

INVESTING FOR NO RETURN

Recommendations to reform Washington's system of reentry to improve outcomes for men and women released from the State's prisons, to reduce crime, and to enhance public safety.



**King County Prosecuting
Attorney's Office**

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Transitioning Successfully from Prison to the Community:

Investing For No Return

Foreword by Dan Satterberg, King County Prosecuting Attorney

Over the past three decades, the criminal justice system in Washington State has risen to face many challenges. Over that time, leaders in local justice systems and in Olympia have built an infrastructure of courts, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, prisons and jails to meet the unprecedented challenge of crime associated with the crack cocaine wave of the late 1980's and early 1990's. Our successes are notable:

- The rate of reported serious felony crime has dropped 43% since 1980, with a 27% drop in violent crime (not including drug crime statistics);
- We have incorporated drug courts and drug treatment into our criminal justice system, causing the percentage of prison inmates serving sentences for drug crimes to fall from 22% in 2005 to 8.6% today;
- While the Washington State prison population rose from about 7,000 in 1980 to 17,000 today, Washington State still ranks 41st of the 50 states in the rate of prison incarceration. We have incarcerated our citizens at a lower rate than the national average.

One area that has not received sufficient attention over the past 30 years is that which is broadly called "reentry." Simply put, government leaders have not accepted as part of the mission of the criminal justice system to assist inmates with making a successful transition back into the community upon completion of their sentence. It is not a performance measurement demanded of the criminal justice system.

In fact, as we forecast the need for prison space in the future, planners expect that 30-50% of all inmates who are released will be back in prison within three years. We expect recidivism, we plan for it, and we suffer the consequences of it. We need instead to work harder to help former inmates

make a successful transition to the community so that our entire community can reap the benefits of a lower recidivism rate.

Assisting the individuals being released from prisons and jails to avoid the predictable conditions that lead to recidivism makes sense on many levels. Reducing recidivism makes the community safer, transforms formerly incarcerated individuals into productive citizens, and strengthens the families that surround each of these men and women.

Whether you measure the economic return or the restoration of human dignity to each formerly incarcerated person, it just makes sense to improve our efforts and systems to help with that difficult transition.

I offer the following principles to help guide our discussion of reentry:

1. Reentry planning begins on the day a person is sentenced to prison or jail.
2. People returning to the community after a period of incarceration need the same things everyone else does to succeed: housing, food, clothing, a job or an educational opportunity.
3. People returning to the community after a period of incarceration may also need these things: peer support, community orientation, family counseling, mental health and/or chemical dependency treatment, and help navigating social service networks and the legal system.
4. While the "Criminal Justice System" is generally considered a monolithic structure by people most impacted by it, it is actually scores of smaller systems that are often disconnected. A person who is in the custody of the state for one offense should have the ability to resolve other pending matters in other systems so that when they are released from prison they do so with a clean slate, or at least an organized and approved plan to resolve other pending legal matters.
5. It is *not* the mission of the criminal justice system to impose lifelong disabilities upon people who have been convicted of a crime, served their time, and paid restitution and other legal financial obligations. State, county, and city governments should do more to affirmatively assist people with reentry, and financially support successful existing programs and nonprofit effort to provide vocational training, housing and education.

6. Collateral consequences beyond those imposed by a court, and social stigma that interfere with successful reintegration into the community are major causes of recidivism. Even the language that we use to describe those who were formerly incarcerated contributes to the imposing barriers we erect in the path of successful reentry.

7. Most of the successful reentry programs have been created in the private non-profit sector, many without any government assistance. We must identify the programs that work and strengthen them. State government must begin to own the responsibility to assist in successful reentry by supporting private efforts and by instituting early re-entry planning within the Department of Corrections. Local governments must also embrace programs that work, and look to the challenges faced in the reentry from jail as well as prison.

This report is the work product of people interested in change – some inside the criminal justice system, some from the private sector, and others who were formerly incarcerated. Our goal is to elevate the level of discussion around our shared responsibility to help with the reentry transition, and to make practical recommendations for increased government action.

I am grateful for the participation of the summit members, and grateful to live in a state where people understand the need to help a former prisoner escape the cycle of recidivism by providing basic needs and support during the critical period of re-entry. I am confident that if we make reducing recidivism a priority, we will make our communities safer while at the same time making the lives of formerly incarcerated people more productive and fulfilling.

It's time for a frank discussion about the realities of reentry. We can do better.

Sincerely,

Dan Satterberg
King County Prosecuting Attorney

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Executive Summary

Each year, nearly 8,000 men and women are released from Washington State prisons.¹ Nearly one-third of the 8,000 men and women released will recidivate within the first three years of release. Of those that recidivate, the vast majority do so within the first year of getting out of prison.²

Research has consistently shown that reducing recidivism saves money over the long term. Investments of public money in the criminal justice system since 1980 have largely been focused on building up the infrastructure of the criminal justice system – police, prisons, jails, courts, prosecutors, public defenders. The average taxpayer investment in the criminal justice system has risen by over 120% during that time, coinciding with a decrease in our State's reported felony crime rates of 43% since 1980³.

Our State's incarceration rate has also increased over that same period of time.⁴ Today nearly half of all adult men and women who are being sentenced to prison for felony offenses have been there before.⁵ Of those released to King County from prison within the past five years, nearly 40% have since been readmitted to prison for new offenses.

Even a cursory analysis of this data suggests that our State should do more to stop the revolving doorway to prison and invest in strategies and programs to more successfully support men and women making the transition from prison back into the community.

