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THE ROLE OF FAITH-BASED/GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS IN PRISONER REENTRY

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Every year, 650,000 individuals are released from prison in the United States. In the near future the number is expected to rise to 1.2 million. Of those released, statistics confirm that two-thirds will commit additional crimes and return to prison shortly after their initial release. This failure in prison reform comes at great expense to society not only in increased crime, but increased tax and spending. In recent years, the government has recognized this dilemma and called upon the faith-based community to partner with them in creating reentry programs aimed at reducing recidivism. In some circumstances the government is solely the financier of the program and in others it is also helping to deliver services. The programs profiled here offer a stimulating example of successful faith-based/government collaborations.

INTRODUCTION

Prisoner reentry presents a complicated and arduous challenge, often magnified by barriers in society such as few employment options, scarce resources in low-income communities and public animosity (Williams, 2006). The result is a staggering rate of recidivism, an enormous dilemma considering 650,000 individuals are released from prison annually (Schofield, 2006). This has gained the attention of both the government and nonprofit community. The government advocates for faith-based organizations to take a more significant role in the reentry process, a role the faith-based community has already begun to fill. Numerous partnerships have developed between the two sectors including strategies such as mentoring, employment training and counseling (Reentry National Media Outreach, 2006). Classified as collaboration, the partnerships represent complementary and supplementary relationships. The complementary relationships provide an example of how government and faith-based organizations can work together to deliver services. In contrast, through government financing, the supplementary relationships rely upon the faith-based community to deliver the services.

Although many partnerships exist, this analysis will examine only four: Fort Wayne's Weed and Seed, Ready4Work, Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency and the Maryland Reentry Partnership. Each program has found tremendous success in reducing recidivism.

The four programs provide a basis for better understanding private/public partnerships. Analysis of the programs reflect five major observations. First, faith-based/government partnerships are a natural fit due to the capability and resources of the faith-based community. Second, while partnerships are critical, the government must still take the lead role in prison reform. Similarly, the two sectors need to strengthen their influence and advocate on behalf of ex-offenders. The fourth conclusion is that increased awareness is critical for the success of reentry. Lastly, it is noted that private/public partnerships can present challenges such as complications with liability, failure to collaborate services, and lack of funding.

Overall, the faith-based community is making a difference and can continue to do so with partnerships involving the prison system and social services agencies. Faith-based nonprofit organizations play a significant role in prison reform, specifically in the area of providing a more efficient transition of prisoners into society upon release.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM OF PRISONER REENTRY

Prison reform epitomizes the idea of unintended consequences. Overcrowded prisons, increased state and federal spending, and higher crime rates are plaguing the nation. While many challenges exist in the area of prison reform, the most notable is prisoner reentry. Otherwise known as the transition or integration of prisoners back into society, successful reentry is an initiative that has weighty consequences. The idea is relatively new; recognizing that while prison may be successful at providing a short-term punishment for the individual, the long-term consequences often fall into the hands of society when the prisoners are released. Recidivism, a relapse into crime, has become one of the greatest obstacles of successful reentry (William, 2006). In addition to higher crime rates, taxpayers are forced to deal with enormous state and federal spending on the prison system—most notably spending on individuals that are returning to prison after their initial release. According to Regina Schofield, Assistant Attorney General in the U.S. Department of Justice (2006a),

Most offenders, including the most violent offenders, will eventually return to their communities. Public safety is affected by their return. A study from OJP's (Office of Justice programs) Bureau of Justice Statistics found that more than two-thirds of all released offenders were rearrested within three years. So, of the 650,000 people who are released from prison annually, over 400,000 are likely to be rearrested. Between the harm caused by their original crimes, the injuries inflicted by their new offenses, and the collective damage they do to both their neighborhoods and their communities, the path of destruction recidivists leave is wide and long. In addition to the obvious threat to public safety, this cycle of crime and imprisonment drains scarce community resources from other essential services (p. 1).

Another study revealed similar results, suggesting that 67% of offenders will be rearrested within three years of their initial release (MacLellan, 2005, p.2). More disturbing, 84% of the arrests will be for a felony and 16% for a serious misdemeanor (2005, p. 2).

