
Need for partnerships begins in the institutions and continues in the community.

- Prerelease engagement is a best practice
- Prerelease reentry planning fosters success in the community
- Correctional agencies are not always in the best position to provide services or to coordinate service delivery
- Correctional agencies often have limited (and outdated) understanding of community-based support systems
- Community-based programs need to partner with correctional agencies to support the reentry population
- Need for partnership includes, but is not limited to, correctional organizations
Interagency coordination and collaboration can lead to more comprehensive service delivery.

- Through partnerships, individuals can more easily navigate the range of available community-based services.
- More comprehensive services can be offered through effective partnerships.
- Programs can enhance their offerings through partnerships and address program limitations.
- Service delivery is arguably more efficient and effective when delivered through partnerships; organizations can supplement and/or complement their activities/services and reduce duplication in services.
Different Partnership Types: Opportunities and Challenges
Formal partnerships offer some advantages over informal partnerships.

- Informal partnerships may include a working knowledge of the other agencies and a willingness to provide and receive referrals to those agencies.

- Formal partnerships may include special service/funding/data sharing agreements, MOUs, or integrated data systems.

- Informal agreements are perhaps easier and quicker to establish; no commitment!

- Formality may allow for:
  - Quantifying/measuring service delivery and partnership engagement
  - Holding organizations accountable
  - Efficient/streamlined referral processes and service delivery
Whether formal or informal, there are a range of governmental and nongovernmental partners.

- Criminal justice government agencies
- Non-criminal justice government agencies
- Non-governmental community-based organizations
- Academic institutions
- Business/for-profit community
- Others
Criminal justice government agencies...

- ...such as, state and federal prisons, local and regional jails, probation and parole departments, and police departments
- **Opportunities**: prerelease recruitment and service delivery; graduated sanctions; collect important historical and outcome data on participants
- **Challenges**: hard to predict issues can disrupt activities in institutions; different institutions may have different rules of engagement; the different correctional contexts present different challenges and opportunities for recruitment and service delivery; bureaucracies can be hard to penetrate
Non-criminal justice government agencies...

- ...such as, health and human services, child support, labor, housing, transportation, etc.
- **Opportunities**: child support order modifications, secure public benefits, reinstate licenses, public housing assistance, employment opportunities; services enable programs to be more comprehensive
- **Challenges**: agencies are often overwhelmed with existing clients; agencies are under-resourced; staff may have high caseloads; different rules of engagement that may change over time; some agencies have preferred service providers or existing service agreements; bureaucracies can be hard to penetrate
Non-governmental community-based organizations...

- ...such as, faith organizations/community, reentry coalitions, treatment providers, and other nonprofits

- **Opportunities**: expand your capacity and knowledge of other issues; see individuals/families in context; additional services and treatment can complement and supplement your program; broader social (service) networks can assist in fulfilling individuals’ fundamental needs at no or little cost

- **Challenges**: ensuring missions are aligned; scope creep; potential redundancies in service delivery and intake; staff may have high caseloads which limits their ability to serve program participants; limited budgets; different definitions of success
Academic institutions...

- such as, colleges, universities, other skills-building organizations and clinics that can provide training opportunities and certificates and services

- **Opportunities:** participant access to degree-/certificate-earning programs and trainings (e.g., OSHA, hazmat, CDL, culinary, welding, forklift, other vocational programs); prosocial engagement with the larger community; medical and legal services

- **Challenges:** ensuring consistent demand; matching participant population with appropriate trainings and services
Business/for profit community...

• ...such as, workforce development boards, businesses, and banks

• **Opportunities**: expand employment opportunities for participants; provide training opportunities and financial services; help participants open checking and savings accounts; help participants build credit

• **Challenges**: businesses have a for-profit mindset that nonprofits or service providers may not be accustomed to; need to educate the business community on utility of serving reentry population
...and there are various other partnerships that can be pursued

• Being creative,
• Flexible,
• Open,
• And responsive to participant (and family) need
• By casting a wide net
• Can lead to identifying untapped resources.
• Partnerships can help programs address various other reentry issues that often go unaddressed
Building, Maintaining, and Sustaining Effective Partnerships

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Partnerships

“Strategically formed relationships between organizations that involve varying degrees of resource sharing, joint decision making, and collaboration to address common interests and achieve shared goals ... they are premised on the need to combine resources and strengths to produce client or community outcomes.”

-- adapted from Stewart, Walker & Minzner 2011
The Four C’s of Partnering

Collaboration
A spirit of willing cooperation & mutual respect that allows different entities to share a common vision to contribute to the process.

Coordination
A sequenced plan of action, agreed to by all parties, delineating who will do what, when & for what duration.

Commitment
A good-faith pledge by all partners to do whatever each has resources to do, with no concern for who gets credit.

Communication
The free sharing of information and knowledge.

Figure source: Kraus, W. A. 1980. Collaboration in Organizations: Alternatives to Hierarchy. New York: Human Sciences Press: p. 12. For more on the Four Cs and a brief diagnostic check list see also the TJC Online Toolkit (http://tjctoolkit.urban.org/index.html)
Effective Partnerships

• Accomplish stated objectives
• Engage leadership
• Share a common mission and vision
• Build capacity, expertise
• Leverage resources
• Adapt and grow
• Stand the test of time
Building Effective Partnerships

• Identify and engage the “right” partners
  o Be strategic
  o Have a concrete “ask” in mind
  o Outline the benefits and potential challenges

• Set clear, relevant goals and objectives

• Share information/data

• Formalize and tend to relationships
  o Articulate expectations, roles, responsibilities, resources
  o Meet consistently
  o Get to know your partners
Evidence of Effective Reentry Partnerships

• Collaboration across systems, agencies, and staff levels
• Resource-sharing (staff, trainings, knowledge, expertise, etc.)
• General understanding of partners’ broader missions, operations, procedures, and policies
• Ongoing education of core partners to build collective understanding and buy-in
• Information- and data-sharing at agency and client levels*
• Regular self-evaluation
Maintaining Effective Partnerships

• Like all (good) relationships, partnerships must be cultivated
  o Meet regularly, purposefully
  o Revisit goals/objectives, tweak as needed
  o Cultivate partner capacity
  o Review progress – celebrate successes, learn from failures
  o Don’t fear disagreement

• Sustainable partnerships grow and change
  o Be flexible
  o Be strategic
  o Be creative
Session Summary

• Cast a wide net
  o Many opportunities for partnerships and many partnership types (families, for example)
  o Think outside the box!
• Be flexible
  o Functional, effective partnerships change
• Be purposeful
  o Articulate missions and vision, objectives
  o Have a clear and appropriate “ask” of partners, define roles
  o Engage partners in decision-making, direction setting
  o Learn from one another
• Cultivate partnerships to sustain them over time
Thank You

For more information...
http://www.urban.org/policy-centers/justice-policy-center
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/programs/healthy-marriage

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Audience Q&A

Type your questions into the chat box.