Numerous studies confirm that the first months following release are an especially challenging and high-risk period for men and women making the transition back into the community.⁶ The majority of men and women released from prison face very real barriers to reentry, including a lack of stable housing, limited educational and employment opportunities, unaddressed mental health and/or substance abuse issues, and inadequate support services.⁷ Failing to address these barriers in any sort of intentional or meaningful way has the effect of impeding the path to productive citizenship, and instead repaves a direct path back to prison.⁸

It is within this framework that King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg, along with community partners Mary Flowers, Dustin

Washington, Martin Friedman, and John Page, convened a four-day Reentry Summit in the Fall of 2012 at the offices of the Prosecuting Attorney (PAO).

Stakeholders from throughout the state were invited to the table to engage in an honest conversation about the barriers facing those released from prison and to brainstorm solutions to overcome those barriers. Stakeholders were challenged to identify system-level changes that would have the greatest impact on reducing or eliminating barriers to success. Stakeholders were also encouraged to honestly identify practices that contributed to disproportionality and to think about improvements or system changes that would positively impact disproportionality.

As part of this Summit, Dan Satterberg consulted with and sought input from The Black Prisoners Caucus (BPC), a program inside the Monroe Correctional Complex, and promised to include in this report an unvarnished, unedited chapter from the BPC.

In addition, each year the BPC conducts its own summit on an important policy issue. This year, the BPC planned its summit to align with the work of the PAO's Reentry Summit and focused on two related topics: reentry and education.

At the conclusion of the Reentry Summit, stakeholders developed 12 priority recommendations for consideration by our state's leaders and policy makers. These 12 recommendations fall within six broad categories, and with political will, many are achievable within a relatively short period of time:

Housing	Treatment
Transition	Education
Employment	Family Support

The cost to operate prisons is high. Currently, there are 12 adult prison facilities throughout the state, and the Washington Department of Corrections (DOC) estimates that annual operations costs hover around \$45 million per prison.⁹ The construction of just one new 2000-bed prison carries the hefty price tag of \$250 million. Compared to 20 years ago, costs for criminal justice and incarceration borne by taxpayers are nearly twice as much today.¹⁰

In light of these trends and in consideration of future implications, state legislators and policy-makers, in recent years, have “expressed an interest in identifying alternative evidence-based options that can: (a) reduce the future need for prison beds; (b) save money for state and local taxpayers; and (c) contribute to lower crime rates.”¹¹ At the local as well as national levels, the result has been renewed focus and momentum around the issue of reentry.¹² This report summarizes the conversation and lists the recommendations that stem from the PAO’s Summit.

12 Priority Recommendations

Prior To Release

1. Build a Reentry Tool Kit

Provide men and women leaving prison with a reentry “tool kit” to help facilitate access to housing, employment and services. Items in the tool kit would include a Washington State identification card, Social Security card, and portfolio or recent resume listing all job skills and experience, including jobs held or classes taken while incarcerated.

Currently, the majority of men and women leaving prison are left to obtain these necessary items on their own without much guidance. These items are necessary to access housing and employment, yet for many, just knowing where to go to obtain these items is a challenge.

Since incarcerated individuals have DOC-issued identification cards, and their true identity is seldom in question, the Washington State Department of Licensing should be able to issue official state identification cards prior to release.

2. Basic Needs Benefits

As their release date approaches, incarcerated people should receive guidance for determining eligibility for public benefits for housing, food assistance and other basic needs. DOC staff should be trained to assess and enroll people about to be released in benefit programs so they are not released homeless, hopeless and hungry.

Those without a stable address upon release should be classified as homeless so that they may more readily access housing vouchers and services. Examine the expansion of the existing housing voucher assistance program and consider whether 90 days is long enough to provide stability.

3. Outstanding Warrants and Court Obligations

Identify and resolve outstanding warrants while men and women are incarcerated so that when they are released, they have a “clean slate.” Similarly, clearly identify each person’s legal financial obligations and establish a realistic payment plan prior to release. Child support obligations should also be clearly established with a flexible payment plan taking into consideration the reduced earning potential of a recently incarcerated person.

4. Community Orientation Program

Offer a reentry orientation for individuals at least six months prior to release to share practical information, such as where to go for services and how to access and check schedules for public transportation.

New students arriving at college are offered formal orientations designed to ensure student success. Like a college orientation, a reentry orientation would include very concrete information regarding essential needs.

5. Support and Expand Existing Successful Programs

Within several DOC institutions are examples of successful personal improvement programs: The Village (Washington Correction Center for Women), The Legacy Program (Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women), The Black Prisoners Caucus (Monroe Correctional Complex), and The Redemption Program (multiple locations). These programs should be recognized and supported as models by DOC administration, and replicated where possible in all prisons.

DOC rules and regulations should be amended to allow formerly incarcerated individuals who have successfully transitioned back into the community to serve as peer mentors to those behind bars. Current DOC rules and regulations do not allow former inmates to regularly meet with individuals behind bars, even though former inmates who have successfully made the transition back into the community could serve as natural role models to those who are incarcerated.

6. Family Counseling to Support Reintegration

Offer those incarcerated and their families *shared* classes or training to build skills, such as communications, family dynamics, and parenting, to better prepare families for the return of their loved one back into the family and into the community. Expand the limited number of existing programs that offer these services.

7. Reentry Council

Create a statewide Reentry Council to oversee and guide re-entry practices and policy. It may also be beneficial to have regional re-entry councils that would tie into and align with the statewide Reentry Council. Create a subcommittee (either statewide or within DOC) to examine how to better offer differentiated services depending on the age, gender, and health needs of the individual being released. A “one size fits all” model is not always successful.

8. Employment

Currently, only 4% of all men and women released from prison have access to work release. Expand the capacity of work release to support the transition of more incarcerated men and women. Work release should also begin earlier while men and women are incarcerated, and the length of the program should be increased.

In The Community

9. State Contract Requirements

When not inconsistent with other security regulations, the State of Washington should require businesses providing goods or performing services to employ a certain number of formerly incarcerated individuals and offer tax incentives to those businesses that knowingly hire formerly incarcerated people.

