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## The View Behind Rubber Bars: An Analysis and Examination of Faith and Non-Faith Jail Reentry Programs in Central Florida

### Cover Page Footnote

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## The View Behind Rubber Bars: An Analysis and Examination of Faith and Non-Faith Jail Reentry Programs in Central Florida

Gautam Nayer

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### Abstract

This paper examined the usefulness of jail reentry programs as an alternative towards increased jail and prison costs. Policy issues for returning inmates could and often did include future employment prospects, housing and public safety. Prisoner reentry programs generally fell into two broad categories; faith and non-faith based. Generally, non-faith programs were conducted in jail or prison while the individual was incarcerated for an extended period of time. Non-faith type programs involved classes on anger management, G.E.D. attainment, college credits, or alcohol or drug abuse therapy. Faith based programs were generally Christian based, although they usually did not discriminate against other individuals of different religions joining their program. Faith based programs were usually conducted outside of the jail/prison environment. However, a few jails and prisons did keep Bible or religious wings.

Reentry programs are often managed from the client-oriented side of public and non-profit administration. However, the majority of charities would not describe the individuals in their program as clients. Rather, in faith based programs there is a tendency for the administration to identify the individual as part of a larger family-based treatment program, not as a client-oriented service provider.

It is worth mentioning that most faith-based programs are comprised only of men. The men in faith based programs live, work and sleep under the same roof and spend entire months cut off and isolated from modern-day distractions. These difficult processes allow the men to adjust and refocus their lives in an attempt to create a lasting change in their lifestyle, and possibly prevent them from recidivating.

Prisoner reentry programs received a boost in political support in April of 2008 when President Bush signed the *Second Chance Act* allocating \$200 million for municipalities and cities to use in order to create, manage and expand upon existing prisoner reentry programs. Between 1999 and 2006, the population of people incarcerated in prison substantially increased from 1.1 million to almost 1.5 million (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). During this time period, additional research was compiled examining the impact of parole and other work-release programs in order to gauge whether the idea of prisoner re-entry programs had any merit. In 2008, the Pew Center on the States, released a report that found 2,319,258 adults were held in American prisons or jails, or one in every 99.1 men and women. A total of \$49 billion was spent on corrections by states in 2007 (Pew Center on the States).

Almost 650,000 inmates are released each year and most have no supervision at all (Travis, Solomon, & Wahl, 2001). The majority of returning inmates travel back to their former neighborhoods vastly unprepared to start a new and different lifestyle for themselves. Reentry programs are a tenuous, yet, brawny thread, which could potentially change the cycle of re-arrest and re-incarceration for returning inmates.

### Definition of Prisoner/Jail Reentry

Prisoner and jail reentry programs were previously known as prisoner rehabilitation programs. They were set up as classes or programs so that prisoners, who had been removed from society, could adapt easily when released. Prisoner/jail reentry is defined as "...the process of leaving the adult state prison system and returning to society" (La Vigne, Mamalian, Travis, & Visher, 2003, p.1).

### Policy Challenges among Returning Inmates

**Policy issue no. 1: Prisoner reentry and public safety.** The government's obligation to protect its citizens from actions committed by criminals should not vanish once these former criminals had served their time and were released from prison. Almost 100,000 prisoners each year were simply released and left without any assistance, guidance, or supervision (Travis, 2005).

During the course of reentry programs, prisoners were allowed to attend school, start working, and connect with their families during the day. At night, the prisoners were returned to the prison, but were granted restricted privileges to spend time in society. These types of programs encompassed halfway houses, work release facilities, furloughs, and education release programs. The idea was to not only allow the inmates to

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connect with the community, but to also lower the probability of crime once they were released back into society (Travis & Visher, 2003). Research has also shown that prisoners who were regularly supervised prior to and upon their release from prison, were statistically less likely to engage in crime, and had a lower recidivism rate following their release (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Travis, 2005).

**Policy issue no. 2: Families and children.** In 2002, one in 45 children had a parent in prison (Mumola, 2004). While incarcerated, parents may not be able to see their children for a long time, and if they were single parents, their child may have to be placed in foster care or with relatives. This served to cause a great deal of anxiety and stress for the parents and could impact the child's future development and adjustment to society (Hairston & Rollin, 2003; Maluccio & Ainsworth, 2003).

