



the NATIONAL REENTRY
RESOURCE CENTER

— *A project of the CSG Justice Center* —

Learning From People Who Succeed Upon Release: Strategies, Approaches and Tools That Can Make A Difference

Brought to you by the National Reentry Resource Center and the
Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice

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Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Open Society Institute



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www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org

- The resource center is continually updating its website with materials relevant to the reentry field.
- Sign up for the monthly NRRC newsletter to receive news about upcoming distance learning and funding opportunities.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the National Reentry Resource Center. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Home, About, Library, Topics, Training & TA, Reentry Facts, and What Works. A search bar is located in the top right. The main content area features a welcome message, a 'What's New?' section with several news items, and a 'Popular Topics' section. A sidebar on the left contains sections for 'Audiences' and 'Tools & Resources'. The footer includes the BJA logo and the text 'Bureau of Justice Assistance U.S. Department of Justice'.

Speaker

- Kathleen Gnall
Independent Criminal Justice Consultant

Background in strategic planning, performance measurement, research and evaluation, criminal justice policy and program development and implementation. Spent 17 years with PA Department of Corrections in multiple positions including the Deputy Secretary for Specialized Programs and Reentry.

Presentation Overview

- Part One: Reasons For Optimism
 - We continue to learn: the body of knowledge is growing.
 - We are more focused on application.
 - We are innovators. Policing. Crime ↓. Partnerships.
 - We are committed to change. We find the current circumstances unacceptable and will use our collective problem-solving abilities to make our communities safer and healthier and to improve the lives of individuals.
 - *Nothing Great Was Ever Achieved Without Enthusiasm.*
Emerson

Presentation Overview

- Part Two: Suggestions for adopting organizational strategies informed by evaluation findings, practitioners, and those who have transitioned successfully.



Presentation Overview

- Specific Topics for Review.
 - Maximizing opportunities for positive change. The concept of legitimacy.
 - Readiness for change. What are we asking offenders to do?
 - The RNR Model.
 - Motivation. Internal/external control.

Presentation Overview

- Examining some characteristics which distinguish successes from those who return to incarceration.
 - Expectations.
 - Identifying triggers for the individual; personalizing strategies (people, places, things).
 - Coping skills.
- What do Ex-Offenders Say?
 - The power of informal social controls.
 - Adopting a family focused – strength based approach.



The Time Is Now

- We all know the statistics about our country's criminal justice system:
 - U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world. The U.S. has 5 percent of the world's population, but 25 percent of the world's prisoners.
 - One in 31 American adults is under correctional supervision. Disproportionate impact to young men of color from a small number of urban neighborhoods.
 - An African American man has a 30 percent lifetime probability of spending at least one year in prison.

The Time Is Now

- Tremendous growth in the number of prisons, the number of prison inmates, the total dollars and the percentage of state tax dollars spent on prisons and corrections in general over the last several decades.
- According to a 2009 report released by the Vera Institute of Justice, the U.S. spends 50 billion dollars or 1 in every 15 general fund dollars on corrections.
- The high, and virtually unchanged, failure rates of offenders reentering communities from prisons and jails.

There Are Reasons To Be Optimistic

- The U.S. crime rate continues to decline. At the same time, the number of people under correctional supervision is decreasing.
- Several states have already closed prisons and more are expected to close.
- We know more about what works, what doesn't and under what circumstances.
- Commitment to Science, Evidence-Informed Perspective.
- More and better practitioner-friendly resources, technical assistance.
- Inter-disciplinary approach. Learning from others who have tackled huge public policy challenges and made a dent. (e.g. medical community.)

We Can Do Better and We are Committed To Doing So

- TRANSLATIONAL CRIMINOLOGY. Applied research. Academic/Practitioner Partnerships.
- We are better at collaborating across agencies, disciplines and levels. Still, it's hard work.
- **Necessity is the Mother of Invention.** Multi-disciplinary, problem solving approach. Blended Funding.
- Better data systems and in some cases, better data. More sophisticated analyses focused on application.

When written in Chinese, the word “crisis” is composed of two characters – one represents danger, and the other represents opportunity. J. F. Kennedy

We Can Do Better and We are Committed To Doing So

- Advances in technology which give us more tools to include in the box. Some examples: electronic monitoring, GPS, kiosks, SCRAM bracelets, ignition interlock.
- Public opinion polls show Americans overwhelmingly support rehabilitative efforts and alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders.

An Expert's Viewpoint

- Future: Community Focus for Solutions.
- We've Been Here Before. Joan Petersilia's [keynote](#) at the National Institute of Justice 2012 research conference.
- Cautions:
 - Economy.
 - Reduced resources for community organizations addressing offender needs.
 - Prioritization of Populations.
- Danger in being swept away by latest trends and expecting massive change in outcomes overnight.

Moving Forward

- We Need to Know What We Don't Know.
 - Faye Taxman, George Mason University. Review of Community Corrections. Contacts Between Officers and probationers/parolees.
- Careful not to Overpromise and Under-deliver.
- Smart. Balanced. Engaged.
 - No Single Solution.
 - Commitment to strategic, collaborative planning and execution.
 - Transparency. Clear Documentation of theory, assumptions, methods.
 - Attention to fidelity in implementation. Weeds in the Garden .
 - Careful study of process and outcome.
 - Share Results. “Daring To Fail.”

Context for Change

- Importance of clarifying core individual and organizational values.
- Compromise/consensus necessary and important part of enacting public policy.
 - Make room for varying points of view at the (round) table.
 - Freedom to express ideas.
 - Dissension/tension is healthy and results in better policy.
 - Checks/balances.
 - Focus on the “Greater Good,” deter future criminal behavior, fewer victims.
 - Both end and means matter.