10. Treatment in the Community

Offer incarcerated men and women mental health and/or substance abuse treatment upon demand (i.e. when they are ready for it) as opposed to waiting until the individual is within six months of his or her release.

Offering treatment when an individual asks for it promotes an increased level of engagement in treatment models. Instead, current practice often *requires* treatment as a condition of release.

11. Coaching Instead of Policing

We should transition traditional community supervision from a monitoring model to a coaching/advocate model that starts behind bars. Create a supervision model where successful reentry is a performance measurement for community corrections officers.

12. Community Awareness

Increase community awareness and engagement regarding reentry. Educate communities about reentry, the obstacles to successful reentry, and the benefits of successful reentry, to shift how we view the men and women leaving prison. Increasing community awareness and education will help start a necessary paradigm shift.

Investing In No Return

Full Report

Crime, Recidivism and Reentry in Washington – the Current State of Affairs

Crime rates in Washington State are lower today than 20 years ago, yet residents are paying more for prisons.

Current data indicate that “felony crime rates [in Washington State] are 43% lower than they were in 1980...and the odds of being a victim of serious violent or property crime have been reduced significantly.”¹³

At the same time, however, the state’s incarceration rate has increased, and currently stands at about three adults incarcerated per 1,000.¹⁴ While Washington’s incarceration rate is considerably lower than the national average, the latest State Caseload Forecast Council (CFC) has predicted continued growth in incarceration rates over the next 20 years despite declining crime rates.

The most recent projections indicate that continued increases will result in the need for two new prisons by 2020, and three and one-half by 2030. The forecast is partially explained by current sentencing laws, anticipated criminal justice and demographic trends, and population growth.¹⁵

An equally plausible explanation can be derived from an examination of current prison demographics, which suggest that entry and reentry through “a revolving doorway to prison” may also be driving statewide incarceration costs.

As of June 2012, nearly half of all adult men and women currently incarcerated in Washington State are there due to *readmission* for a new felony conviction following a prior release from prison.¹⁶ Equally striking is that nearly 40% of those released from prison to King County *within the last five years* have since been readmitted to prison.

In Washington, the costs to operate a prison are high. There are currently 12 adult prison facilities throughout the state, and DOC estimates that annual operations costs hover around \$45 million per prison.¹⁷ The construction of just one new 2000-bed prison carries the hefty price tag of \$250 million. Compared to 20 years ago, costs for criminal justice and incarceration borne by taxpayers are nearly twice as much today.¹⁸

In light of these trends and in consideration of future implications, state legislators and policy makers, in recent years, have “expressed an interest in identifying alternative *evidence-based* options that can: (a) reduce the future need for prison beds, (b) save money for state and local taxpayers, and (c) contribute to lower crime rates.”¹⁹ At the local as well as national levels, the result has been renewed focus and momentum around the issue of reentry.²⁰

Approximately 20% of all incarcerated men and women are released to King County each year.²¹ Notably, the assessed risk of reoffense among men and women released to King County mirrors that in the rest of the state. In other words, nearly two-thirds (1,078) of the 1,609 men and women who were released from state prisons to King County in fiscal year 2011 were determined to be at “high-risk” to reoffend, and the majority (60%) were classified as high-risk for violent recidivism.²²

Community Supervision resources of DOC have been cut drastically, and now only those who are classified as “high-risk, high-violent” may be placed on community supervision.²³

Of the nearly 8,000 men and women released from the state's prisons in 2006, one-third *actually* recidivated within 36 months, the majority having done so within their first years of release.²⁴

Not surprisingly, recidivists who had been classified as “high violent risk” had the highest rates of reoffense in the state.²⁵ Violent crimes, however, accounted for the lowest percentage of reoffenses.

Instead, new crimes committed by the 2006 cohort tended to involve nonviolent, property, drug, or other offenses.²⁶ Consistent with recidivism trends in the state since the turn of the century, an additional 10% of the 2006 cohort recidivated by the five-year mark.²⁷ Trends for the 2007 cohort were similar to those for prior cohorts, although overall 36-month recidivism rates were slightly lower (28.7%).²⁸

Still, the high risk of reoffense coupled with high rate of reoffense -- particularly for the high-risk subpopulation -- should not be deemed a foregone conclusion. While forecasts about statewide recidivism rates have proven to be reliable, predictions about the “probability of recidivism [by an individual tend to be] much less precise, given dynamic factors.”²⁹

Criminological research suggests that desistance from crime -- or the process of terminating offending behavior -- appears to be most strongly influenced by salient life events experienced over one's life course, which affect social bonds and informal social control.³⁰

Elements such as “job stability and marital attachments are significantly related to changes in adult crime: the stronger the adult ties to work and family, the less crime and deviance.”³¹ These elements have been found to be especially influential for men.³² In short, even the highest risk, longest-standing, and most violent offenders can retreat from patterns of offending behavior and become productive and upstanding members of the community.

But a metamorphosis is not likely to happen overnight and is even less likely to take place when individuals leaving prison face multiple frustrating systemic barriers.

Many offenders enter prison with a host of issues and exit with the same, which --left unaddressed--decrease their chances for successful reentry, and ultimately, compromise public safety.³³

Taking into account extensive national research on the subject of risk factors for entry into the prison system, the pervasiveness of **unemployment, under-education, and unaddressed treatment needs** among men and women -- prior to incarceration -- comes as no surprise.