Similarly, parents trying to reconcile with their spouses may also experience difficulty and trauma (Bra-man, 2002). Spouses may be estranged from each other while in prison and prisoners may be transported to a far away location making it difficult for visitation. There may be issues of infidelity or divorce while in prison, further complicating matters between spouses. Both spouses lose the mutual trust that comes from being in a relationship with the loss of normal emotional and physical contact prior to imprisonment (Hairston & Rollin, 2003).

In other words, the longer the prison stay, the less the contact. Therefore, the less the contact, the weaker the social and familial bonds inmates developed with their families and friends. Consequently, research proved that ex-offenders were unlikely to successfully reintegrate once they returned to society (Hairston, 1998). Additionally, with the passage of stricter sentencing laws, inmates now have fewer opportunities to stay in contact with their children and family; thus, making reintegration possibly even more difficult.

Faith-based programs could be more successful than non-faith programs for men who have children, because of the emphasis on religion and morality, especially related to family issues. Non-faith programs tended to be more reality-oriented with emphasis placed on everyday issues such as finding a job, going to Alcohol Anonymous (AA) meetings and becoming a productive member of society (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006).

**Policy issue no. 3: Employment.** Employment studies in economics have focused on the topic of job earnings as a deterrent for future criminal activity. Reentry programs are crucial at a time when young, impressionable men are in prison or jail surrounded by gangs and other criminals. Such associations could fuel and increase the likelihood that an individual would continue with criminal activity once they left jail or prison (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999).

Statistically, the longer a returning inmate remains unemployed, the higher the probability that an

ex-offender would resort to crime (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Additionally, as prison sentences have become longer, it increases the likelihood of a return to crime due to poor social skills, as well as, a robust drift towards crime because of the longer sentence (Lynch & Sabol, 2001).

Both faith and non-faith programs have job development opportunities such as culinary classes, lawn and gardening, and auto detailing services. Thus, it allowed for inmates to develop their job skills prior to returning to society.

**Policy issue no. 4: Housing.** Prisoners may face many challenges upon reentry but possibly the most immediate concern facing them upon returning to society is that of shelter (Lynch & Sabol, 2001; Petersilia, 2003). Usually, returning inmates are able to bunk or share rooms with friends, family members or other community members, who they know well enough to solicit such a request. In 1999, Nelson, Deess, and Allen conducted a study that followed 49 ex-prisoners released from New York state prisons. They found that 40 of the ex-prisoners were living with family, a spouse or a partner in the 30 days immediately following their release.

There are numerous barriers to gaining affordable housing that ex-offenders are subject to, beginning with the lack of monetary funds. Besides a lack of money for housing, the two most common barriers were those of community opposition and landlords' discrimination against housing the formerly incarcerated (Petersilia, 2003). The majority of inmates leave prison without enough money for a security deposit on an apartment. A small amount of money, known as gate money, was provided to inmates upon their departure from prison and ranged between \$25 and \$200 depending on the state. However, one-third of states did not provide any money at all upon the inmate's departure (Petersilia, 2003).

### **Florida's Prison System**

**The state of Florida.** As the nation's fourth-largest prison system (after California, Texas, and the complete federal penitentiary system), the Florida Department of Corrections fulfills a major responsibility for public safety in Florida. Through a network of 59 major prisons, 76 work camps, and community-based facilities, the department manages incarceration and care for 93,000 inmates (Florida Department of Corrections [FLDOC], 2008). In fiscal year 2006-2007 the agency's annual operating budget was \$2.2 billion (FLDOC).

**Florida department of corrections: Prisoner facilities in Florida.** The 135 prison facilities within the Florida Department of Corrections are divided into major institutions, annexes, work camps, work release centers, and road prisons throughout the state. The classification of inmates into these different facilities takes into account; the seriousness of their offenses, length of sentence, time remaining to serve, prior criminal record, escape history, prison adjustment, as well as, other factors. The most serious offenders with the longest sen-

tences and those least likely to adjust to institutional life were placed in more secure facilities (FLDOC, 2008).

**Florida prisoner releases: Demographics.** In June of 2006, 33,348 inmates were released that served an average of 85.5% of their sentences (FLDOC, 2008). Additionally, 64% (21,336) were released because their sentences expired, 14% (4,658) were released to some type of probation or community control, and 16% (5,326) were released to conditional release supervision (a type of supervision for more serious offenders). Furthermore, 89.4% (29,808) of offenders released in FY 2005-2006 were overwhelmingly male and over 40% (13,457) were between the ages of 35 and 49 (FLDOC, 2008).

