

Introduction that the
returning person is
able to



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Introduction

Reentry refers to the issues related to the transition of ex-offenders from incarceration to community. Reentry comprises of all the efforts aimed at ensuring that those released from prison are able to relate well with the general society. Collateral consequences of criminal charges or the “Four’Cs” are the indirect consequences of criminal convictions and “comprise a mixture federal, statutory and regulatory law as well as local policies and are part of arrest, prosecution or conviction but are not part of the sentence imposed” (National Crime Prevention Council 1). The essay looks at reentry collateral in details and the effects it has had on the community and individuals. The systems and policies being applied by organizations are analyzed. A discussion on how to improve the policies being implemented before they become laws is included in this article.

History and the process of reentry process

It can be correctly argued out that those who are involved in the reentry programs have one main goal of ensuring that the subjects integrate well with the society. It is significant that the returning person is able to fit well with the society as this will make it possible for him/her to avoid engaging in criminal activities. Some of the challenges the ex-prisoner is likely to face include housing, public safety, employment and families. Other challenges to reentry include problems with family relationships where if not already problematic, are often weakened by incarceration. Convicted felons have difficulty finding employment and this can be aggravated by prison experiences (Irwin 1). Recidivism is the process whereby there is a tendency to re-lapse into previous criminal behavior; the individual characteristics that

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influence recidivism includes “ demographic characteristics, prison experience, employment history, education level, criminal record, and substance abuse dependence” (The Heritage Foundation 1). It has been noted that recidivists tend to have a history of crime record which is traceable to their early ages when they were still young (The Heritage Foundation 1).

Ex-prisoners have a lower rate of literacy than individuals in the general population, ex-prisoners also face unmet health and mental needs and housing issues due to legislation that bar the ex-convicts (National Crime Prevention Council 1). Some of the housing issues that ex-offenders face include: finding affordable rental housing, maximizing the use of existing housing resources and identifying and eliminating the stigma of ex-offenders in order to receive housing from the society (The Heritage Foundation 1). It has been noted that families offer very significant support for the individuals who are entering the society from the prisons: “ former prisoners living with their families are less likely to drop out of reentry programs compared to their counterparts who do not live with their families” (The Heritage Foundation 1). Collateral consequences mean legal, social and economic barriers to an individual reentry into his/her society: Although many individuals released from jail leave with the hope of a fresh start, these barriers make it difficult for the individual to integrate into the community and hence the reason why many ex-prisoners go back to jail. (Irwin 1) Elsewhere collateral consequences have been described as: “ Invisible punishments, unseen and often devastating, largely hidden and unspoken until it is too late” (National Crime Prevention Council 1). Collateral

consequences are indirect consequences of criminal convictions and comprise “ a mixture federal and statutory and regulatory law as well as local policies” (National Crime Prevention Council 1). The second chance act signed into law by president Bush is a response to a glowing crisis in the United States of America faced by ex-prisoners once they are out of jail.

It has made significant improvement but a lot needs to be done by community groups, county governments, state governments, church welfare groups and nongovernmental organizations for it to fully succeed and its impact felt in the society. The act recognizes the need for comprehensive and integrated services. It is a benchmark for reentry programs and policies for the federal government to intervene in a growing crisis (The Heritage Foundation 1).

The government has made significant funding since the act become law and significant impact has been felt where the program has been initiated and in most cases the results from such an initiation has been a great success. It should be noted that, “ the act did expand the federal government’s role in the reentry process by creating grants for states to implement prisoner reentry programs; the Act authorized \$330 million for prisoner reentry programs during fiscal years 2009 and 2010” (National Crime Prevention Council 1). More laws have been passed in relations of the reentry: Congress also passed laws that temporarily or permanently disqualified persons convicted of felony and drug related oddness from receiving certain federal welfare benefits and disqualified those convicted of any drug related offences in the country from receiving federal educational grants. In addition, congress passed laws declaring individuals and their households ineligible for <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-that-the-returning-person-is-able-to/>

federal housing assistance if they have been convicted of specified criminal activity. Moreover congress did give local authorities vast discretion to local housing authorities to establish standards regarding criminal records (National Crime Prevention Council 1).

System and Policy

In this section a reports on an identified system and policy connected with that system that affects incarcerated, former incarcerated and family members is briefly discussed.