In the last decade, the unemployment rate for men and women in Washington State-- just one year prior to prison admission -- increased threefold from 28% in 2001 to 67% in 2008.³⁴

Partially explaining and perhaps exacerbating this trend is the substantially low level of educational attainment by those who end up in prison. “At

incarceration, approximately 59% of [adults] in Washington State had less than a 12th grade education level, compared to about 10% of the State's general population."³⁵

Like limited education, serious or chronic mental illness also creates an impediment to obtaining and retaining employment for a number of working-age adults in our state. "Unfortunately, many mentally ill, unemployable citizens end up in the custody of the Department of Corrections."³⁶ Indeed, a seriously mentally ill person is three times more likely to end up in jail or prison than in a hospital.³⁷

Resources in the State's prisons for addressing employment, education, and treatment needs of inmates are scarce and often reserved exclusively for certain populations. A March, 2012 needs assessment of inmates in Washington State's prisons revealed that **highest identified needs of high-risk men and women are housing, treatment, and employment.**³⁸

Often, these men and women continue to face the same pressing challenges upon release, while attempting to comply with mandatory terms of supervision. According to the March 2012 needs assessment, housing, employment, and treatment again topped the list of needs among high risk men and women on active supervision in the community.³⁹

These hardships are often exacerbated by efforts to fulfill obligations to children and family members and to address legal financial obligations.⁴⁰ More than half of our state's incarcerated men and women are parents who impact the family structure, and its financial and emotional stability.⁴¹ Obstacles encountered in securing employment, housing, or treatment upon release from prison have the effect of destabilizing prospects for financial and emotional security in families, further impacting indebtedness for legal obligations like child support and statutorily required fees⁴² assessed for felony convictions.

A high-risk factor for many is the return to high-crime and economically-depressed communities of origin that, when coupled with a lack of access to critical support services, hinders successful reentry.⁴³ DOC has noted that resources -- beyond what the DOC can provide -- are needed in *each* Washington community to address the needs of men, women, and their families.⁴⁴

In King County, the lack of sufficient housing options, employment opportunities, and treatment services available to men and women released from the local jails, has been highlighted, and reentry planning has been initiated by local leaders and stakeholders, who will comprise the King County Reentry Task Force.⁴⁵

A Strategic Investment in Reentry makes “Cents.”

Through systemic reforms that facilitate investments in prevention and early intervention programs, Washington has made progress in decreasing overall crime rates statewide. Likewise, the State has taken critical first steps toward addressing recidivism by implementing proven practices *in prison* and enacting new laws aimed at reducing recidivism.

According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP), actual recidivism rates are lower today than they would have been because of a number of critical changes in law and policy that have been in effect since 2002.⁴⁶

Continued investment by the Legislature in evidence-based prison programming has contributed to improvements in adult recidivism rates.⁴⁷ Many programs currently employed have been found to be effective at reducing crime, including cognitive behavioral programs, vocational education, drug treatment, correctional industries, and employment and work programs.⁴⁸ The 2007 Legislature allotted \$48 million in the biennial budget to “expanded use of evidence-based criminal justice treatment and prevention programs.”⁴⁹

This investment, in conjunction with new legislation targeting recidivism, has resulted in statistically significant improvements in overall adult felony recidivism rates in Washington State.⁵⁰ Newly enacted laws have had the effect of changing how the State provided supervision to adult felony offenders, eliminating supervision for certain low-risk property offenders, revising the drug offender sentencing grid, and replacing community custody sentence ranges with set terms.⁵¹

Until recently, however, Washington had not directly invested in reentry as a strategy to reduced recidivism in our state. In Washington, like much of the

nation, “reentry is a critical issue for three reasons: (1) the growing prison population and numbers of returning offenders; (2) the impact of returning prisoners on crime rates; and (3) the rising cost of corrections.”⁵²

In 2007, the Washington Legislature passed a bill establishing a pilot program aimed at better providing coordinated supervision services to men and women upon release.⁵³

The bill, now codified at RCW 72.78, expressed a clear intent on the part of the state to facilitate successful reentry and reintegration among men and women transitioning from prison by addressing the deficits that contributed to their criminal behavior in the first place, and are likely to perpetuate the cycle of crime if unresolved, and by facilitating strong partnerships between “DOC, local governments, law enforcement, social service providers, and interested members of the community.”⁵⁴ This law and attention to reentry by the State paved the way for reform of corrections policies⁵⁵ and advanced reentry initiatives and programs across the State.⁵⁶

Focusing resources on individuals with the highest risk for recidivism has the potential to produce the greatest impact on crime rates in the community.⁵⁷

Growing attention to and investment in reentry at the national level renders the present an ideal time for the state to build on prior successes in reducing recidivism rates by targeting strategies aimed at successful reentry. For decades, State legislators have relied on current research, analyses of practices and data, and cost-benefit calculations to guide systemic investments designed to benefit residents and help the economy thrive. Investments in the state have been, in essence, informed and strategic.

In a recent series of legislatively-commissioned studies, WSIPP proposed that Washington “successfully implement a moderate-to-aggressive portfolio of evidence-based options” to address recidivism rates, increase public safety, and mitigate the need for more prisons in the State by 2020.⁵⁸ State recidivism and crime data dictate that an effective strategy entails including reentry-specific options in the portfolio.

To ensure that the State receives the greatest “bang for its buck,” however, such options should capitalize on the impact of any investment. Dr. Steve Oas, Director of WSIPP, recently noted that “**more crime can be avoided when resources are aimed at the highest risk populations.**” The most optimal investment strategy is to focus programming and resources on the two-thirds of men and women determined to be at high risk to recidivate within 36 months of release.

Understanding this population’s histories in the criminal justice system, their personal, familial, and social experiences, the systemic factors driving them into the criminal justice system, and most importantly, their unmet needs -- is the first step in navigating the reentry maze.

From there, a critical examination of hurdles and supports in both the system and community is needed to help identify and understand service gaps and related limitations, and critical resources that may be untapped or underutilized. This examination serves ultimately to inform recommendations that improve and facilitate successful reentry into the community.