### Florida Faith-based Programs

**Dunklin Memorial Camp, Okeechobee.** Using the teachings of Christianity, the sole purpose of Dunklin is to assist drug and alcohol abusers with their addictions. The original idea was to create a tent ministry in Martin County, which eventually grew into a community and training center, successfully duplicated in other nations (Dunklin Memorial Camp, 2008). It is the Camp's belief that the Christian approach is the most effective method by which to eliminate an individual's destructive habits with alcohol or drugs. Dunklin believes a spiritual, emotional and physical philosophy can successfully straighten an individual's determination to become a productive member of society.

**Lamb of God, Okeechobee.** Lamb of God is a faith-based program that is similar to the Dunklin Memorial Camp. However, the men at Lamb of God worked off campus, while both Faith Farm and Dunklin's men worked on their respective campuses for extended periods of time (Lamb of God, 2008). In the evening, the men returned to Lamb of God's campus and after supper held Bible classes, or attended AA or Narcotic Anonymous (NA) meetings. Some of the men also worked on their G.E.D. or took community college classes, nearby. Lamb of God allowed the men living on its campus a large degree of autonomy, freedom of movement, and self-discipline, which was rarely found among faith-based programs. Its Executive Director, Michael Lewandowski has been running the program since its establishment in 1990. The men lived at the Okeechobee campus for a period of 6 months, but they were free to leave at any point, unless they were under a court order to stay longer.

**Faith Farm - Okeechobee and Boynton Beach.** Faith Farm Ministries was created and founded in 1951 by Reverend Garland Eastham. In the beginning, the purpose of Faith Farm ministries was simply to offer shelter, comfort, food, and Biblical training to any homeless and destitute men who would desire them. However, in realizing that there was a critical need for an alcohol rehabilitation program in the community, Faith Farm initially created a three-day program to help men recover from alcohol abuse. In the years since

1951, this program has become a comprehensive eight-month program, serving men of the Christian faith.

**The Love Center, Fort Pierce.** The Love Center was created and founded in 1995 by Pastor Jerome Rhyant, who struggled with his own substance abuse problems prior to dedicating his life to assisting others with their difficulties. The Love Center also worked with the Sheriff's Department of Prisoner Re-Entry Programs to provide a halfway/transitional house for men who had recently left jail or prison and needed a place to stay temporarily. The Center is supported by donations, but men were also sponsored or paid for their own treatment out of pocket. While the Bible is used in classes, Pastor Rhyant credited self-responsibility as a viable method for men to reform their lives.

**The Next Step Center, Stuart.** The Center is a transitional housing and substance abuse center utilizing Christian based principles in order to alter lives. It was founded in 1996 and its Executive Director is Bob Wilson. On average about 20 men resided in one of the two buildings that the Center owned. Most of the men stayed between 4 to 7 months after re-entering society. Mr. Wilson worked actively with the Martin County Sheriff's Department to assist inmates to re-enter society successfully.

In combining a faith-based program with the Bible and Alcoholic/Narcotic Anonymous classes, men were allowed to stay for a minimum of 90 days. Certain types of criminals - such as sexual predators, domestic abuse offenders, and mental health disorder types - were not permitted to apply for admission at the Next Step Center.

### Florida Non-faith based Programs

**Freedom House, Port St. Lucie.** Freedom House is a halfway house for men who had recently left jail. It was created and founded by anonymous donors and ran by Adam Hoff. Mr. Hoff is the Executive Director of the halfway house, which fitted seven men at any one time. Men, who had recently left jail, were allowed to reside at the house for a period of 6 months. They lived two to three a room and shared minor household expenses, although most supplies were donated. Most of the men had participated in some type of prisoner reentry program during their incarceration period. Freedom House was referred to men while in jail and allowed them to enter the halfway house after leaving jail. Mr. Hoff was also instrumental in the community; with maintaining ties with former Freedom House residents.

**Saint Lucie County Sheriff's Offices of reentry programs and the Public Defender's Office of reentry programs, St. Lucie County, State of Florida.** These two programs worked in conjunction with a number of agencies and departments, as well as, local non-profits and churches in order to create, assist and successfully integrate former offenders back into society. Since 2003, Major Patrick Tighe has been the Direc-

tor of the Prisoner Reentry Programs at the St. Lucie County Jail in Fort Pierce.

