

Corrections Corporation of America on Pre-Release and Reentry Services

Offender reentry begins *at the point of entry* into the corrections system. And an effective pre-release process should occur well before offenders transition from custody to community and reintegrate into their new lives. This is what we believe at Corrections Corporation of America.

Such precepts have long been connected to the overarching mission of corrections systems – to not only ensure that offenders serve their sentences in a safe, secure setting but also to return them to their communities and families as restored, rehabilitated citizens. Our vision is to be America’s best-full service adult corrections system. As such, we understand that this delicate segue is a pivotal turning point that any turnkey corrections company must be prepared to address in the 21st century.

Since CCA’s founding in 1983, we have been committed to changing lives, one inmate, one day, at a time. A variety of opportunities and outlets are devoted to the pre-release process at many of our facilities, where more than 600 mental health, addictions treatment and programs professionals help offenders secure a second chance at building a new life. Individual and group counseling, academic education, vocational training, life skills development and substance abuse treatment help prepare offenders for long-term success.

CCA is capable of providing a continuum of care for government partners and their inmate populations. We uphold the rigorous standards of the American Correctional Association (ACA), other accreditation organizations, and various local agencies in meeting and exceeding relevant operational benchmarks. Additionally, CCA works diligently to identify and model programs considered successful within our own system and developed in the public and private sectors by other industry leaders. By maintaining symbiotic relationships with researchers who are identifying and assessing approaches proven to reduce recidivism, CCA guides offenders in adopting pro-social, crime-free and drug- and alcohol-free lifestyles.

We help offenders become rehabilitated, better educated, specially trained and increasingly prepared to meet the demands and expectations of community, family and the workplace. Research shows these areas are critical to ex-offenders’ long-term success in the community.

Chapter 1

A National Focus on Pre-Release and Re-Entry

*Nationally, more than 700,000 inmates will be released from America’s prisons this year. To put that in context, that is three times the size of the U.S. Marine Corps. That is an average of over 1,900 offenders per day returning to neighborhoods across the country. This is not early release. These prisoners have served their term. . . . The key questions are, ‘What kind of neighbors will these returning inmates be? What has been done to prepare them to live healthy, productive, law-abiding lives?’ - Pat Nolan, vice president, Prison Fellowship*¹

Current discussions about corrections and criminal justice rarely occur without some mention of pre-release and reentry. Many have argued that offenders have an obligation to not only serve their time, but to improve, rehabilitate and grow in the process. Many say adult corrections must serve not merely to contain offenders of the law, but also to correct anti-social, criminal behavior and thinking. Corrections is expected to go beyond specific deterrence and the warehousing of inmates. Based on the growing body of intervention research in adult corrections, reentry and aftercare are considered integral parts of a successful corrections/rehabilitation model. Additionally, there is an increasing understanding that most of the persons who are incarcerated today will be released back into the community. Assisting a former inmate’s reentry is not simply an exercise in making the offender and his or her family more comfortable about the transition; rather, it is also necessary for the safety of our communities.

As the Bureau of Justice Statistics noted, “statistics show that 95 percent of all incarcerated state felons are eventually released from prison, with 80 percent of those released to parole supervision”² in the community. Such ideological perspectives and moral arguments notwithstanding, new legal moves, a downward economy and concerns about public safety continue to advance interest in and implementation of pre-release/reentry services in the corrections continuum.

1 Nolan, Pat. “Safer Communities and Fewer Victims: Prison Fellowship’s Experience Helping Prisoners Reenter Society Successfully,” Testimony for CJS Hearing on Reentry, March 11, 2009 <http://appropriations.house.gov/Witness_testimony/CJS/pat_nolan_03_11_09.pdf>

2 Bureau of Justice Statistics, Reentry Trends in the U.S., “Releases from State Prison” <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/reentry/releases.htm>>

An offender population rapidly on the rise

The nation's fast-growing inmate population has quickened the debate on reentry and pre-release; in fact, this group is growing more rapidly than the general U.S. resident population.³ The number of persons incarcerated in America's federal and state prisons rose by an average of 1.8 percent during 2007, leaving more than 1.5 million in federal and state correctional facilities.³ In fact, the prison population increased in 37 jurisdictions in 2007, with the greatest growth largely concentrated in the southeast and southwest regions of the country.

At the beginning of 2008, the nation's total inmate count was more than 2.3 million, with more than 1.5 million in state or federal prisons and more than 700,000 in local jails.³ Such an increase in the incarcerated population corresponds with a rising number of offenders under some form of correctional control. Many American adults are not counted among the rapidly rising number of offenders housed in correctional facilities; instead, they represent the lesser known "largest area of growth in the criminal justice system" as those sentenced to probation and parole.⁴ According to The Pew Center on the States:

*With far less notice, the number of people on probation or parole has skyrocketed to more than five million, up from 1.6 million just 25 years ago. This means that one in 45 adults in the United States is now under criminal justice supervision in the community, and that combined with those in prison and jail, a stunning 1 in 31 adults is under some form of correctional control.*⁴

Recidivism as a prison population driver

Recidivism, ex-offenders' return to criminal behavior and, for many, correctional confinement, is a major contributor to the growing prison population. A 15-state study found that more than two-thirds of released offenders were rearrested within three years.⁵ In 1994, more than half of all prisoners returning within three years of release did so because of a new crime or a technical violation of their parole.⁵ According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, "[t]echnical violators differ from violators who were sent to prison for committing a new offense while under supervision in that they were not convicted of a crime."⁶