“The first year of release, indeed, the first moments of release [from prison], can be critical for shaping an [individual’s] pathway toward desistance or recidivism.”⁵⁹

Numerous studies confirm that the earliest months following release are an especially vulnerable and high-risk period for men and women returning to the community. Further complicating an already fragile situation are often numerous barriers faced by men and women, as they attempt to reenter after having “paid their debts” to society.

In most cases, these barriers, which include unstable housing, limited or lack of educational and employment opportunities, unaddressed health needs, and inaccessible support services, were present at the time that these individuals entered the criminal justice system, and subsequently, prison.

For a number of men and women, these same barriers will continue to persist upon reentry.⁶⁰ Supporting these men and women through the initial transition period and beyond is critical to improving the chances for successful reentry outcomes, and in turn, enhancing public safety. Failing to

address these barriers in an intentional and meaningful way has the effect of impeding the journey to productive citizenship, and repaving a direct pathway back to prison.⁶¹

The following list of proposed recommendations attempts to address roadblocks to reentry in an intentional and meaningful way. These recommendations, in addition to the 12 priority recommendations listed earlier in this report, were developed over the course of the four Reentry Summit meetings, with input from all participants.

During the course of developing these recommendations, six primary areas of focus emerged:

1. **EDUCATION**
2. **TREATMENT/PROGRAMMING**
3. **EMPLOYMENT**
4. **HOUSING**
5. **FAMILY SUPPORT**
6. **TRANSITION**

While this list of recommendations is comprehensive, it does not necessarily represent consensus, despite the fact that there was agreement among participants that each recommendation listed below adds some value in making reentry more successful.

It is also important to note that this is not an exhaustive or final list of recommendations; rather, this list represents a starting point for broader systemic reform of the current reentry process.

Finally, inherent in each recommendation are core themes of the Summit: *humanization, cultural competence, individual voice, system-based reform, and collaboration.*

A Report By The Black Prisoners Caucus

The next five pages comprise the Reentry Report written and submitted by the Black Prisoners Caucus (BPC), a program inside the Monroe Correctional Complex.

The BPC was founded in 1972 by men incarcerated at the Washington State Reformatory in Monroe, and has continuously worked to improve the condition of incarcerated people, their families, and their communities.

The BPC maintains an organizational culture of support, dignity, pride, and hope. Through what some members have referred to as “a circle of life,” the BPC has created a community-led model for emotional healing, education, growth, and self-determination under the most challenging circumstances.

The BPC plans, collaborates, implements, and hosts workshops, summits, and forums on many topics, including education, criminal justice, domestic violence, employment, youth-related issues, family support, culture, and spirituality. Many, including public officials, educators, students, social service practitioners, clergy, and DOC staff have attended various BPC-sponsored events.

This report represents the BPC's collective observations about the challenges facing those are released from prison, along with a list of key questions and logistical details that should be considered by each individual being released from prison and by organizations vested in their successful reentry.

BPC members worked collectively to learn from the experiences of those who were ill-prepared to reenter the community, and as a result, returned to prison. BPC members have compiled their

collective observations and assessments about what key factors point toward successful reentry and what unmet needs may lead to recidivism.

Re-Entry Programming

The issue with re-entry has caused a large amount of discussion between everyone involved in the process. It is agreed that we need to devote more time and energy working out some of the apparent difficulties with the current re-entry system. The only question is what to do with the program that will enable it to provide the necessary elements for success.

It is essential that re-entry start as soon as possible. When you have a child, you do not wait until that child has to go somewhere before you teach them to walk. You do not wait until they need to say something before you teach them to talk. So, why is it that re-entry is withheld until a person is about to be released before the process is presented to them? Starting the process when one enters the system may appear to be a waste of time and energy if that person is not scheduled for release for many years. However, with prior preparation, the individual will have a foundation to build upon and will be able to make direction adjustments along the way. They will also understand the process more fully than they would if they had to wait until the last minute to begin.

In addition to this, the person will not be grounded in the prison mentality of there is nothing there for me, or nobody is going to give me a chance, and other such feelings that hold people back from really trying to make it upon release. Options will disappear over time, and new ones will appear, and the only way to be prepared for them is to be made aware of their existence from the beginning and adjusting your plans in accordance with the changes.

The Department of Corrections has a list of every person's release date. With this information, it will be easy to target those men

who are in the greatest need of re-entry information. Once the individual reaches one year from their release date, they should be required to take part in a variety of release-oriented programs. These programs will be designed specifically for those men who are being released within the next year however; they should be open to everyone who has: a projected release date within a two-year period. With special emphasis placed on the individuals who are the closes to their release date, we must not forget that the process leading towards release should/must start the very first day after conviction. The more time put into preparation for release, the better the chances are that the release process will be successful and effective.

In every facility in the system, there are people with the title of Counselor and/or Caseworker. These individuals need to start functioning according to their job description. Instead of just moving paper from one place, to another,, they should involve themselves with the process of developing a plan of action for the men or women on their caseload. This will give them some idea of what they need to be doing in preparation for the time when a final release plan needs to be submitted and final re-entry involvement begun.

When the man or woman is admitted to their parent institution, other; than a simple, "hello, I'm your counselor and you are going to be here for a while and if you need anything come see me", some type of inventory should be made of the persons' skills, abilities, capabilities, resources if any. This should also include what they may need to concentrate on while incarcerated to prepare them for the time when they will be ready to enter a re-entry program.

If re-entry preparation is not started in prison, then most of the people being released will start out with a bigger handicap than just being a newly released person. The present mindset is

for everyone to enter into change programs such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Moral Recognition Therapy, Anger Management, and a host of other such programs. I will agree that these programs have merit and value; however, they are not the all-in-all as they are often presented. I know of no occasion where either of them, nor a combination of them all, has played a part in a person getting housing upon release, being hired by an employer, or buying a Big Mac. Placing the emphasis and money where it will accomplish the most makes more sense than to place it on just one type of program when there are money issues to be dealt with.