Solomon, Thomson and Keegan (2004) found that on average, parole failures cost the State of Michigan \$117 million a year—money that could desperately be used for other purposes such as education or healthcare. Since 1990, the number of prisoners being released in Michigan has increased by 40% (2004, p. 1). For the country as a whole, the cost of parole failures in 2004 was an alarming 40.7 billion (MacLellan, 2005, p. 1).

Returning offenders are not only costly, they are creating a logistical dilemma. In 2003, twenty-two states reported being at or above prisoner capacity and twenty other states reported being at 90% capacity (2005, p. 2). This is a huge obstacle considering that over two million prisoners are held in state and federal prisons and local jails in a given day (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006a). Of those, 95% will eventually be released—a rate four times higher than it was 25 years ago (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006b)

Even though society is beginning to realize there is a major problem with prison reform, little is being done to address the root causes of the problem. For the average prisoner, reentry into society is complex and strenuous. Many prisoners are returning to a world far different from the one they left. Not only have family ties potentially been broken, society and technology have developed at a fast rate. Upon release, individuals are forced to secure housing, obtain employment, establish a legal identity, receive treatment for substance abuse or mental health, reestablish relationships, find transportation and procure basic necessities such as food and clothing. The task is daunting, and few government resources support these endeavors.

Furthermore, Solomon et al. (2004) believe that prisoners are less prepared to re-enter their communities and more likely to be addicted to substance abuse than in years past. Released prisoners are also dealing with more health issues, discrimination and unaffordable housing costs. While these barriers are enormous, prisoners returning to society face an even more daunting obstacle: reemployment. Even for the well-trained individual, finding employment can be challenging. Add to that a criminal background, lack of training, and the absence of legal identification (the majority of prisoners are released from prison without proper identification from the State), and an individual is doomed for even greater failure. Aukerman & Stangl (2006) reveal that many offenders are barred from working in many areas of the labor market. They list markets such government, transportation, healthcare, financial services and school services as examples. Governor Jeb Bush of Florida also recognizes this problem, declaring that an estimated one third of all jobs in Florida are off-limits to ex-offenders (Basile, 2002). Adding to the challenge, half of released population is illiterate and 11% is expected to enter a homeless shelter within

two years of release (MacLellan, 2005, p. 4). These major barriers make successful reentry and self-sufficiency virtually impossible.

Ironically, government policies have been created to limit the resources available to ex-offenders. For example, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 prohibits individuals with a drug-related felony from receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) for the rest of their lives (MacLellan, 2005). Ex-offenders are also banned from public housing, a significant problem since many private housing complexes also do not accept tenants with serious felonies (MacLellan, 2005).

The problem is magnified considering that many prisoners are being released to low-income communities with few resources. For instance, in the North Lawndale Community of Chicago, Illinois, a staggering 70% of its males have criminal backgrounds (Williams, 2006, p. 1). Similarly, the city of Baltimore is the release site for 59% of Maryland's prisoners (MacLellan, 2005, p. 4) and in Michigan 34% of the State's prisoners are released to Wayne County (Solomon et al, 2004, p.40).

For all these reasons, the problem has gained the attention of both the government and nonprofit sector. The government is recognizing that the cost of the status quo is adding up and they need help in the area of prison reform. The nonprofit sector is equally interested, acknowledging that it might hold the key to the problem.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE COLLABORATION

While both sectors are interested, who is ultimately responsible for the weighty problem of prison reform? Is it the government or is the government's role simply to punish? Is it society's problem and should the burden fall upon families and communities? When exploring who is responsible for various policy issues, Salamon and Anheir (Powell & Clemens, 1998) suggest it is common to assume only two possible avenues exist: dependence on the state or dependence on the public sector. On many occasions, burden and blame are placed exclusively on one sector over the other. They believe this way of thinking is faulty, asserting, "A third route exists . . . a route that involves neither sole reliance on the on the state nor sole reliance on the private sector, but rather a partnership between the two (Powell & Clemens, 1998, p. 151). In the case of prisoner reentry, this third route may be the best option.