Technical violations are frequently a symptom of offenders' inability to seamlessly and supportively return to their communities. Such violations may include but are not limited to testing positive for drug use, maintaining contact with other known criminals, failure to secure steady employment, failure to report for drug testing or treatment (Fifty-five percent of probation and parole violators convicted of a new offense reported using drugs in the month before their arrest.⁶), failure to pay fines, restitution or other financial obligations, and missing appointments with a probation or parole officer.⁶

Clearly, many such violations may be reasonably attributed to limited access to transportation, inadequate addictions treatment and lacking marketable job skills or career training to secure employment that would enable offenders to meet their financial obligations. Offenders cannot be released with "only \$25 and a bus ticket" as a recipe for success; for many, beating the odds requires access to and involvement in "individual counseling, group counseling, financial management, employment services, health care services, parenting skills, GED training"⁷ and more.

Eighty-seven percent of probation technical violators and 43 percent of parole technical violators were arrested for new offenses. Of those, more than one-third reported a failure to report to their probation or parole officer while under community supervision.⁶ From 1974 to 1991, the number of technical violators in state prisons rose from 17 percent to 45 percent.⁶

A legislative look at reentry and prerelease

Local, state and federal government are showing a renewed interest in reentry and pre-release programming through recent considerations and lawful commitments. In March 2009, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science held seven hearings on offender reentry and reintegration.⁸ Thirteen reentry specialists in academia, government, the nonprofit sector and direct service providers offered testimony about trends and needs in such services, as well as assessing their effectiveness. During a week of testimony on the state reentry and pre-release, Pat Nolan, vice president of Prison Fellowship, lamented the lack of transitional assistance made available to most offenders. Nolan asserts the need to rehabilitate inmates holistically – practically and morally, stating:

3 West, Heather C. and William J. Sabol. "Prisoners in 2007," Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, December 2008.

4 The Pew Center on the States, "One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections," March 2009.

5 Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Reentry trends in the U.S. – Percent of released prisoners rearrested within 3 years, by offense, 1983 and 1994," Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

6 Cohen, Robyn L., "Probation and Parole Violators in State Prison, 1991: Survey of Prison Inmates, 1991," U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, August 1995.

7 Amison, Jennie. "Jennie Amison's Testimony," House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies," March 11, 2009.

8 Reentry Policy Council, "4/22/2009: House Appropriations Subcommittee Holds Hearings on Prisoner Reentry," April 22, 2009

<http://www.reentrypolicy.org/announcements/house_appropriations_subcommittee

Further, little is done to change the moral perspective of offenders. Most inmates do not leave prison transformed into law-abiding citizens; in fact, the very skills inmates develop to survive inside prison make them anti-social when they are released. Most are given a bus ticket to their hometown, gate money of between \$20 and \$200 and, infrequently, a new set of clothes.¹

The limited availability of pre-release and reentry opportunities and outlets lays the foundation for a cycle of recidivism. Nolan further states:

Over the last 30 years, the rate of re-arrest has hovered stubbornly around 67 percent. If two-thirds of the patients leaving a hospital bed had to be re-admitted soon thereafter, the public would quickly find a new place to be treated.¹

When offenders are released and return to a community changed by time, technology and trends, they face some fundamental, shared questions – “Where will they live? Where will they be able to find a meal? Where should they look for a job? How will they get from one place to the next? Where can they earn enough money to pay for these necessities?”¹

Contrary to prevailing stereotypes about ex-offenders, many desire a life free of crime, provided a clear and feasible path to doing so is made available. In testimony before the House CJS Committee in March, George T. McDonald, founder and president of The Doe Fund, a non-profit that provides transitional work programs, said:

In the early 1980s, when I first started working with people our society had given up on – homeless, drug-addicted offenders – I heard from their mouths that what they really wanted was a hand up, not a handout. They wanted the opportunity to go to work, lift themselves out of poverty, to end destructive cycles, and to rejoin mainstream society.⁹

Prison life is very different than what inmates face when they are released, and the transition from prison to the community often seems surrealistic to offenders. One ex-offender described his experience in leaving prison and returning to the community “like entering Disneyland” and further describes his experience below:

Leaving prison after all those years was like entering a strange new world. Inside I was a respected convict. I knew where I stood with others, how to act and what to expect. Once outside in the ‘free world,’ everything changed. Moreover, my self-concept and orientation got flipped on its head.¹⁰

Many obvious issues face offenders after serving long sentences in prison, including finding jobs, reuniting with their families, avoiding a crime-free lifestyle, finding a suitable place to live, creating financial resources, and being a support and not a drain to their families. Not only does incarceration impact the inability of the offender to support the family and provide childcare, it also diminishes the previously existing relationship between husband and wife, parent and child.

As a result of the increased awareness of issues facing inmates leaving prison, much effort has been directed to improving the correctional system and providing better linkages to the community. The Urban Institute launched a “policy conversation” by hosting an ongoing forum of academics, correctional practitioners, community leaders, policy makers, advocates and former prisoners. They published a comprehensive review of the issue entitled *From Prison to Home: Understanding the Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry* in 2001 and followed that with *Beyond the Prison Gates: The State of Parole in America* (2002), *Prisoners Once Removed* (2003), *Families Left Behind: The Hidden Consequences of Incarceration and Reentry* (2003), and *From Prison to Work: The Employment Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry* (2004).