When we consider most released people entered prison at an early age, and most have never held a regular job, the issue of job placement and location will be one of the first areas of concern in the re-entry criterion. Even with the present economic crisis, some jobs can be obtained to at least get a person started, and, help them to survive until something better is available. An assessment of the person's work skills, if any, will need to be evaluated so that possible areas of employment can be targeted for that person.

Housing is another area that every person will have difficulty with, unless they have family or loved ones that will provide housing for them or at least help them obtain a place to live. As it is with employment, housing is going to be an area that most people will have trouble obtaining. Property owners and realtors must be knowledgeable of what influences a recently released person will have on their property values, and how tenants will react to that person living in the same building or area. Although areas that are willing to accept new releases are available, finding them is not an easy task. Compounding this is having the resources for damage deposits, and two months' rent, and you have priced most people out of a place to live.

It is vital that as much information on available resources upon release is provided to the individual while in prison. Doing this will assist him/her in judging if everything they will need for success is included, and if not they can start to gather the possible resources in advance so they will not have to attempt to discover them after release. Avoiding a possible problem or area of difficulty hopefully will be accomplished if discovered in time. Chances for success are reduced when a person is released from prison, and finds that resources they need are not available, cannot be found if available, or are too expensive. An assessment of what the person's needs are should be made prior to release, and a list of possible or definite areas of assistance is researched and presented so that requirements for assistance and any cost required is available. Resources include but is not limited to, A A, N A, Mental Health Counseling, Substance Abuse, Housing Referrals, Job Finding, Food Banks, How to sign up for food stamps, medical and disability, etc.

Areas requiring attention prior to release include counseling, so that the individual is ready for the stresses they will face upon release. The need for life skills, such as how to budget your money; how to use the buses to move around; where to find needed service; where and how to contact emergency services, and where to find help in times of need, are also essential. Classes on filling out a job application, resume writing, and interview skills are desperately needed. This includes how to dress for the interview and researching the company so you can ask intelligent questions about the job and your place in the company.

The stigma of being fresh out of prison is amplified by trying to find various resources without someone willing to offer a helping hand, The man or woman just out of prison, just like someone new to

a job, will need to feel welcomed and have someone show him or her how to navigate the city. Our society is ever changing, and even for someone who is returning to an area they lived in, many things will have changed and finding resources will not be easy. If one has never had to use the needed resources prior to prison, their knowledge of them may be non-existent at best. Being new to your environment and feeling all alone must be considered once a person walks out of prison. Having someone take you by the hand, like a tour guide, and show you where everything is located is the best manner to assure that the person is aware of where the resources are and just how to reach them.

Being released from prison should be a happy time, however, there is a large amount of stress related to being released that the re-entry program should address. If the stress related to being released can be reduced, it will give the person a degree of stability, which will reduce the probability of recidivism. Realizing that there is going to be some difficulties that one will have to face upon re-entering society will help a person to be ready to face them realistically. This realization comes with having a plan B and perhaps even a plan C as a part of the re-entry planning. If something can go wrong, they always will, and this is especially true for someone who has not been a part of society for an extended period. The inclusion of some flexibility in the plan allows for the last minute changes that always seem to occur. However, the flexibility should not be used as an excuse for not following a plan if things go wrong. It is included so there will always be another direction to travel so that a person is not standing still while waiting for the primary plan to be implemented.

The person will have to be the one filling out the items in the re-entry plan. This is necessary to give the person some control over

their lives. While in prison, the person has had almost no real control over the elements of their lives. In addition to this, they have had almost no decision power. To enforce the fact that they will have control of their lives, it will be imperative that each person start to make decisions for themselves with some guidance from the people assisting them. These processes will emphasize the fact that the person will now have to make decisions for themselves and they cannot depend on someone else to tell them what to do.

A fill-in the blanks form cannot be use for most people because, just as there is going to be different people using the form, each person will have a different set of needs, will be going to a different part of the state, and will have varying types of resources available to them.

Hearing first person accounts on issues related to what you are about to face, or something you may need to be aware of can be the one things that causes you to give more serious thought to what you are about to do. Because of this, it would be a wise decision to have some people who have experienced the stress and other factors associated with re-entry come and talk with the members of the program. They will be able to relate to what the class is going through and tell them exactly what they had to go through in order to successfully transition from one point to another. Everything that these people speak on may not be totally positive, but just the experiences they had (and perhaps might still have) will prepare the people in the re-entry class for the reality of leaving and trying to be as successful and as positive as possible once they are re-entering free society.

In addition to relating their experiences, they can possibly present information on places and people who can be contacted that will be able to provided some much needed help and assistance to people upon release. They may also be aware of some resources that are not listed in the current program, and some that may no longer be available.

This aspect of the program carries the value of hearing someone that can be related to knowing that they have been there, and they can understand what will be experienced, and the best way to avoid some of the pitfalls people are sure to face.

Implementing this program is going to take some time and dedication to assure it is effective. However, the basic purpose of corrections is to prepare each person for successful return to society with the best possible chance for establishing themselves as positive, productive members of that society. It is a truism that if you equip a man with the necessary tools for success and give him half a chance, he will take full advantage of it and become a better person because you showed faith in him.