Also, since 2003, the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office has worked extensively to create and maintain prisoner re-entry programs at the St. Lucie County Jail. These programs were primarily operated as a joint operation with the St. Lucie Public Defender's Office. There were three chief programs, which have been operated both during and after the inmates were released from jail. These were the substance abuse program, the G.E.D. program, and the culinary program.

The substance abuse program was operated in cooperation with the Public Defender's Office in St. Lucie County. It was also operated as a therapeutic community and had its own wing in the St. Lucie Jail. In this manner, the inmates did not socialize or spoke to anyone else while in the program. This program was a 90 day program, upon which the inmate left jail with a certificate of completion.

The G.E.D. program was offered with the assistance of teachers from the Indian River State College (IRSC). They volunteered to assist inmates with graduating with their G.E.D. while in jail. Upon graduating from the program and once they have been released back into society, former offenders could apply for college classes at IRSC.

The Culinary program at the St. Lucie County Jail was offered primarily through the Aramark Corporation, which also cooked and handled all the meals at the jail. This program lasts about 6-8 weeks. On average, this program usually involved about 10 to 12 men for the duration of the program. Upon graduation and when the inmates have been released back into society, they are awarded a certificate of completion. However, Aramark did not offer assistance to the inmates when they left the program nor did the corporation allow the men to use their company as a reference. A number of these inmates looked for jobs in the St. Lucie County area and some lived in halfway houses, such as Freedom House, upon leaving jail.

During the course of this research, the central research question was, *what are the attitudes of the formerly incarcerated towards prisoner reentry programs?* This paper critiqued reentry programs and determined their viability for helping the formerly incarcerated reintegrate back into society. A corollary question was, what are the satisfaction levels among returning inmates when measured in these reentry programs? Also, which program appears to be more effective at assisting former inmates to reintegrate successfully back into society?

There are three hypotheses for this study. They are: 1) Faith based participants are more likely than non-faith participants to have heard about the reentry

programs through a church or a Christian based organization; 2) Faith based participants would be more satisfied with the process of their program than non-faith based participants; and 3) Faith based participants are more likely to be satisfied with the overall content of their program than non-faith based participants.

## Method

### Sample

The faith and non-faith programs were geographically located in the state of Florida. Programs were evaluated in Florida in cities such as Stuart, Okeechobee, Fort Pierce, Boynton Beach and Port Saint Lucie. These cities are located in St. Lucie, Martin and Okeechobee and Palm Beach County.

Only men were the focus and subject of this research because men and especially African-American men are the single largest group of individuals leaving jail and prison today. The vast majority of prisoners returning to their communities were both male (91%) and single (83%) (Travis, Keegan, Cadora, Solomon, & Swartz, 2003).

### Design and Procedure

This research examined both types of reentry programs; faith-based and non-faith based. Using data survey analysis, former prison and jail inmates' beliefs were evaluated concerning the programs they had recently participated. Analysis was conducted regarding the effectiveness in assisting them to reintegrate successfully back into society. The methodology consisted of quantitative questionnaires which provided in-depth perspectives on the value of client-oriented services in the reentry programs. Statistics package for the social sciences (SPSS) software was utilized for analyzing and discussing the findings of the quantitative methodology. SPSS software was also used to analyze the descriptive statistics, as well as, Chi-Square results from the data collected.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the data collected. There were more participants in the non-faith program (N = 112) than the faith program (N = 106).

Table 1.  
*Faith and Non-Faith Based Program Characteristics as a Percentage of the Sample*

	Faith (N = 106)	Non-Faith (N = 112)
Average Age	28	23.2
Married	13.2	24.1
Education - High School	67	52.3
Ethnic Background	73.6 (White)	82.1 (White)
Entered Program	34 (3-6 months)	33(3-6 months)
Heard of Program	58.5	48.2
Currently in probation	24	40
Currently on parole	2.9	4.2
Probation in past	75.5	74.8
Parole in past	1.9	0.0
Staying for entire treatment	75.0	56.4
Have children	48.1	53.2
Program improved relationship with children	90.0 (Yes)	88.0 (Yes)
Most common occupation prior to program	24.8 (Service)	19.8 (Service)
Length of time to gain employment after program	86 (1-3 mths)	84.3 (1-3 mths)
Program assists in gaining employment	69	72.6
Returning to prior profession	26.9	30.9
Starting new profession	28.8	27.3
Education assistance- G.E.D.	19.1	27.8
Education assistance- college credits	23.4	18.9
1st time in program	73.5	87.4
Participated more than once in program	26.5	12.6
If choice, wish to stay in program	84.6 (Yes)	64.8 (Yes)
Resource increase-more assistance with job hunting	29.3	25.0
Resource increase-more funding provided to administration	22.8	27.8
Resource increase-more assistance with housing	10.9	12.0
Decrease amount of time spent in program	24.6	14.6
Treated as clients during course of program	81.1	77.0
Satisfaction with Program Administrators' assistance	93.1	89.6
Satisfaction with Process of Program	91.1	92.4
Satisfaction with Content of Program	94.1	94.3