The Second Chance Act

In consideration of these and other related issues, in April 2008, President George Bush signed the Second Chance Act into law. This legislation is intended to improve outcomes for ex-offenders returning to the community. According to the Reentry Policy Council:

This first-of-its-kind legislation authorizes federal grants to government agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, victims support, and other services that can help reduce recidivism.¹¹

9 McDonald, George T., “Testimony of George T. McDonald before the House CJS Subcommittee,” March 11, 2009.

10 Terry, Charles M. “From C-Block to Academic: You Can’t Get There from Here,” *Convict Criminology*, Eds. Jeffrey Ian Ross and Stephen C. Richards, Belmont, Calif., Wadsworth, 2003).

11 Reentry Policy Council, “Second Chance Act,” June 24, 2009, < http://reentrypolicy.org/government_affairs/second_chance_act>

These aims correspond with the biggest roadblocks that can stymie successful reentry – “the many details of personal business, such as obtaining various identification cards and documents, making medical appointments, and working through the many everyday bureaucratic problems that occur during any transition.”¹

In March 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law an appropriations bill that provides \$25 million for Second Chance Act programs, with \$15 million in grants for state and local reentry projects, and \$10 million for nonprofit mentoring and transitional services for the remainder of the fiscal year.¹² For 2010, the President has requested more than \$200 million for reentry programs, including \$100 million for Second Chance Act programs administered by the U.S. Department of Justice and \$112 million for those overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor.⁷

Such moves at the highest level of government reflect a serious level of concern and commitment to explore alternatives and transitional complements to traditional correctional confinement. Missions and goals that have been typically advanced by churches, nonprofit organizations and community programs are now prominent on the state and national stage.

Economic and budgetary refocusing amid the recession

The economic downturn has drawn a more critical light to corrections systems already under scrutiny for spending. This comes just as states nationwide take a hard look at budgets that have spiraled out of control and require some difficult choices in the prioritizing and provisioning of public services. According to the Center on Budget and

Policy Priorities, “[a]t least 46 states faced or are facing shortfalls in their budgets for this and/or next year, and severe fiscal problems are highly likely to continue into the following year as well.”¹³ With a recession that officially began in December 2007 and the concomitant decline of the housing market, job losses and reduced spending, governments relying on the sales, income and property taxes of better times are bracing for a deep downturn: “As a result, states have three primary actions they can take during a fiscal crisis: they can draw upon available reserves, they can cut expenditures, or they can raise taxes.”⁸ They can also reduce services and revise strategies.

In this schema, corrections can represent an easy, unsympathetic target. According to The Pew Center on the States:

*Corrections is a prime target for cuts. Last year, it was the fastest expanding major segment of state budgets, and over the past two decades, its growth as a share of state expenditures has been second only to Medicaid.*⁴

The dollars to fund the large number of inmates reached nearly \$50 billion in 2007 and, by 2011, is expected to cost an additional \$25 billion.¹⁴ A common argument is that everyday, tax-paying citizens scoff less at their dollars funding education or health care over housing and services for convicted criminals. With nearly one in every¹⁸ state general fund dollars supporting corrections¹⁵ and one in every 100 adults in America incarcerated,³ taxpayers may not feel they’re getting a good return on these public dollars. According to the Pew Center on the States, “In the absence of tax hikes, lawmakers may find themselves forced to cut or limit other vital programs – from transportation to education and healthcare – to foot the incarceration tab. . . . confronting agonizing choices and weathering bitter divisions” in the process.³ Such spending at the expense of other public needs makes the spotlight on pre-release and reentry more compelling – and crucial. And more officials find the case increasingly compelling, as “[s]ome policy makers are questioning the wisdom of devoting an increasingly large slice of the budget pie to incarceration, especially when recidivism rates have remained discouragingly high.”³

What could explain an antagonistic public reaction to corrections spending? After all, many would agree that convicted felons must “pay their debt to society” in the form of confinement. However, also implicit in such a response to such high costs and a rising incarceration rate is the expectation that dollars spent on corrections and criminal justice should reduce recidivism, deter future criminal behavior and return offenders as rehabilitated citizens upon release.

12 Lappin, Harley G. “Statement of Harley G. Lappin, Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons, before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies,” Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, March 10, 2009.

13 McNichol, Elizabeth and Iris J. Law. “State Budget Troubles Worsen,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, January 29, 2009.

14 The Pew Charitable Trust, Public Safety Performance Project, “Public Safety, Public Spending: Forecasting America’s Prison Population, 2007-2011, February 2007.

15 National Conference of State Legislatures, “Crime Costs: Tough-on-crime laws impose a steep sentence on state budgets,” March 2009.