In order to best understand how a partnership between the two sectors is possible, one must analyze the purpose of each sector. Each sector was established and has evolved for various reasons. Stated simply, the state sector was needed to create order and provide structure. The third sector, often described as that which does not fit into the category of government or market, came into existence to address elements such as personal well-being, health or survival; all are necessities to human (or environmental) existence. The purpose

of the sector therefore becomes to serve the public. Ironically, most government agencies and personnel would argue that as public servants, that is their goal as well. Salamon and Anheir (Powell & Clemens, 1998) suggest the overlap exists because the third sector shares the mission of serving the public while at the same time enjoying independent status. They also note institutions in all three sectors (state, market and private) can carry out many of the functions of both government and the non-profit sector.

To explain the potential relationship between the government and private sector, Salamon and Anheir (Powell & Clemens, 1998) rely upon a model developed by Gidron, Kramer and Salamon. Although the model is designed to explore the social welfare system, it can be transferred to other areas including prison reform, and specifically prisoner reentry. First, they define the *government-dominant model* which involves the government as the chief funder and deliverer of human services. Next, they describe the *third-sector-dominant model* in which the nonprofit sector is responsible for both financing and delivering human services. The *dual model* involves active roles of both the government and the nonprofit sector but with little interaction among the two. Lastly, the *collaborative model* entails equally active roles but with a high level of overlap often with government financing and nonprofit delivery of services (Powell and Clemens, 1998).

According to Gidron, Kramer and Salamon (1992), the degree of discretion held by nonprofit organizations can vary within the collaborative model. The nonprofit organization can be an agent of the state and perform defined tasks or can exhibit more authority and have greater voice in how to deliver services. Gidron, Kramer and Salamon (1992) suggest that as the complexity of the activity increases so does the authority given to the deliverer of the service.

Young (Boris & Steuerle, 1999) offers a similar theory about the relationship between the government and nonprofit organizations. He describes potential relationships as supplementary, complementary, or adversarial. When a *supplementary* relationship is present, the nonprofit sector is fulfilling a need that has been left void by the government. In a *complementary* relationship, the two sectors work together, often through financing from the government. The final relationship, *adversarial*, involves an attempt to influence another sector. For example, a nonprofit may advocate for policy change and the government may regulate the services of a nonprofit. None of these relationships is exclusive (Boris & Steuerle, 1999, p. 33).

Using the two frameworks, how can the current partnership between the government and nonprofit sector be described in the area of prison reform? (For the purpose of this analysis, the faith-based community will represent the nonprofit sector). Hundreds of reentry programs exist throughout the United States. Some are small local efforts of nonprofit agencies and others are large-scale federal programs. Of these programs, the most common relationship is a

collaborative relationship. Within the collaborative relationship, complementary and supplementary relationships occur, both exclusively and simultaneously. The first example is Fort Wayne's Weed and Seed program, a collaborative and complementary program. The Federal program, Ready4Work program illustrates a collaborative and supplementary program. Finally, the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency and the Maryland Prisoner Reentry program offer examples of a collaborative relationship that is both complementary and supplementary.

CASE STUDY ONE: FORT WAYNE, INDIANA WEED AND SEED

The City of Fort Wayne, Indiana provides a straightforward example of a collaborative relationship in which the government and faith-based service providers supply an equally active role in offering support to ex-offenders. This could be described as a complementary relationship. The partnership emphasizes that faith-based organizations provide the community with an abundance of housing, employment training programs, and family service programs, all of which are needed for successful integration back into society.

According to the Community Capacity Development Office, Fort Wayne's main reentry initiatives stem from their Weed and Seed Program, a model program recognized by the U.S. Attorney General. With the overall goal of reducing crime, Allen County Community Corrections partners with local community agencies to address the issue of recidivism. Law enforcement officials focus on "weeding" elements such as immediate housing, monitoring, and mental health status. Community agencies, many of which are faith-based, focus on transitional programs for "seeding" aspects such as substance abuse treatment and employment readiness. The program has reduced recidivism by over 22%, lowered crime by 13.5%, and saved the community an estimated \$2 million. (Community Capacity Development Office, 2006).

Najam (2000) would describe this relationship as co-optation. This involves two groups seeking "similar ends but dissimilar means." The City of Fort Wayne and the social service providers seek to reduce crime in their community (ends). They employ different means-- the City of Fort Wayne focuses on immediate needs while the service providers focus on longer term needs. Both groups hold a level of authority in offering services.