The items listed below are an example of what a person needs in a reentry plan:

1. RELEASE ADDRESS:

- a. This can be a family member or a friend's home if you do not have a place of your own.
- b. Your release address should include:
 - i. Physical address
 - ii. Phone number
 - iii. How long will you be living there
 - iv. Deposft needed if any
 - v. When will housing vouchers be needed if at all
 - vi. Who is the contact person for your housing
 - vii. Copies of application or rental agreement if you have one
 - viii. Do you have other options if this one does not work

2. SUPPORT SYSTEM:

- a. You will need to have a support system in place such as family, friends, and/or religious organizations, and people you trust that will not be afraid to let you know when you are off track and can give you the necessary support when things are not going well

3. EMPLOYMENT:

- a. You must have employment set up

- i. Name, address and phone number
- ii. What type of work will you be doing
- iii. What are your work hours
- iv. How far is employment from where you live
- v. What are your wages

- b. If no employment

- i. You must have a resume (how to put one on the Internet)
- ii. Type of employment you are looking for
- iii. Where will you look for this job
- iv. What is your search plan
 - 1. Car
 - 2. Public transportation (are you aware of the cost involved)
 - 3. Internet
 - 4. Newspaper
 - 5. Telephone
 - 6. Friends
 - 7. Word-of-mouth

- c. Have you considered the possibility of working more than one job

- i. One full time and one part time
- ii. Two full time

iii. Two part time

4. EDUCATION:

- a. Will you need to seek education
- b. b, Schools applied to
- c. Classes needed, desired
- d. Cost involved — how will you pay
- e. How long is program
- f. Do you need transportation
- g. Will this interfere with your employment
- h. Is it needed for your employment

5. FINANCIAL/SUPPORT:

- a. Do you need support until you get a job
- b. Have you checked with DSHS
- c. Can you get unemployment benefits
- d. Are you eligible for Social Security
- e. Can you depend on family and/or friends
- f. Do you have retirement benefits
- g. Do you have vet benefits
- h. Are there local charities you can depend on
- i. What will you need weekly-monthly to live on
- j. Have you taken into consideration things such as:
 - i. Food
 - ii. Housing
 - iii. Clothing
 - iv. Utilities
 - v. Transportation
 - vi. Insurance
 - vii. Savings.
 - viii. Entertainment
 - ix. The unexpected

6. TRANSPORTATION:

- a. Do you have valid ID
- b. Do you know how to get it
- c. Do you need a drivers license
- d. Do you know how to get one
- e. Do you know the bus routes
- f. Do you know what riding the bus cost
- g. Have you checked into bus passes
- h. Can you depend on any one to get around
- i. Do you have or are you planning to get a car or other means of personal transportation
- j. Do you have outstanding tickets or owe fines
- k. Have you made arrangements to pay them

7. ARE THERE RELEASE REQUIREMENTS YOU NEED TO ATTEND TO:

- a. Are there any restrictions on where you can live
- b. Are there any restrictions on who you can be around
- c. Are there any treatment or program requirement you need
- d. How are you working to meet these requirements if you have any
- e. Do any of these treatments/programs require payment
- f. Can you afford to pay for them
- g. Are they nearby and can you get to them in a timely manner
- h. Will any of these interfere with your employment
- i. Do you have any legal financial obligations that you need to attend to

8. YOUR FUTURE:

- a. Make sure you have enough time in your day for leisure time activities
- b. Make a daily schedule of what you need to accomplish each day and maintain it to the best of your ability. Your priorities may change, but it is important to have a plan in place to establish a sense of organization
- c. Set some personal goals that can be realized within 6 — 12 — 18

months out

- d. Adjust your personal goals as each one is reached and set more
- e. Attempt to associate only with people who want the best for you and will help you, reach your goals
- f. How are you making sure you are on the right path
- g. Set specific times to meet with your support group
- h. Be aware if or when you are under stress and develop some means of dealing with the stress in a positive manner

There are a few other areas of need prior to release that should be included in an effective re-entry program, but this will provide an idea of how much a prior to release re-entry program is needed.

A Comprehensive List of All Recommendations

EDUCATION

- Develop a mandatory **reentry planning orientation** for all individuals upon the start of their prison sentence to assess academic level, learning needs, and long-term educational goals so that individuals could address some needs and achieve some long-term goals while incarcerated.
- Expand and **facilitate access to educational and employment opportunities** for incarcerated men and women so that they may acquire basic life skills and develop marketable employment skills.
- Conduct **individualized, skill-based career research and planning** for individuals at least six months prior to release. Use Washington-specific tools to help men and women develop detailed short and long-term employment, education and career goals with concrete steps to achieve those goals.
- Ensure that individuals leave prison with **portfolios** summarizing job skills, education, and employment experience developed during the course of incarceration, which will also help improve access to post-secondary education and/or vocational training.
- Connect individuals with “**transition counselors**” and/or community partners to help facilitate access to post-secondary education and/or vocational training. To the extent possible, begin this work prior to release.
- Convene an **education workgroup** to continue to develop recommendations to address barriers to education following the summit.

- Ensure that Community Corrections Officers utilize **collaborative networks** to help men and women access post-secondary education and/or vocational training during and following incarceration.
- Support **culturally relevant, nontraditional programs** and resources that help facilitate educational development and the pursuit of post-secondary education and/or vocational training by men and women while in prison and in transition to the community.

TREATMENT

- At the time of incarceration and at least six months prior to release, assess treatment needs and develop a concrete and comprehensive **treatment plan** with input from the men and women being served. Treatment should be offered throughout the period of incarceration.
- Identify **barriers** that may **restrict eligibility** for treatment (both in prison and the community), including but not limited to, a lack of state-issued identification or Social Security cards, outstanding warrants, and financial obligations. Develop a plan to address the identified barriers.
- Make **trauma-informed treatment and support** available and accessible to individuals while they are incarcerated.
- Ensure that **specialized treatment** is available and accessible to targeted populations throughout the State's correctional facilities.