For fiscal year 2010 budgets, many states have considered deep corrections cuts. Correspondingly, states have weighed a range of non-prison alternatives, including but not limited to reductions in programming, alternatives to incarceration, early release, reducing corrections staff, community monitoring, jail, detention center and prison closures, the elimination of mandatory minimums in sentencing, increasingly funding drug treatment programs and more.¹⁶

Corrections costs have spiraled, in tune with the large and growing inmate population. According to the Pew Center on the States, the 34 states surveyed on prison costs for its “One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections” study reported “an average of about \$79 per inmate per day – or almost \$29,000 per year.”¹⁷ This paled in comparison to the costs of alternatives – which “ranged from \$3.42 per day for probationers to \$7.47 per day for parolees, or about \$1,250 to \$2,750 per year, respectively,” for community-based options.⁴

The first detailed survey of state corrections spending since 2002 found that “seven times more money [is spent] on prisons than on probation and parole, even though the vast majority of the 7.3 million people now under correctional supervision are not behind bars.”¹²

The most frequent solution for reducing the cost of corrections is to blend incarceration for high-risk and violent offenders with the increased use of community punishments for lawbreakers guilty of less serious crimes. A good example is Texas, which avoided spending an estimated \$523 million in more prison beds, expanded drug treatment and diversion beds, many of them in secure facilities. They also changed parole practices and expanded drug courts. These reforms are expected to save Texas \$210 million over the next two years, and double that if the recidivism rate drops as expected.³ Senator John Whitmire of Houston noted that, “It’s always been safer politically to build the next prison... But, we’re at a point where I don’t think we can afford to do that anymore.”³

Efforts are underway to change how parole and probation violators are handled. In 2005, parole violators accounted for more than one-third of all prison admissions.⁸ Some violators are re-incarcerated for new crimes, but others have parole revoked for “technical” violations – failing a drug test or missing an appointment with their parole officer – rather than commission of a new crime. States are increasingly opting to punish this level of technical parole violators with community-based sanctions, such as day reporting centers, electronic monitoring systems and community service.

States are giving inmates the chance to earn more – or gain – “good” time in order to reduce the length of sentence served. On the “front end,” more community diversion programs are being developed to give offenders another chance to stay in the community rather than be incarcerated. And on the “release end,” community sanctions rather than imprisonment are being developed to avoid the return for technical parole violators. The other major release change is the focus on prisoner reentry. Every state is focusing on ways to improve the programming and transition for inmates coming out of prison, hoping to reduce recidivism and thereby reduce the costs associated with re-incarceration.

Chapter 2

Evidence that Pre-Release and Reentry Work

America is the land of second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path should lead to a better life.
 - President George W. Bush, in his 2004 State of the Union address¹⁸

Nearly a decade into the 21st century, Americans are facing a financial climate reminiscent of the early 20th century, when the Great Depression cast a shadow over the nation’s economic life.

With job losses, growing unemployment, rising costs and the fallout of several sectors that once propelled the engine of our economy, states are backed against a formidable fiscal wall. As of June 2009, states exercised a range of options, including reducing public school funding, considering the closure of state parks and taxing cell phone ring tones.¹⁹

16 16 National Conference on State Legislatures, “FY 2010 Actions and Proposals to Balance the Budget: Criminal Justice,” April 2009.

17 Gramlich, John, “Study finds disparity in corrections spending,” Stateline.org, March 2, 2009.

18 Mentioned in Travis, Jeremy. “Statement by Jeremy Travis, President of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, at a hearing on ‘What Works’ for Successful Prisoner Reentry,” House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, March 12, 2009.

19 Goodnough, Abby. “States turning to last resorts in budget crisis,” The New York Times, June 21, 2009.

Clearly, public needs are competing for survival and sustenance. And corrections spending has become a highly scrutinized slice of the taxpayer-funded pie. Housing and caring for offenders in jails and prisons is outstripping available dollars in public coffers. If nothing changes – that is, if offenders are housed in the same way, with the same expenditures, and this population grows at the projected rate – by 2011, states can anticipate spending \$67.5 billion on corrections each year.²⁰ This poses an untenable dilemma. Attorney general Eric Holder, in addressing The Vera Institute of Justice in July 2009, said:

*Prison populations are at an all-time high and still climbing, yet the crime rate is no longer declining. States are in serious financial distress. But opportunities have changed, too. We are able to compare the cost and suitability of different criminal justice strategies. We no longer must choose between more crime and more prisons.*²¹

In light of these considerations, policymakers, researchers and corrections administrators are asking – and being asked – some pointed questions.

- **Can recidivism be reduced, so taxpayers don't cyclically fund habitual offenders who aren't prepared to re-enter society?** Two-thirds of the 700,000 offenders released each year are rearrested within three years, with 44 percent of them rearrested within the first year.²²
- **Can prisons and jails do a better job preparing offenders for success upon release?** Many offenders don't benefit from available academic and vocational programming opportunities, drug treatment and other restorative services not uniformly offered in prisons and jails.
- **Can offenders be rehabilitated safely outside a penal environment?** Some argue that “states can carefully reduce incarceration and still protect – and even improve – public safety”²³ through such alternatives.
- **Will dollars spent on rehabilitation and reentry services ultimately lower expenditures on corrections?** Community corrections as one reentry option range from \$3.42 to \$7.47 per day, per offender.⁵

Such questioning and corresponding statistics make a case for a new approach to corrections management. According to Holder, “[I]ncarceration is part of the answer . . . [but] not the whole answer. . . . [I]mprisonment is not a complete strategy for criminal law enforcement.”²⁴ As a result, corrections agencies and companies are being forced to take a critical look at their traditional model “to consider what happens to people after they leave prison and reenter society.”²⁴ Moreover, pre-release and reentry models are getting a more prominent seat at the corrections table as policymakers seek ways to reduce the future need for prison beds, save money and lower crime rates.²⁴

Pre-release, reentry and reintegration: Three phases toward rehabilitation

The terms pre-release, reentry and reintegration are often used interchangeably without much variation. However, these three terms represent distinct phases on the path toward rehabilitation and merging with the broader community.