CASE STUDY TWO: GOING HOME AND READY4WORK

On a much larger scale, the Federal government has also responded to the problem of prisoner reentry by calling the faith-based community to action. Working in a collaborative manner, the Department of Justice launched a partnership in 2002 called Going Home: the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (Schofield, 2006). Through the partnership, 120 million

dollars has been awarded to communities in all 50 states to help implement reentry programs. Each community is asked to follow a basic model which includes collaboration with faith-based and other community organizations. The program is presently evaluating its success but has received positive feedback. In 2005 and 2006, more grants were awarded—thirty went to faith-based and community organizations for the specific task of providing post-release services (p. 1). Appendix 1 offers a reentry model found on the website of the U.S. Department of Justice (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006c).

In his 2004 State of the Union Address, President Bush addressed the issue of prisoner reentry by proposing a \$300 million initiative to reduce recidivism and help prisoners reintegrate into their communities. The initiative was designed to “harnesses the resources and experience of faith-based and community organizations in providing newly released prisoners with job training and placement services, transitional housing, and voluntary mentoring support” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006a). The initiative was a result of two pilot programs by the Department of Labor. The first, Exodus Transitional Community in New York resulted in only 1% of released individuals being rearrested. The City of Memphis’ Second Chance program resulted in only 4 of 1,500 individuals be rearrested in the course of three years (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006d). This is significantly less than the 67% average the country experiences.

The President’s Reentry Initiative focuses primarily on the area of employment through its Ready4Work program (Bishop, 2006). Faith-based organizations have been designated to assist in job training and job placement. From October 2003 to October 2006, over half of the enrollees in the program were employed and only five percent of the entire group returned to prison within one year of their release (2006, p. 1). Appendix 2 displays a list of the cities participating in the Ready4Work program and the type of partnership employed. Notably, the majority of the partnerships are with faith-based organizations and are located in communities that have high rates of returning offenders. The sites range from well-established organizations that have been assisting ex-offenders for more than 30 years to new organizations created in the last 7 years. Several of the sites are even located within government complexes (Jucovy, 2006). Initial reports on the Ready4Work program reveal that success is often tied to relationships built while the individual is still incarcerated. Several of the Ready4Work sites recruit in manner (Jucovy, 2006).

In these instances, the Federal government plays an active role in trying to assist ex-offenders. However, its main role is to offer financing, not delivery of services. Thus, the relationship becomes supplementary. The faith-based community is filling a void, since the government does not want to deliver the services. It is also important to note that Ready4Work program receives funding from the Annie E. Casey and Ford Foundations (Farley & Hackman, 2006).

CASE STUDY THREE: COURT SERVICES AND OFFENDER SUPERVISION AGENCY

Relationships between the government and nonprofit community are not always as trouble-free as those found in the Fort Wayne Weed and Seed and Ready4Work programs. Najam (2000) describes the relationship between the government and nonprofit organizations: “Much of NGO [Non-government organization] action and aspiration can be boiled down to NGOs doing, or wanting to do things the government either refuses to do, does not do enough of, is incapable of doing, or is unable to do” (p. 380). In the case of ex-offender reentry, the government has proven that it often incapable of developing better policies for successful integration of ex-offenders into society.

Consider the partnership in the District of Columbia, which illustrates a collaborative relationship but not one that is equal. According to Bill Broadway (2002), the District of Columbia has implemented a partnership with local churches and other faith-based organizations to tackle the reentry problem. The partnership stems from the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) in the District of Columbia. The mission of the organization is “to increase public safety, prevent crime, reduce recidivism, and support the fair administration of justice in close collaboration with the community” (Quander, 2006). Each partnering organization is asked to provide at least three individuals from their congregations to become mentors to the ex-offenders. At the time the partnership was unveiled, the faith-based organizations were not receiving any federal funds for their services, but were told funds may be made available in the future (2002). CSOSA claims the success of the program will have a direct correlation to the number of faith-based organizations that participate (2002). At this point, the partnership has not developed into a contracting relationship, but could potentially do so in the future.