Montgomery county has come up with policies, program and a system that offers ex-prisoners a second chance. The system and policy at the Montgomery has registered a significant success and therefore will be a good example to study. Re-entry efforts in Montgomery County in Ohio have been a good study for policy and law makers, it is a success story of an effective well managed program. The re-entry task force in the county assembled an extensive collaborative force of over 200 community leaders from different professions including ex offenders for their valuable insight into the issue and how the community would benefit from their insight (Montgomery County). The re-entry task force accomplished its work through a combination of several work groups including children, families, continuum of care, employment, housing, legal issues and advocacy, pre/post-release services and technical teams. Re-entry programs in Ohio were 246 in 2009 (Montgomery County). The Montgomery county has been providing a variety of specialized rehabilitative services, which include providing common pleas court system that focuses on encouraging ex-offenders to succeed as law abiding citizens without first going to prison, this program seeks to address <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-that-the-returning-person-is-able-to/>

whatever dysfunction has resulted in the offender committing the crime, other program include residential drug intervention services, education and employment opportunities, specialized supervision of felony, non support cases and community drug intervention and education. Specialized services include life support that focuses on providing necessary skills that affect positive behavioural changes such as male's issues group, emergency assistance and alternatives to violence program (Montgomery County 1).

Other specialized programs include case management where there is an individual and group contact between offenders and community control officers, others include secure transitional offender program and felony non support court which is a specialized court that was implemented in an effort to ensure payment of court-ordered child support obligations. Stop the violence me is a program designed to educate men on violence, power and control in relationships and empathy for the victim. To ensure that the efforts make some significant achievement, a number of local, non profit agencies are given financial support to assist the re-entry population (Montgomery County 1). Montgomery County has also provided services to ex offenders who are part of Montgomery County " call in sessions"; these sessions offer individuals a chance to turn their lives around and provide services to those who are willing to do so including case management, job training and educational services. A number of community based providers also offer services to ex offenders; the council also assists a few non profit agencies with financial support to assist the re-entry population such as Dayton urban league, action partnership, Salvation Army booth house, mercy manor and volunteers of America (Montgomery County).

Solutions as to strengthen various services

Re-entry services must be offered in a coordinated fashion, the re-entry system is usually a complex network made up of many interdependent systems. We simply cannot afford to have these various systems and services working in isolation. Hence, all agencies and organizations - both public and private - will need to be engaged in service coordination in order to respond to the many barriers encountered by the ex-offender upon their release into society.

Only Complete service integration through a network of community partnerships will be vital in ensuring that these efforts are to be successful in the future and have positive impacts on both the community and ex offender (Montgomery County). Another factor that demonstrates the importance of public-private partnerships is the fact that the government cannot fund this initiative on its own as the government cannot participate everywhere. Many years of experience have shown that with governmental programs of all types, public money eventually dries up. This is true for both governmental funding used to initiate new services as well as governmental funding used to leverage funds from the private sector for the continuation of services. This results in services decreasing and later ceasing to exist. To counteract this occurrence, the community must exhibit a sincere investment in a particular service and bear a significant portion of the necessary funding. It is only through public-private partnerships that sustainability is even a possibility (Montgomery County 1).

The Ohio prisons have realized that it may not be possible to always rehabilitate all convicts in the system and have consequently partnered with <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-that-the-returning-person-is-able-to/>

the Montgomery County to reduce recidivism and bring attention to the state of reentry in Ohio hence the need for increased cooperation (Montgomery County 1). There is a need to increase the number of transitional, supportive, and affordable ex-offender housing opportunities in Montgomery County for high-risk groups (i. e., individuals with sex offenses on their criminal record, mental health disorders, and/or substance dependency) as well as for families and children (Montgomery County 1). It would be wise if an assessment for the needs of each inmate is carried such that the same can be consistently followed upon being released from prison. When possible, applications and steps toward accessing student loans and other financing will take place prior to release so as to aid in education (Montgomery County 1).

There should be negotiation with the local housing authority to recommend that families and children are given a preference on the waiting lists. There is also a need to develop supportive housing units that will supply needed services and appropriate transitional housing for up to one year (Irwin 1). Develop a program for ex-offenders to use “sweat equity” to rehabilitate homes which might otherwise be demolished, similar to the Habitat for Humanity model (Irwin 1). Develop a Housing Locator containing informational materials to be given to ex-offenders before they are released that includes available housing opportunities based upon eligibility criteria, this will lead to former prisoners having shelter and help reduce crime recurrence from such ex-convicts (Irwin 1).

A needs assessment must be conducted with each inmate prior to release and it should be incorporated in the Reentry Plan and consistently followed

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up when the prisoner is released into the community (Irwin 1). It would be significant if courts are given more discretion in determining treatment options and authorizing early discharge from special probation for individuals who make exceptional progress (Irwin 1).

Conclusion

For there to be successful reentry program and effective policies and systems, there must be effective partnership between the community, ex-prisoners, government, non-profit groups and also inmates themselves to avoid ex-convicts going back to jail. Well implemented reentry programs have helped former prisoners to integrate back to the community and contribute to the growth of the community positively and also become role models for recidivists and prisoners.

Works Cited

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