Pre-release generally represents the individualized treatment plan developed for offenders upon incarceration, in consort with mental health, social services, health services, security and administrative staff. This plan may include prescribed or recommended programmatic activities, educational endeavors, job assignments, addictions treatment course and recreational outlets crafted for a particular offender. Though offenders may be engaged in some form of a pre-release plan during the duration of their sentence, such services may be more concentrated and comprehensive in the months preceding their release.

Reentry refers to offenders' reintroduction to the community, usually as citizens still under some form of correctional control, such as probation or parole. They have typically served sentences in the secure setting of a jail or prison and, through reentry, may be placed in transitional housing or return to their family home. They usually must meet specific reporting and behavioral standards as a condition of their probation or parole. When offenders reenter the community, they face many of the real-world scenarios that pre-release services prepared them for – from obtaining proper government-issued identification and getting a pass for public transportation to finding employment and connecting with social service providers.

20 Lawrence, Alison. “Crime Costs: Tough-on-crime laws impose a steep sentence on state budgets,” National Conference of State Legislatures, March 2009.

21 Holder, Eric. “Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Attorney General Eric Holder at the Vera Institute of Justice’s Third Annual Justice Address,” July 9, 2009.

22 McDonald, George T., “Testimony of George T. McDonald before the House CJS Subcommittee,” March 11, 2009.

23 The Pew Center on the States, “One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections,” Public Safety Performance Project, March 2009.

24 Aos, Steve, Marna Miller and Elizabeth Drake. “Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs and Crime Rates,” Washington State Institute for Public Policy, October 2006.

Reintegration, according to Jeremy Travis, president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, is “connecting returning prisoners with the indicia of citizenship, including work, family, peer groups, community and democratic responsibilities and participation, such as voting.”¹ Closely related to and sometimes synonymously applied to reentry, reintegration is connoted with something more deeply entrenched than offenders’ physical return to communities; at this stage, they become familiarized with its financial, professional, social, civic and familial expectations and increasingly are active participants within it.

Planning at the outset

Too often, pre-release and reentry are treated as a “back-end” immersion in classes, self-study courses and counseling sessions occurring within a few months of offenders’ release. Within just a few weeks or months, inmates might be expected to understand and adopt social expectations, proper personal conduct and a sense of professional propriety. But this common approach, from the viewpoint of some corrections specialists, is the equivalent of a cram session for a final – students may recall enough to pass the test, but by the time they need to apply that knowledge, it may be forgotten.

Reentry planning, then, requires a 360-degree perspective, a full circle whose loop begins at the point of entry into the penal system and closes well into offenders’ reorientation and reintroduction to the community. Therefore, “reentry planning begins at the time of admission and extends beyond the time of release to prepare prisoners for long-term post-release success.”²⁵ This represents a sharp turn from what most corrections agencies are doing, however well-intentioned their current efforts are. “While a comprehensive, holistic approach to reentry planning . . . is clearly the ‘gold standard’ . . . corrections agencies must prepare exiting prisoners for this period and work hand-in-hand with community service providers and agencies”⁹ to make sure ex-offenders acquire the skills and access the resources instrumental to success.

What are the ingredients of post-release success?

According to the Urban Institute, offenders returning to the community must have:⁹

- Transportation
- Clothing, food and amenities
- Financial resources
- Documentation
- Housing
- Employment
- Education
- Health care
- Support systems

Typically, helping offenders meet these needs has been a disjointed process:

State departments of correction have launched a variety of initiatives designed to improve the reentry process, but little attention has been paid to the role of release planning as preparation for the moment of release and as a mechanism for connecting former prisoners with appropriate services and support systems in their communities.⁹

Moreover, “some systems are nothing more than checklists while others involve extensive documentation of prisoner histories and significant outreach to service providers in the community.”⁹

25 La Vigne, Nancy and Elizabeth Davies, Tobi Palmer and Robin Halberstadt. “Release Planning for Successful Reentry: A Guide for Corrections, Service Providers, and Community Groups,” The Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, September 2008.

As corrections providers – state departments of correction, private corrections companies, nonprofit organizations and community agencies – map their own formulas for reentry, what practices generally promote success? Perhaps at the top of the list is the buy-in of an inter-connected, collaborative network of corrections professionals, spanning agencies and specialties. Too often, frontline prison staff see themselves as the enforcers and protectors of safety and security alone; probation and parole officials typically “interpret their role as beginning when an inmate first arrives in a field office after release from prison.”⁹

A release plan should address the nine aforementioned needs of released offenders. The details of such plans may differ according to inmates’ assessed needs, as well as available agency resources. Still, many agree that reentry and pre-release are comprehensive processes; they may appear differently according to the offender, time and space, but at all junctures takes into account the holistic needs of the population.