The CSOSA partnership demonstrates a complementary relationship because the two sectors are joining forces to address the problem of failed prisoner reentry. But it is also a supplementary relationship and calls upon the faith-based community to deliver all services, perhaps an indication that the government recognizes it has been unsuccessful and unable to offer the personal touch needed to impact the lives of ex-offenders. Although the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency initiated the program, all responsibility is left to the faith-based community. The partnership illustrates that the role of the government is corrective and aimed at getting individuals through the punitive system and the role of the faith-based community is to provide support and help individuals return to society in a more successful manner.

CASE STUDY FOUR: MARYLAND REENTRY PARTNERSHIP

In a similar program, the Maryland Reentry Partnership, funded by a federal grant, provides an example of the complementary and supplementary relationship between a nonprofit organization and the prison system. Comparable to CSOSA's program, offenders are matched with community-based service providers before and after release. Transitional housing needs, vocational and education training and counseling are elements to the Partnership. The program has a 70% success rate of prisoners not returning to the correction system (Reentry National Media Outreach, 2006). U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski from Maryland (2005) points out that the program also saves money. The Maryland Reentry Partnership costs \$3,000 per participant. Compared to the \$25,000 spent per prisoner each year, the investment is well worth it (p. 1). Programs such as this can be found in cities throughout the country such as New York, San Francisco, San Antonio and Savannah (Reentry National Media Outreach, 2006). The model used by the Maryland Reentry Partnership is one that addresses prisoner reentry problems at an individual, community and local level. The community provides services but state corrections agencies participate by coordinating services and sharing information (Urban Justice Center, 2000).

POLICY OBSERVATIONS

Several conclusions can be drawn from the case studies of Fort Wayne Weed and Seed, Ready4Work, CSOSA and Maryland Reentry program. All four programs have proven to be successful regardless of the difference in how the government complements or supplements the faith-based organization. It appears, then, that both complementary and supplementary relationships are needed. Following are four observations about faith-based/government partnerships in the area of prison reform.

Faith-Based/Government Partnerships Are a Natural Partner

These case studies show that collaboration does have many benefits. In each situation, the government or the faith-based community could not exclusively solve the issue of recidivism. It can also be suggested that the nonprofit sector and faith-based community is the most logical fit for many prisoner reentry efforts, especially considering that many faith-based organizations offer existing social services. According to Chavez (2002, p. 290), 58% of congregations currently offer social services ranging from food-related projects to education. Many offer programs that assist with housing, job training, mentoring and clothing distribution—all necessities for successful integration. They already have the foundation to offer services to the ex-offender population.

Even if their services are not specially designed for ex-offenders, ex-offenders can utilize them to meet their needs.

Moreover, successful reentry for ex-offenders is an arduous task requiring a unique level of support. For example, mentoring program such as those in the CSOSA's program will include assistance with issues such as securing housing and finding employment. In addition to these necessities, those studying the issue have learned that ex-offenders need an extra level of support—the kind of support that includes accountability to refrain from substance abuse and guidance to maintain emotional and mental stability. For these reasons, partnerships with faith-based organizations seem sensible. The faith-based community has much experience with offering such guidance and is presently involved with many social welfare endeavors. Equally important, faith-based organizations are open and willing to help individuals regardless of their background. Unlike many government agencies, oftentimes churches know their neighborhoods well and are willing to take a more holistic approach to rehabilitation (Earley, 2005).

Berger and Neunhaus (1977) refer to this concept by calling the faith-based organizations mediating structures. The organizations help bridge the gap between public and private life. The case studies exemplify the role that community organizations can have in influencing public good. They also acknowledge that government and public policy does not always meet realistic needs. Ex-offenders need more than just incarceration to change and become profitable members of society.

Government Must Have A More Significant Role

Another observation is that the role of the government in prison reform may vary depending on the need and resources of a community. Yet, one concept is clear—ultimately, the government must play the most significant role in developing better policies for prison reform. While the faith-based community can advocate and collaborate, it does not hold the power to change the system entirely. The government needs to take larger steps in addressing the problem. As budget cuts continue to be made in corrections agencies across the nation, the problem is only being magnified. If the estimates are correct that in just four years, 1.2 millions prisoners (Basile, 2002, p. 1) will be released each year, then our country is on the brink of a major challenge, if not disaster. To counteract this, something has to be done on a local, state and federal level.