### Chi-Square Analyses

**Heard about the program.** As indicated in Table 2, the majority of respondents (76.2%) found out about their program through either a prisoner/jail reentry program or through a friend/word of mouth. This was significant because it could be that the best method for

*getting the word out* about a program's effectiveness was through word of mouth by jail or prison inmates. Consequently, the program's non-effectiveness or lack of success could also be discovered through word of mouth. Prisoners and inmates spoke among themselves quite frequently. Therefore, the best method by which prison officials could assure success in a program was by lis-

tening to these inmates' complaints or praises. A total of 218 men participated in answering this question.

How respondent heard about the program was significant for the type of program in which reentry clients

participated ( $p < .005$ ). While there was enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, it is hypothesized that more research in this area is needed to address the validity of the relationship.

Table 2.

*Frequency distribution of respondents indicating how respondent heard about the program by type of program*

Heard About Program	Faith		Non-Faith		Total	
	N	Valid %	N	Valid %	N	Valid %
Prisoner/jail reentry program	14	13.2	54	48.2	68	31.2
Through friend/word of mouth	62	58.5	36	32.1	98	45.0
Through church/Christian org	26	24.5	4	3.6	30	13.8
Through the internet	4	3.8	0	0.0	4	1.8
Other	0	0.0	18	16.1	18	8.3
Total	106	100	112	100.0	218	100.0

\* $p < .005$

#### **Respondent satisfaction with process of pro-gram.**

As indicated in the Table 3, the majority of respondents (57.2%) were extremely satisfied. In combining all three satisfaction categories (extremely satisfied, very satisfied, and satisfied), the total satisfaction percentage was 91.4%. This meant that the vast majority of respondents were overall satisfied with the program

administrator's assistance with the treatment in their program. However, Chi -square analysis showed that there were no significant results for this category, possibly due to the small sample size. Thus, respondent satisfaction with process of the program was not significant for the type of program in which the reentry clients participated ( $p > .005$ ).

Table 3.

*Frequency distribution of respondents indicating respondent satisfaction with process of the program by type of program*

Respondent Satisfaction	Faith		Non-Faith		Total	
	N	Valid %	N	Valid %	N	Valid %
Not at all satisfied	4	3.9	6	5.7	10	4.8
Somewhat satisfied	5	4.9	2	1.9	7	3.4
Satisfied	13	12.7	9	8.2	22	10.6
Very satisfied	19	18.6	31	29.2	50	24.0
Extremely satisfied	61	59.8	58	54.7	119	57.2
Total	102	100	106	100.0	208	100.0

\* $p > .005$

#### **Respondent satisfaction with content of the program .**

As indicated in Table 4, the majority of respondents (60%) were extremely satisfied with the program administrator's assistance. In combining all three satisfaction categories (extremely satisfied, very satisfied, and satisfied), the total satisfaction percentage was 94.3%. This meant that the vast majority of respondents were overall satisfied with the program administrator's assistance with the treatment in their program. However,

Chi- square analysis showed that there were no significant results for this category, possibly due to the small sample size. A total of 210 men participated in answering this question. Therefore, respondent satisfaction with content of the program was not significant for the type of program that reentry clients participated in ( $p > .005$ ). It is the researcher's suggestion that more research in this area is needed to address the validity of the relationship.

Table 4.

*Frequency distribution of respondents indicating respondent satisfaction with content of the program by type of program*

Respondent Satisfaction	Faith		Non-Faith		Total	
	N	Valid %	N	Valid %	N	Valid %
Not at all satisfied	2	1.9	5	4.7	7	3.3
Somewhat satisfied	4	3.9	1	0.9	5	2.4
Satisfied	11	10.7	12	11.2	23	11.0
Very satisfied	19	18.4	30	28.0	49	23.3
Extremely satisfied	67	65.0	59	55.1	126	60.0
Total	103	100	107	100.0	210	100.0

\*p >.005

### Discussion

Perhaps the most surprising finding that was discovered through this process was that there were no significant differences in men's attitudes towards their programs in either the faith or non-faith based programs. One of the hypotheses was that the faith based programs would have a higher satisfaction level than the non-faith programs. This was hypothesized because there was a perception that faith-based programs were stricter and more disciplined than non-faith programs, thereby increasing satisfaction levels.

