

OAR of Richmond, Inc.

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Our Mission:

to provide community managed services aimed at restoring the individual offender as a responsible member of the community.

What is Offender Reentry?

- **Reentry** is the **process** of leaving prison or jail and returning to society.

Benefits of Successful Reentry

- If the reentry process is successful, there are benefits in terms of **improved public safety** and the **long-term reintegration** of the former offender into the community.
 - Public safety gains are typically measured in terms of reduced recidivism.
 - Reintegration outcomes would include increased participation in social institutions such as the labor force, families, communities, schools, etc.

National Incarceration and Reentry Trends

- **2 out of 3** of those released are likely to be rearrested for a new crime within 3 years of release, and just over half are reincarcerated.
- Most recidivism occurs **within the first year after release** from prison or jail.
- Current research suggests that **homelessness and incarceration** are linked.

Virginia Info

- The Virginia jurisdictions with the **highest numbers of returning prisoners** are the cities of Richmond and Norfolk.
- Within these cities releasees are most **heavily concentrated** in a small number of the cities' census tracts.
- **High levels of poverty and crime** also characterize some of these neighborhoods.

Factors Contributing to Homelessness

- Three main factors contribute to and complicate homelessness among people leaving prison
 - Ex-offenders face the **same social and economic conditions** that lead to homelessness among the general population.
 - Ex-offenders returning to the community also confront **barriers to housing** associated with their criminal justice system involvement.
 - Finally, in some jurisdictions there is a **lack of ownership of the problem** among government agencies and community organizations.

Reentry Challenges

- Obtaining suitable housing is but one of the many challenges to be overcome by the person engaged in reentry.

Other Reentry Challenges

- Few or no **job skills** & limited work history
- Limited **educational attainment**
- Very few **community support systems**
- Fractured **families**
- **Health** issues (physical and mental)
- **History** of substance abuse
- Poor **credit** and little opportunity to work toward a positive credit rating

How Do We Begin to Address These Challenges?

- **Pre-release planning** is of paramount importance!
- It is the process by which attention to the offender's **transition** from the institutional setting to the community is addressed.
- Pre-release planning should **begin the day the individual is incarcerated.**

How Do We Begin to Address These Challenges?

- Pre-release planning includes:
 - **early identification** of those to be released
 - Development of **trust** in **relationships with community resources** through inclusion in pre-release planning
 - Academic and vocational **assessment**
 - **Strength-based** planning
 - Clarification of **pre-release goals**
 - Ongoing identification of **social networks** and **support systems**
 - Awareness of **post-release restrictions**

How Do We Begin to Address These Challenges?

- Virginia Reentry Pilot
 - In July 2003 the National Governor's Association announced that Virginia was one of 7 states selected to participate in its Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy.
 - Virginia developed **5 pilot programs** (urban and rural) around four **primary principles**
 - Interagency collaboration
 - Community collaboration
 - Integrated service delivery
 - Connection to positive family and community support
 - *To date no participant in the pilot in Richmond has been homeless at release!*

Where Do Releasees Live?

- **Return to family** is the first post-release home for a majority of ex-offenders.
- **Rooming Houses** are one of the primary resources used by single adults.
- **Emergency Housing** is sometimes an option for those who have no place to go upon their release and is mostly provided by an overburdened shelter system.
- **Transitional Housing** provides structure and programming.
- **Supportive Housing** teaches self-sufficiency in a supportive environment.

Who's Providing the Housing Resources?

- **Private** housing market
- **Nonprofit** community
- **Faith-based** community
- **Government**
 - Federal
 - State
 - Local

Desirable Characteristics of Housing Providers

- **Realization/acceptance** that homelessness is a community problem
- **Identification** of and **buy-in** by **stakeholders**
- Common **program outcomes** and **indicators**
- Provision of **supportive services**, i.e., cognitive-behavioral programming, life skills, job search skills, GED instruction, etc.
- **Assessment** of resident **commitment** to identified **goals**
- **Well-trained, empathetic** staff
- **Free, or low-cost**
- Located in **medium-to-low density, low-crime area** with access to **public transportation** and **community resources**

How Do We Affect Policy Change?

- **Educate the public** about the issue of offender reentry
 - Increased volunteerism
 - Reduction of “NIMBY”
- **Educate those in industry**
 - Employers
 - Banking industry
- **Educate legislators**
 - Need for thorough review and possible modification of existing legislation that poses barriers to successful reentry

Summation of Reentry Housing Needs

- **Obtain:** affordable housing with support services
- **Attain:** affordable transitional housing
- **Maintain:** affordable permanent housing
- **Retain:** affordable housing through prevention services
- **Sustain:** services that provide basic human needs, including emergency housing

Resources

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