The segments of success

So what does the path to rehabilitation and reintegration look like, and how do we know it works? Most experts agree that pre-release and reentry planning should enable offenders to seamlessly segue in three general phases: 1) from the time they enter the penal system 2) to the time of their release and 3) to months beyond their return to the community. Such continuity clearly represents an ideal that may seem out of reach, impractical or beyond budget for many systems. However, these factors aside, evidence shows a clear case for incorporating several key elements in any pre-release or reentry plan that aims to holistically address the needs of offenders. Particularly programs should “focus on individual-level transformation” that change “the individual through cognitive change, education or drug treatment.”²⁶

In 2006, the nonpartisan Washington State Institute for Public Policy reviewed ²⁹1 evaluations of individual adult corrections programs to assess which reentry and pre-release efforts do – and do not – work; that is, which ones result in a reduction in the likelihood to recidivate.²⁷ In exclusively conducting reviews of evidence-based programs, the researchers said: “In recent years, public policy decision-makers throughout the United States have expressed interest in adopting ‘evidence-based’ criminal justice programs. Similar to the pursuit of evidence-based medicine, the goal is to improve the criminal justice system by implementing programs and policies that have been shown to work.¹¹ Additionally, in his address to The Vera Institute of Justice, attorney general Eric Holder said, “We rely upon evidence-based methods to innovate in agriculture, transportation, environmental safety and public health. . . . The Department of Justice likewise should embrace modern, evidence-based methods for developing policy.”⁴

Many of the core components of pre-release programs have been proven to reduce recidivism. “Rigorous research has found that inmates who participate in Federal Prison Industries are 24 percent less likely to recidivate; inmates who participate in vocational or occupational training are 33 percent less likely to recidivate; inmates who participate in education programs are 16 percent less likely to recidivate; and inmates who complete the residential drug abuse treatment programs are 16 percent less likely to recidivate and 15 percent less likely to relapse to drug use within three years after release.”²⁸

Substance Abuse Treatment

For drug-involved offenders, the Washington State Policy Institute researchers also found that in-prison therapeutic communities with and without community aftercare resulted in lowering the recidivism rate as did cognitive-behavioral drug treatment in prison.¹¹ Therapeutic communities place participating offenders in residential units separate from the general population.

26 Byrne, James M. “What Works in Prison Reentry: A Review of the Evidence,” Testimony before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, March 12, 2009.

27 Aos, Steve, Marna Miller and Elizabeth Drake. “Evidence-Based Adult Corrections Programs: What Works and What Does Not, Washington Institute for Public Policy, 2006.

28 Lappin, Harley G., “Statement of Harley G. Lappin, Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons, before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies,” Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, March 10, 2009
<http://appropriations.house.gov/Witness_testimony/CJS/harley_lappin_03_10_09.pdf>

Changing Thinking Changes Behavior

General and specific cognitive-behavioral programs for the general prison population also results in lowering the recidivism rate.¹¹ Changing offenders' thinking patterns is correlated to them modifying their behavior, making better choices and thinking before acting. According to the Washington Institute for Public Policy, these programs address "the irrational thoughts and beliefs that lead to anti-social behavior. . . . designed to help offenders correct their thinking and provide opportunities to model and practice problem-solving and pro-social skills."¹¹

Vocational Education and Work Programs

Correctional industries programs and vocational education in prison are linked to reductions in recidivism.¹¹ Training offenders in viable trades increases their likelihood to secure post-release employment. Many trade opportunities offered in corrections facilities center on practical competencies, such as carpentry, construction and building trades, horticulture, painting and plumbing. Such career options, even during a recession, are able to weather even the most difficult economic times.²⁹ The ability to perform a job for which one is trained has been linked to lower odds of recidivating.

Academic education

Basic adult education programs in prison are linked to a reduction in recidivism.¹¹ Such offerings typically include GED preparation that may be complemented by literacy training and select post-secondary educational opportunities for qualifying offenders.

Attaining such credentials may serve as a springboard for offenders to meet minimum educational requirements for employment and, for some, a catalyst to pursue further study.

Community-based interventions

The return of offenders to communities represents a critical crossroads. Through community-based interventions, networks of community organizations collaborate to guide them through successful reintegration. Each participating agency may be devoted to different priorities such as employment, social service networks and drug rehabilitation. A comprehensive and seamless reentry model links offenders to these resources, providing a direct line to the continued support they will need to sustain themselves during this precarious period.

Community residential programs also provide a means by which offenders may seamlessly access instrumental resources and tools. They may bridge the gap between confinement and community by offering structure but also promoting engagement with the community. "Having a person simulate a natural environment and giving them the necessary tools to become active and productive members of the community is when real learning occurs," said Jennie Amison, executive director of Gemeinschaft House, a 60-bed reentry program for non-violent offenders with substance abuse issues.³⁰ This Harrisonburg, Va.-based program contracts with the Virginia Department of Corrections and provides individual and group counseling, employment services, health care, parenting skills, GED training and more to its residents. Gemeinschaft House is working with systems in Philadelphia, Rhode Island and St. Louis to replicate the program.¹⁴

Chapter 3

Pre-Release Services with CCA: A Snapshot of Current Company Offerings

On the surface, the idea of prisons presenting new promise in the lives of offenders may seem incompatible, but Corrections Corporation of America has never viewed the two as mutually exclusive. Since our founding, we have believed that offenders may realize new opportunities as they repay their debt to society – and prepare to one day rejoin it. In fact, our staff of program professionals is committed to changing lives one offender, one day at a time.

²⁹ Crawford, Matthew B. "The Case for Working with Your Hands," *The New York Times*, May 24, 2009.

³⁰ Amison, Jennie. "Jennie Amison's Testimony," House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies," March 11, 2009.