In addition, the hypothesis that participants in the non-faith based programs would prefer to change to another program was shown to be incorrect. Chi-square analysis showed definitively that the former inmates when asked if they would prefer to be in another program definitely said they would prefer to stay in their program and not change programs.

While a majority of men chose family and housing as their two primary concerns upon their return to society. A number of men also wrote about the need to stay away from old neighborhoods and past friends who had tempted them and led them astray. In the non-profit programs, the men often spoke of starting a new life for themselves through Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. Moreover, some of the men believed that an entire lifestyle change was warranted if they were ever to stop recycling through the criminal justice system. Research has confirmed this widely held opinion among the men interviewed; a complete lifestyle change was necessary for an ex-inmate in order to prevent re-incarceration (Taxman, Young, & Byrne, 2003).

While this research was conducted in a timely manner and various safeguards were utilized to protect individuals' privacy, as well as, complete the research in an ethical and honest manner, it would be unrealistic to suggest that this research could not have been done better. Additionally, the sample size could have been larger.

Other limitations included, but were not limited to, the quality and quantity of research questions.

### Future Recommendations for Research

Although this study highlighted some major issues of prisoner reentry programs and allowed for a comprehensive evaluation from both a qualitative and quantitative point of view, there were several issues which future research should address and analyze. Reentry programs success often depends on how closely tied the individual is with the community and their family. Often the community and the family are uneasy with the recent return of a former inmate and may not welcome them back; thus, depriving the individual of invaluable linkages to assimilate faster. Research has shown that the attitude of returning inmate is greatly improved if they can even make one strong contact upon their return to society (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006). Questions in the future, for a similar type of study, should ask questions as to how much community involvement the returning inmate would like and suggestions as to how to go about creating community involvement. A future research question, qualitatively asked, should try and ascertain what the returning inmate would like for his or her community to do constructively. This would allow the individual a greater feeling of reentry prior to returning to their former neighborhoods.

Community based activism is an important and germane part of the reentry process (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006). Studies in Maryland, for instance, have focused on working with returning inmates by creating an exit orientation meeting once a month, in order to speak to the inmates prior to their leaving the program (Travis, 2005). These sessions inform the returning inmates on how to assimilate themselves better into society upon leaving prison. Inmates are taught how to renew their driver's license, and lists of shelters and food banks are provided. In addition, inmates are made wel-

come back to their neighborhoods through community members. Such committees should be established in communities across America because it allows for the jail or prison to take a wider role in reentering returning prisoners effectively.

Families and children of the returning inmates should be notified, whenever possible, that their family member is returning. Often when a prisoner is released, his or her family is not notified and is sometimes unable to even meet with the returning inmate in time to greet them. Prison officials should work with parole, probation, and other community members to create networks of partnerships to more easily assimilate the returning prisoners.

An inmate's network of support is crucial to their success in reentering society. Families, especially an inmate's children, are powerful magnets for preventing a former inmate from returning to a life of crime and a cycle of jail or prison (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006). As public and political support grows for reentry programs, the odds increase in returning inmates' favor that reentry programs will become better at decreasing the recidivism rate. Community awareness of the number of returning inmates will increase if there is more of an effort coordinated through networks involving prison officials, parole, and probation officers and key community and neighborhood members.

In Saint Lucie County, there has been a concentrated effort by the Public Defender's Office, the Sheriff's Office and a loose coalition of homeless shelters, food banks, and community/non-profit leaders to aggressively assist and work with returning inmates. Ultimately, the community must become a more effective leader in preventing crime and reducing re-arrest rates; thus, lowering the recidivism rate for the formerly incarcerated. Future recommendations for research conducted in this field would be incomplete without hypothesizing that the family and children should be increasingly evaluated, as models for the prevention of recidivism among male individuals, as they are the weakest link in a complex chain of events.

In conclusion, as the title suggests, the bars on inmates cells may be rubbery allowing participation in reentry programs, but if programs are not examined and re-examined, the same bars could solidify, preventing inmates from a much needed second chance.

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