

Information and the Challenge of Prisoner Reentry

G. Thomas Kingsley, Nancy G. La Vigne

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The Reentry Mapping Network (RMN) is a partnership among community-based organizations and the Urban Institute designed to create community change through mapping and analyzing neighborhood-level data related to reentry and community well-being. It is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National Institute of Justice.

The importance of understanding and addressing prisoner reentry at the community level cannot be overstated. With more than 600,000 prisoners released each year, prisoner reentry poses many challenges to the communities involved, including an increased risk to public safety and a limited availability of jobs, housing, and social services for the returning prisoners. Today's intense cycle of arrest, removal, incarceration, and reentry—at levels four times higher than 20 years ago—has had profound consequences for a relatively small number of communities around the country where incarceration and reentry policies are experienced most acutely. Over the past decade, a rising number of released prisoners are returning disproportionately to major metropolitan cities and to just a few neighborhoods within these cities. These communities are often among the least able to provide the support necessary for successful reintegration.

Mapping is one of the most powerful ways to capture these important concentrations, patterns, and trends, especially as they relate to community well-being. Tested in several environments, mapping community-level data has proven an effective way to help community members and local leaders better understand the nature of various community problems and develop effective public policies to address them.

RMN Partners

Partners collect and analyze local data related to incarceration, reentry, and community well-being; develop policy options based on the findings; use the findings to engage community stakeholders toward community improvement; and document their findings and lessons learned. UI assists partners with their work, conducts cross-site analyses, holds an annual RMN conference, provides on-site support at least once a year, promotes peer learning, works with sites to disseminate findings and lessons learned, and monitors each site's progress. The RMN is, however, a capacity building project: after two years of funded participation, the goal is for each site to continue its reentry mapping work independently with local funding.

The Reentry Mapping Network currently involves 12 partner organizations in cities throughout the United States, 10 of whom are also partners in the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP). Through a competitive selection process, Urban Institute staff selected the first six RMN partners in March 2003 (Phase I) and the next six partners in June 2004 (Phase II). Current partners and efforts include:

Denver, CO: The Piton Foundation, The Colorado Department of Safety-Division of Community Justice, and Making Connections Denver will collect and analyze the effects of felon disenfranchisement, unemployment, family stability, and neighborhood risks and assets on prisoner reentry. On the basis of their findings, these organizations will then facilitate the development and implementation of community-based interventions.

Des Moines, IA: Using data from the Iowa Department of Corrections, The Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC) has completed two reports for the Neighborhood Learning Partnership, analyzing current prison populations and the effects of incarceration on local communities. The CFPC continues to participate in strategic planning sessions with local service providers.

Hartford, CT: Building on the research of *Making Connections Hartford* regarding deteriorating economic conditions and increasing suburbanization, the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council will promote the coordination of reentry services through analyzing the difficulties ex-prisoners have securing jobs.

Indianapolis, IN: The United Way of Central Indiana will map incarceration and reentry patterns in central Indiana to help community organizations better understand and respond to prisoner reentry issues.

Louisville, KY: Making Connections Louisville and the Community Resource Network (CRN), serving as the

Local Learning Partner, will focus on acquiring and analyzing data relevant to the release of prisoners from state and local prisons to the Louisville metropolitan area, including the availability and adequacy of support services. In particular, they will advocate for the development and use of neighborhood-level data and analysis to help develop resident-driven solutions to prisoner reentry issues.

Milwaukee, WI: The Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee (NPCM) is analyzing countywide arrest data and supervised offender address data. The NPCM is providing geographic analysis for two reentry service providers to demonstrate the value of mapping in understanding and planning community reentry services.

Oakland, CA: The Urban Strategies Council (USC) is working on a proposal to collect data on the health needs of former prisoners and resources in Alameda County. In addition to mapping and analyzing homicides in Oakland, the USC has produced maps locating participants of the Community Reentry Service Provider Network, an organization representing government agencies and community organizations.

Providence, RI: After receiving comprehensive pre-trial, sentencing, and supervision data this spring, The Providence Plan, in partnership with the Rhode Island Family Life Center, has performed mapping and analysis on a statewide basis and neighborhood level. In addition, the Family Life Center has used these data to analyze the impact of voter disenfranchisement across the state and will be releasing a policy brief in late September. In the coming months, the local RMN partnership in Providence will convene community discussions in neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of former prisoners, to help shape the development of a community engagement strategy.

San Diego, CA: The San Diego County District Attorney's Office and The San Diego Association of Governments will gather information on the previous residences and criminal histories of ex-offenders and analyze the needs and resources of this population upon returning to the community.

Seattle, WA: Public Health-Seattle, King County, in partnership with Making Connections White Center/Boulevard Park, will assess reentry patterns on the basis of race, immigration, socioeconomic status, gender, and the presence of dependent children. Public Health-Seattle and Making Connections will collaborate with community representatives in using the data to identify and improve services for ex-prisoners.

Washington, DC: The DC Data Warehouse plans to obtain data on local service providers and analyze their spatial relationship to neighborhoods with concentrated exoffender populations. Currently, DC Data Warehouse is also mapping the location of exoffenders receiving case management services from one specific service provider.

Winston-Salem, NC: The Center for Community Safety (CCS) continues to analyze and map 2003 crime data in search of possible relationships between crime and neighborhoods with high concentrations of former prisoners. The CCS is engaging community partners in target neighborhoods about conducting a resident skill set survey in the Northeast Weed & Seed area.

The Reentry Mapping Network follows the successful model of the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP). The network also builds on the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections initiative, with seven network sites collaborating with Making Connections partners. Making Connections works to increase and improve support to disadvantaged families and communities by enhancing social connectedness; linking them to local resources and services; and strengthening community members' financial well-being. For more information about Making Connections, see www.aecf.org/initiatives/mc.

More information about the Justice Policy Center's reentry projects is available at <http://www.urban.org/content/PolicyCenters/Justice/Projects/PrisonerReentry/overview.htm>.

Other Publications by the Authors

- G. Thomas Kingsley
- Nancy G. La Vigne

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