Due in part to prevailing stereotypes, corrections has long been linked to containing criminals rather than correcting their behavior. Sensationalized portrayals of prisons and jails in movies and television have done corrections few favors in casting a more realistic, measured light on this public service. CCA seeks to provide offenders with a continuum of care that far exceeds the fabled “two hots and a cot.” As one example of this commitment, CCA in some instances offers pre-release programming even when not required by customer contract.

Pre-Release, Reentry and Transition Programming at CCA

At CCA, we believe that rehabilitation is one of the chief aims of incarceration. Helping offenders improve their social skills, increasing their academic achievement and boosting their work force readiness elevates their odds for success upon release. CCA not only want to see offenders reenter and reintegrate with the community, we want them to remain law-abiding citizens who do not return to correctional facilities. Knowing how to access community resources, developing life management skills, modifying thinking and behavior, and being trained in a marketable trade reduces their likelihood to re-offend.

A variety of inmate program opportunities are available to many offenders at all long-term CCA facilities. And approximately half, or 32, of CCA’s operating facilities have a dedicated pre-release, reentry or transitional program. Such programs are exclusively devoted to the late stage of offenders’ sentences, typically occurring during the last four months, or 16 weeks. However, such programs at CCA facilities range from six to 52 weeks in length, depending on facility and/or contractual specifications.

These offerings are specifically designed to help offenders transition into the community upon release and, as a result, may be more intensive and strategic than inmate programs available to the general population. Companywide, more than 600 substance abuse professionals serve as addictions treatment counselors, managers, coordinators; mental health specialists and coordinators; case managers and supervisors; social workers and psychologists, working collaboratively with education and programs staff to ensure appropriate program planning and delivery to offenders. This team includes more than 600 principals, educational counselors, academic and vocational supervisors and others. Nearly 50 professional staff are devoted entirely to pre-release, reentry and transition programs, overseeing a total annual capacity of nearly 3,000 participants.

Inmate Programs at CCA

CCA offers a variety of offender programs intended to enhance the whole person, while recognizing that each offender’s needs necessitate a personalized treatment plan. All offerings reflect our belief that pre-release begins at the moment offenders enter a CCA facility; in fact, our suite of programming opportunities available to offenders at the moment they enter a CCA facility is evidence of this seamless philosophy in action.

When offenders enter a CCA facility, they are assessed by a multi-disciplinary staff of mental health, health services, inmate programs, social services and security professionals, who collaborate in the development of a personalized treatment plan. Together, they develop the continuum of care that matches an offender’s needs and facility resources to a range of services and activities intended to address their behavioral, cognitive, educational, social, vocational and, if desired, religious and spiritual needs.

It should be noted, however, that CCA’s programmatic availability can be affected by the length of time an offender resides in a CCA facility. For example, offenders at long-term CCA facilities have access to all programmatic offerings, while inmate programs may be limited at short-term facilities, such as jails, due to the briefer terms of sentences.

Educational Services

Educational offerings as CCA facilities incorporate academic, vocational and life skills education.

- **Academic Education** programs address inmate needs ranging from functional non-readers and the developmentally disabled to degree-seeking, college-level students. Most students demonstrate dramatic gains in reading and math skills, advancing whole grade levels in months rather than years. Many go on to earn GEDs and some even pursue post-secondary studies, when available.
- **Vocational Education** provides job training suitable for the abilities of low and high-functioning inmates in a variety of trades, such as commercial cleaning and maintenance, computer repair and maintenance, food service, horticulture and grounds maintenance, as well as a range of programs accredited by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), a nationally recognized authority in construction and maintenance

training quality. Such programs include training in cabinetmaking, carpentry, construction crafts, electrical skills, HVAC, masonry, painting, plumbing and more. CCA is also an authorized testing center for the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) program, a globally recognized exam based proficiency certification in Microsoft applications.

- **Life Skills Education** emphasizes the importance of social responsibility and concentrates on parenting and family dynamics, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, substance abuse education, financial management and occupational readiness.

Addictions Treatment and Behavioral Programs

Where supported by customer contract, CCA offers evidence-based addictions treatment programming based on objective assessments, including:

- **Substance Abuse Education** includes a variety of educational programs that provide an opportunity for inmates to understand the negative impact of substance abuse. Approaches link changes in thinking to subsequent modifications in behavior and decision-making.
- **Residential Drug Abuse Treatment Program (RDAP)** is a research-driven, evidence-based, cognitive behavioral treatment model that occurs within a modified therapeutic community. RDAP is offered in three modalities: 1) residential treatment, in a modified therapeutic community lasting nine to 15 months; 2) intensive outpatient, lasting six to 12 months; and 3) outpatient, lasting 20 weeks. This intensive program contains anger management and conflict resolution elements.
- For drug-involved offenders, researchers have found that in-prison therapeutic communities with and without community aftercare result in lowering the recidivism rate, as does cognitive-behavioral drug treatment in prison.
- **Therapeutic Communities**, which house participating offenders away from the general population, where they participate in structured individual and group rehabilitative activities that cultivate role modeling, positive socialization, trust and accountability among peers. Research has also found that therapeutic communities combined with a cognitive-behavioral curriculum produces the most effective outcomes among criminal justice populations.
- **Support Groups** are offered to offenders who recognize a need for additional support to reinforce their personal recovery programs. These support groups include:
 - Alcoholics Anonymous
 - Narcotics Anonymous
 - Faith-based programs
 - Partners in Parenting, designed to address the special needs and concerns of parents in recovery
 - Straight Ahead, developed by Texas Christian University's Institute for Behavioral Research and delivered in 10 two-hour sessions
 - Thinking for a Change, comprised of 22 lessons developed by the National Institute of Corrections.
- **After (Continuing) Care** emphasizes philosophies of various support groups, relapse prevention, and reentry skills. Controlled environments offer the opportunity to practice learned skills and new habits acquired during the term of treatment.