Programs such as Fort Wayne's Weed and Seed provide an impressive example of what can be done locally. However, at this point, the majority of legislation is being passed at a state or federal level. For example, the State of Illinois passed Public Act 094-1067 on August 1, 2006. The Act provides many benefits to reentry such as tax credits to employees that hire ex-offenders; it allows the Department of Corrections the opportunity to provide pre-release training and encourages agencies involved in state contracts to hire ex-offenders

(Safer Foundation, 2006). On the federal level, the Ready4Work program provides the best example of a large scale approach.

Because little coherence exists at the local, state and federal level, problems are occurring which need to be addressed to truly have a significant impact on policy. The more communities that develop programs, the more likely the state and federal government will be involved. For instance, if the CSOSA partnership continues to be successful, it will gain the recognition of other cities and states. Even the President's Initiative was conceived to mimic an already successful and existing program. But more needs to be done to build capacities for prison reform as a whole since the problem of recidivism and prison/jail overcrowding occurs at all levels. It also creates financial burdens to many communities, highlighting the need for more diverse funding options and resources. It is an important issue and if programs such as Weed and Seed, CSOSA and Maryland's Reentry Partnership go unsupported or collapse, the rates of recidivism and crime will only continue to rise and hinder public good.

The government also has to develop alternatives to the faith-based collaborative model. For example, the CSOSA partnership may not be well accepted from the ex-offender population and CSOSA should not assume that every individual will feel comfortable or be responsive in a religious setting. The Charitable Choice Bill suggests that individuals should be allowed to choose between service providers that are religiously affiliated and those that do not have any religious affiliation (Wuthnow, 1999). Ex-offenders should be given alternatives to religiously affiliated organizations when seeking services such as mentoring. The Bill permits use of federal funds for faith-based organizations to provide social services to the community and prohibits use of federal funds for religious purposes (Wuthnow, 1999). The nature of the ex-offender program may make it difficult to draw a clear distinction between religious and non-religious purposes since rehabilitation involves emotional, spiritual and mental support.

Adversarial Relationships are Needed

The case studies explore complementary and supplementary relationships, but neglect to investigate adversarial relationships. As Young (Boris & Steuerle, 1999) would describe them, adversarial relationships often attempt to influence. It has been established that faith-based organizations have the potential to reduce recidivism and also that the government must play a critic role. Now, each partner must learn to stimulate and persuade the other partner.

As a former Virginia Senator and Attorney General, the Honorable Mark L. Earley is very familiar with the criminal justice system and calls the faith-based community to play an active role. He feels the system is broken and is ashamed of the rates of recidivism and crime in America. He says:

A blossoming of primary faith-based efforts, at both the national and local levels, are leading thousands of volunteers in local churches to become

involved in the lives of prisoner both in prison and as they reenter society... Bureaucrats cannot deliver prisoner rehabilitation and reentry efforts. For starters, it is anything but a 9 to 5 job. Instead, such efforts must be delivered through a community of loving relationships that are patient, nurturing, sacrificial, holistic, and able to sustain a genuine long-term commitment to the welfare of prisoners and ex-prisoners. These efforts must be administered by those who believe that darkness can be overcome by light, evil by good, despair by hope and addiction by freedom. (2005, p. 2, 58).

Pleas like Earley's and the overwhelming statistics on recidivism suggest that the faith-based nonprofit community needs to continue the work it has begun and increase collaboration between the faith-based community and government. An avenue to do this is advocacy. Joe Walker of Grand Rapids, Michigan has been volunteering for three years at the Richard A. Handlon Michigan Training Unit in Ionia, Michigan where he leads a Bible study for prisoners. Walker's experience has led him to believe that more advocacy is needed by the faith-based community. Referring to the involvement of the Catholic Church he suggests:

The Catholic faith-based groups should focus more on advocacy. The faith-based communities should advocate that prisoners possess State ID cards, Social Security cards, Bridge cards, and birth certificates upon release. Faith-based communities should also advocate for ex-offenders' transportation from prison to inexpensive, safe housing near soup kitchens and/or food pantries. Advocacy should aim at providing Catholic ex-offenders contacts with nearby Catholic ministries, as well as out-placement assistance in seeking employment before and upon their release. (J. Walker, personal communication, November 28, 2006).