- Facilitate direct connections to **community care providers** to help ensure ongoing treatment and transition of care in the community.
- Restore **reentry specialists** within DOC to facilitate reentry planning, provide a continuum of service, and streamline the transition process.
- Reexamine and modify **access to mental health care criteria**, particularly where eligibility hinges on “at-risk” classification.
- Create and offer a **certificate of rehabilitation** to men and women who have undergone and completed treatment programs while in prison and after release.
- Establish a **network of care providers** for men and women to access while in prison and to connect with upon release and reentry into the community.

FAMILY SUPPORT

- As part of the mandatory reentry orientation, assist men and women in identifying **family or friend-specific partners** to facilitate family reunification throughout the term of incarceration.
- As part of the mandatory reentry orientation, help men and women develop a viable **plan** to address **child support obligations** during the term of incarceration and after release.
- Increase availability of and accessibility to **parenting classes** in prisons.

- Offer incarcerated men and women classes on developing and maintaining **healthy relationships**.
- Support and provide opportunities for **family reunification** in prison, and help address identified barriers to reunification.
- Create and facilitate access to family reunification **support groups** led by **experienced mentors**, and provide opportunities for ongoing interaction in prison -- especially in remote correctional facilities.
- Increase and facilitate access to the **Family Offender Sentencing Alternative Program** (FOSA) and the **Community Parenting Alternative** (CPA) for men and women in the final 12 months of incarceration.
- Convene a **Reentry Council** at the state and local levels to continue to develop recommendations that address family-specific issues affecting men and women transitioning from prison to the community.
- Reexamine and modify **State policies and laws** that bar access to State needs-based programs and services because of outstanding child support obligations.

HOUSING

- As part of the mandatory orientation, assist men and women in identifying viable housing options upon release as part of an **intensive release plan**.
- Help men and women leaving prison access and obtain **short-term, transitional housing** for a minimum of six months (180 days) following release.
- Expand DOC's **housing voucher program** and conduct ongoing analyses of populations served, process, and

outcomes throughout the state.

- Eliminate **exclusionary housing policies and practices** based on an individual's criminal history.
- Amend the State **Landlord-Tenant Act** to address provisions permitting adverse action based on an individual's criminal record.
- Authorize **tax credits** via the Washington State Housing Finance Commission to incentivize owners of rental properties to provide housing to men and women with criminal records.

EMPLOYMENT

- As part of the mandatory reentry orientation, assess strengths, talents, and specialized employment skills of men and women, and **identify relevant and tangible employment options**.
- Expand and facilitate access to **educational and employment opportunities** in our State prisons so that incarcerated men and women may acquire basic skills, including technological proficiency, cultivate specialized knowledge and expertise, and hone practical and marketable employment skills.
- Connect men and women with **peer mentors** to help facilitate access to employment opportunities and serve as a mechanism for accountability.
- Streamline and modify the 38-page document detailing **court-ordered conditions**.
- Develop and launch a **public education campaign** to encourage employers to hire individuals who have been

released from prison and to raise awareness/availability of tax incentives programs.

- Identify and replicate proven **work-release programs** implemented in Washington State.
- Address policies requiring a **50% hold for child support** on an individual's employment wages. Recognize that family stability plays an important role in successful reentry, and that a small contribution to child support arrears is more important than no contribution.
- Reserve a specific percentage of **government jobs** for individuals released from prison.
- Support "**Ban the Box**" type initiatives by inviting participation and input from individuals who have to identify their criminal history on job applications. Consider local B&O tax breaks for companies that employ formerly incarcerated individuals.

TRANSITION

- As part of the mandatory reentry orientation, conduct an **individualized needs assessment** and develop a **transition plan** that incorporates input from incarcerated men and women.
- Expand **access to rehabilitation programs** in prison – including, but not limited to, education, treatment, and other specialized programs. Address capacity issues that impede satisfaction of rehabilitation requirements set forth by the Indeterminate Sentence Review Board.
- Provide legal records and documents, critical for accessing services and opportunities in the community -- including but not limited to, a **State-issued ID card or**

Social Security card, and birth certificate to men and women 12 months prior to work-release and six months prior to release.

- Upon release, provide men and women with **critical supplies to address basic needs**, such as a calendar, a watch, and a toiletry kit, and other tools.
- Establish a **coordinated community base** for transition support that consists of voices from the institution and community.

Endnotes

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⁵ R. Barnoski. (1997). *Standards for Improving Research Effectiveness in Adult and Juvenile Justice*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 97-12-1201. It is important to note that this figure includes all inmates readmitted, during any time period, to DOC and not just those within a particular time frame. Further, the figure does it consist of those with current pending criminal charges, as most offenses require at least one year to be processed in the criminal justice system.

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¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ R. Barnoski. (1997). *Standards for Improving Research Effectiveness in Adult and Juvenile Justice*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 97-12-1201. It is important to note that this figure includes all inmates readmitted, during any time period, to DOC and not just those within a particular time frame. Further, the figure does it consist of those with current pending criminal charges, as most offenses require at least one year to be processed in the criminal justice system.

¹⁷ Steve Oas, Marna Miller, and Elizabeth Drake. (2006) *Evidence-Based Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 06-10-1201.

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- ²⁶ *Ibid.* "Other" offenses include failure to register as a sex offender.
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⁶⁰ Bumby, Kurt et al. (2007). *Increasing Public Safety through Successful Offender Reentry: Evidence-Based and Emerging Practices in Corrections.* A companion document to the National Institute of Corrections TPC Reentry Handbook and The National Institute of Corrections TPC Case Management Handbook. Center for Effective Public Policy. Pager, Devah. (2005) *Evidence-Based Policy for Successful Prisoner Reentry.* *Criminology and Public Policy* 5(3): 505-514. Patrick Langan and David Levin. (2002) *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994.* Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice: *Reentry Policy Council Report: Addressing Core Challenges*, Last modified January 1, 2012, <http://www.reentrypolicy.org/Report/PartI/ChapterI-B/PolicyStatement4/Recommendation4-A>.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*