** When required or requested by partnering agencies, CCA provides restorative justice programs based on their respective model.*

*** Due to the nature of the corrections environment, CCA does not provide family therapy. However, inmates' family needs are assessed and incorporated as part of discharge planning. This is intended to enhance a seamless transition with departments of probation or parole.*

To ensure continued delivery of cutting-edge treatment programs, CCA utilizes nationally recognized, research-driven objective measures. The Criminal Thinking Scales, developed by Texas Christian University's Institute of Behavioral Research, and supporting instruments measure individual, group and program outcomes. These tools ensure consistent program delivery, continued development and implementation of best practices and staff development.

Faith-based Programs

Chaplain and religious services are provided at all CCA-managed correctional facilities. All religious and faith-based programs are offered to the inmates on a voluntary basis and in adherence with the First Amendment and established policies and procedures. CCA actively recruits volunteers to provide religious services for inmates of all beliefs. Religious services and programs focus on the principles and knowledge needed to practice positive life changing values, attitudes and behaviors. CCA has developed partnerships with national and international faith-based ministries, including:

- Champions for Life
- Child Evangelism Fellowship
- Habitat for Humanity
- Institute for Basic Life Principles
- Prison Fellowship Ministry
- Purpose-Driven Ministry
- School of Christ International
- Wheels for the World

These programs are operated in compliance with the Constitution, agencies religious policies and procedures, and emphasize social recovery with a focus on character development. All are voluntary, non-denominational and non-sectarian.

Industry

CCA's Inmate Programs department also develops secular work programs that offer offenders meaningful work and employment opportunities that enhance existing skills and teach new ones that are especially marketable in today's workplace. Developing positive social skills and understanding principles related to career development and employment are integral components of CCA's Prison Industries Enhancement (PIE) program.

To achieve these objectives, CCA has implemented two models: the Prison Industry Enhancement Certified Program (PIECP), which has been designated by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) as a Cost Accounting Center (CAC) and Prison Industry Enhancement - Like Program (PIELP), or service industry program, that is undesignated.

Recreation

CCA views recreational time as an opportunity for structured improvement of self-esteem and social skills. Recreation may include but is not limited to:

- Leisure activities
- Intramurals
- Board games, card games, billiards and bingo
- Hobbies, including art, music, ceramics, photography and leather craft
- Sports
- Gardening

Chapter 4

The Future of Pre-Release and Reentry with CCA: A Timely Statement on a Timeless Need

"CCA is aware of this movement. Policymakers and corrections experts increasingly agree that reentry should begin at the point of entry into the corrections system. As an innovative company providing a needed public service, we share that belief."

- Tony Grande, CCA executive vice president and chief development officer

CCA recognizes and participates in the growing prominence of pre-release and reentry in corrections. Incarceration is understood as a means by which offenders repay their debts to society. Included in this is the public expectation that upon release offenders are better prepared to reintegrate with their communities.

Community leaders, elected officials and their constituencies are looking more critically at the traditional corrections model. Many strongly feel that incarceration should help offenders gain the knowledge and skills to live as contributing, law abiding citizens. Such outcomes should reflect work force preparation, a commitment to sobriety and essential life skills that enable – and encourage – ex-offenders to live successfully and independently.

CCA believes that public agencies, private corrections providers and non-profit organizations should work collaboratively to meet the dynamic needs of offenders at every stage of their involvement with the corrections system. By extension, such efforts keep communities safe and may be linked to reductions in recidivism. As a company, CCA believes that all three spheres each play a unique and vital role in providing pre-release and reentry services.

Since 1983, CCA has partnered with government to develop customized solutions that address a range of correctional concerns. That includes crafting programs, as contractually specified, that help meet the educational, emotional, spiritual and addictions needs of offenders. Our company has forged partnerships with a number of national and international organizations in providing an array of rehabilitative opportunities to offenders in our care. Additionally, many of our facilities have cultivated partnerships with local nonprofit organizations and volunteers.

In exploring relevant trends and policy developments, examining the effectiveness of programs and detailing CCA's current offerings that aim to rehabilitate offenders, our company is certainly part of the pre-release and reentry continuum. Effective reentry and pre-release planning often requires examining available resources, community partnerships and operational logistics, among other considerations.

CCA is available to help current and prospective government partners make informed decisions about pre-release opportunities available – or possible – with our company. CCA has a long and distinguished history in meeting local, state and federal agencies where they are – and helping them get to where they want to be. CCA, then, can flexibly meet a range of needs and specifications to develop a tailored approach to corrections management.

As the founder of the nation's private corrections industry, some might consider our efforts to reduce recidivism counterintuitive. However, this is how CCA defines success.

To learn more about pre-release and reentry services with CCA, contact CCA Business Development at businessdevelopment@correctionscorp.com. Also, please visit us online at www.correctionscorp.com.