Walker recognizes that prisoner reentry is not currently a top priority of leaders in the faith-based community. Jude Granstrom, Diocesan Director of Prison/Jail Ministries in Grand Rapids agrees: "Working with offenders is a hard sell even to the faith-based. I believe pastors could help significantly by calling people to step up to the plate and establishing social justice committees." (J. Granstrom, personal interview, November 29, 2006). Yet, it is battle Walker, Granstrom and churches such as those mentioned in the case studies, is willing to fight.

Increased Awareness is Necessary

As part of the advocacy process, the public must become aware of the problem of recidivism and failed prison reform. One of the first steps needed to improve the reentry process is to educate society on the effects of prisoners integrating back into communities. Understandably, community members may be more concerned with their own well-being than the well-being of a released offender. But many of these individuals may fail to understand the severity of the problem. Even if one cares little about the well-being of the ex-offender, the

fact is that many tax dollars are fed into the prison system each year and crime is occurring in many communities. Rather than the media focusing on how much prison costs us each year, journalists could take the story a step further and present the consequences of the underlying problem. This is the job of both the government and the nonprofit community.

Increased awareness is also needed so that faith-based organizations understand their options better. According to Chavez (2002), only three percent of congregations in America take advantage of federal funds under the Charitable Choice Bill. The case studies and the programs mentioned in this analysis suggest that faith-based organizations are a natural avenue for reentry programs due to their holistic approach and understanding of the population. The impact of more congregations utilizing these funds for reentry programs could be enormous and consequently, more effort is needed to persuade congregations to participate in the Charitable Choice funds.

Collaboration Can Be Challenging

Faith-based partnerships reap significant benefits, but they do not come without challenges. Common obstacles may include liability, lack of coordination and funding. Consider again the CSOSA partnership program. Who is liable for the success rate of the program? Is the faith-based organization or CSOSA? It is certainly in the interest of CSOSA to promote programs that are effective at reducing crime. Taxpayers would be more content, government agencies would respect CSOSA more and additional revenue could be directed to the District of Columbia. Faith-based organizations, on the other hand, would likely appreciate the credit for success but would not find as many benefits. However, community recognition and congregational support are always welcomed and provide a form of accountability.

In the case of the CSOSA partnership, the government appears to provide little accountability to the churches and synagogues involved. Blame for failures in the program could certainly be passed to both parties. Faith-based organizations such as those working with the CSOSA typically have limited resources. The government could easily be criticized for not supporting the organizations enough or failing to provide them with necessary means to achieve their end goals. An assessment of the Ready4Work program reveals that the program is most effective when the responsibilities of each partner are clearly established (Jucovy, 2006).

Lack of coordination is also a problem. While government correctional facilities often allow faith-based organizations to come to their facilities, the collaboration is not always seamless. Joe Walker describes his experience as a volunteer in a faith-based program:

The prison administration provides our Catholic Diocese and other volunteers with moral suasion about our roles in reducing recidivism. On the other hand, they admit that there is no money available to them to facilitate our

efforts to reduce recidivism. One obstacle we face is the close, time-consuming scrutiny involved in getting relevant videos, books, and/or CD's, rosaries, etc. approved so we can show or give them to prisoners. If a prisoner were found after class with any printed materials I were to hand out, he would be disciplined, and I most probably would be forever banned by MDOC. [Michigan Department of Corrections] (J. Walker, personal interview, November 28, 2006).

Walker's experience suggests that faith-based organizations and the government do not always complement each other. The prison administrators identify the benefits of Walker's Bible study but do little to assist him in making the process of facilitating it easier. Walker explains the process of entering the jail as arduous. First, he must undergo a series of questions and searches. Once there, his prisoner attendees must also undergo scrutiny and endure searches.

As Walker notes, funding is always an issue in prison reform. The Department of Correction even admits that the government is not providing needed funding. Earley (2005) notes that when government cuts have to be made, correctional budgets are typically the first to be affected since they are perceived to be of low priority by the public. While he believes the work needs to be done at the faith-based community level, he does feel the government should play a role in funding the initiative.

CONCLUSION

Across America, prisons are becoming overcrowded and costing millions of dollars to operate. According to Regina Schofield, Assistant Attorney General in the U.S. Department of Justice (2006, p. 1), approximately 650,000 prisoners are being released annually. In the near future, this amount is expected to rise to 1.2 million prisoners per year. As these individuals attempt to return to their communities, they are faced with insurmountable challenges such as employment seeking, segregation into low-income communities and public scrutiny.

The government has recognized the problem and has made several attempts to address the issue. Realizing its inability to properly rehabilitate and prepare individuals for assimilation into their communities, the government has called upon the nonprofit sector, primarily faith-based organizations, to be partners in this aspect of prison reform.

Using a collaborative model, numerous cities and states have established reentry programs. Many of these programs utilize the faith-based community as the foundation of their initiatives. Fort Wayne's Weed and Seed, the federal government's Ready4Work program, the CSOSA and the Maryland Reentry Program exemplify reentry programs that collaborate with the government to successfully reduce recidivism and improve communities. Within

the collaborative relationship, complementary and supplementary relationships occur, both exclusively and simultaneously.

The four programs in the analysis reflect several findings. Most importantly, the faith-based/government model of prisoner reentry appears to be successfully working. Yet, despite the need for the faith-based community to be involved, the government must remain the driving force beyond the effort. Consequently, more awareness is needed on the topic and the two sectors must improve components of their relationship. Lastly, one must recognize that these partnerships do not come without challenges such as liability, lack of cooperation and inadequate funding.

Faith-based partnerships with the government are indeed an improvement to status quo. Statistics clearly demonstrate that individuals participating in reentry programs have a lesser chance of going back to prison or committing crimes. They also are more likely to obtain employment and experience stability on a variety of levels. The partnerships are also building evidence that there is a better way of conducting prison reform. While punishment is inevitable for those that commit crimes, more resources should be offered to the criminals not only for their benefit, but for the benefit of greater society. When a criminal is sentenced to prison, little is being done to assure that after their punishment, the individual will not commit more crimes or create greater burdens on their communities. Unintended harms are plaguing the country as large numbers of individuals go in and out of the prison systems. Thankfully, faith-based partnerships offer an alternative to this vicious cycle.

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APPENDIX 1

The President's Reentry Initiative follows the model below:

Phase 1-Protect and Prepare: Institution-Based Programs. These programs are designed to prepare offenders to reenter society. Services provided in this phase include education, mental health and substance abuse treatment, job training, mentoring, and full diagnostic and risk assessment.

Phase 2-Control and Restore: Community-Based Transition Programs. These programs work with offenders prior to and immediately following their release from correctional institutions. Services provided in this phase include, as appropriate, education, monitoring, mentoring, life-skills training, assessment, job-skills development, and mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Phase 3-Sustain and Support: Community-Based Long-Term Support Programs. These programs connect individuals who have left the supervision of the justice system with a network of social services agencies and community-based organizations to provide ongoing services and mentoring relationships.

Source: Copied directly from <http://www.reentry.gov/learn.html>

APPENDIX 2

Ready4Work Adult Sites

Chicago: The SAFER Foundation

Secular nonprofit

Detroit: America Works

For-profit, in collaboration with Hartford Memorial Church

Houston: Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church and InnerChange Freedom Initiative

Faith-based nonprofit

Jacksonville: Operation New Hope

Faith-based, nonprofit community-development corporation

Los Angeles: Union Rescue Mission

Faith-based nonprofit

Memphis: The City of Memphis, Second Chance Ex-Felon Program

City program

Milwaukee: Holy Cathedral/Word of Hope Ministries

Faith-based nonprofit

New York: Exodus Transitional Community

Faith-based nonprofit

Oakland: Allen Temple Housing and Economic Development Corporation

Faith-based nonprofit

Philadelphia: Search for Common Ground

Secular international nonprofit

Washington DC: East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership

Faith-based nonprofit

Ready4Work Juvenile Sites

Boston: Straight Ahead Ministries

Faith-based nonprofit

Brooklyn: Girls Reentry Assistance and Support

Secular public agency

Camden: Volunteers of America Delaware Valley

Faith-based nonprofit

Houston: Greater St. Paul Community Development Corporation

Faith-based nonprofit

Los Angeles: LA Ten-Point Coalition

Faith-based nonprofit

Seattle: Church Council of Greater Seattle

Faith-based nonprofit