Context For Change



- Legitimacy.
 - Collaborative.
 - Fair.
 - Even-handed.
 - Increases Based on Positive Personal Experiences.
 - What We Say Matters. What We Do Matters More.
 - Transparent. No “Gotcha.” Clear. Consistent.
 - Prisons run with the consent of inmates.
 - Think About Social Learning Theory. Offenders are paying attention to whether we do what we say we will do. Are we the “real deal?”



Legitimacy

- Select successful strategies based on clear communication of expectations, careful and consistent monitoring and most especially following through with promise of punishment/reward.
 - H.O.P.E.,
 - 24/7 Sobriety
 - The Chicago Project Safe Neighborhoods
 - The Boston Reentry Initiative
 - Baltimore’s Reentry Partnership

An Offender's View: What Are We Asking?

- Key *Criminogenic* Needs Targeted For Change
 - Attitudes, Beliefs, Values.
 - Associates (Friends and Family).
 - Impulsivity. Restlessness – aggression, hostility, especially toward authority.
- In many cases, what we are saying is that an offender needs to change most everything about him/herself; what he/she thinks, how he/she thinks, who he/she spends time with, how he/she spends time.

Individual Change is Difficult, but Not Impossible

- Think about changing just one significant aspect of your life (e.g. quitting smoking, getting more exercise, losing weight.)
- How Do Organizations Support/Encourage Change?
 - Leadership. Vision: Focus on preparing offenders to live law-abiding lives.
 - Hire and retain professionals with attitudes and skills supportive of creating opportunities for change.
 - Organizational responsiveness.

Supporting Positive Change

- Invest in high-quality training, observe interactions between staff and offenders, model behavior. In short, create a learning environment – “laboratory.”
- It is easy to get discouraged. Talk and walk.
- Realize that while the ultimate goal is no more criminal activity, change is a process.
- Understand the desistance process. Is criminal activity becoming less frequent? Less serious?
- Reward staff doing good work.

The RNR Model

- Research on Models of Supervision indicates that the Risk- Need- Responsivity (RNR) Model makes the most impact on offender outcomes.
- A 2011 study by the Washington Institute for Public Policy, found that the RNR model approach achieves a 16 percent reduction in recidivism.
- In the RNR Model:
 - Staff serve to manage offender behavior.
 - Developing rapport with offender is critical. Excellent communication skills required.
 - Assessment of Risk and Need first step.

The RNR Model

- Offender must be partner in identifying triggers (People, Places, Things), and developing individual plan.
- Clear expectations outlined in behavioral contract.
- Rewards for compliance. Sanctions for failure to comply.
- Motivational Interviewing Often Used. Based on where offender is in stages of change.
- The integrated case plan is the backbone in this approach.
- Every interaction with an offender is an opportunity to teach, listen and learn.

Other Tools



- One size doesn't fit all.
- One approach doesn't fit all.
- Many tools needed. The challenge is in figuring out which one is best for the job at hand.
- If fostering desire for change and an internal focus isn't working, external controls are available.
- Especially for the very high risk, the goal may be "containment" as opposed to change. Protecting other people.
- An argument can be made for trying deterrence approaches first and allowing for "self-selection" into treatment.
- What we can observe and measure is behavior.

Lessons From Ex-Offenders

- Those who did better on release:
 - Had more reasonable expectations of the challenges of staying sober, re-engaging with family, finding and keeping a job,
 - **AND** had very specific strategies that they planned to use to address their triggers.
 - More Advanced Coping Skills.
- Those who returned to prison:
 - More likely to say “the world is against me,”
 - Had unrealistic expectation – no aspect of reentry will be difficult.
- For excellent discussion See Urban Institute Justice Policy Center series on *Returning Home, Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative* and Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Parole Violator Study.

What Do Ex-Offenders Say?

- In surveys, interviews, focus groups, research study findings, ex-offenders often point to a person/people who “cared, ” could be trusted, as a major factor in their success.
- Research findings showcase the importance of “informal social controls” such as friends and family.
- While we invest heavily in “formal controls” such as police, probation, and the judiciary, evidence indicates their influence is small compared to that of informal social controls.

Informal Social Controls

- Harnessing power of community.
- Mentors from faith and civic organizations.
- Businesses.
- The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates



Family, Strength-Based Approach

- Vera Institute Family Justice Program built on *La Bodega de la Familia*.
 - Family broadly defined.
 - Builds from identifying strengths of offender and family as opposed to starting from needs.
 - Recognizes Connectedness.
 - In surveys, people who say they are happy and fulfilled consistently point to the importance of relationships in their lives.
 - Many tools available (Relational Inquiry Tool, Ecomap, Genodome).

Family, Strength-Based Approach

- Coaching Packet
[Engaging Offender Families in Reentry](#) edited by the Center for Effective Public Policy.
- Undoubtedly, there are challenges in maintaining family connections during incarceration. May not be appropriate or even possible in every case:
 - Virtual visitation.
 - Phone calls, letters, subsidized busing.

What Do Offenders Say They Need

Responses from offenders involved in SVORI Project before release from prison		
	Men	Women
Education	94%	95%
Job	80%	83%
Driver's License	83%	82%
Access to Clothing/ Food	60%	76%
Mentor	60%	83%
AOD Treatment	37%	66%

Source: Urban Institute publications. Men: Lattimore, Visher and Steffy (2009). Women Lindquist, Barrick, Lattimore and Visher (2009).

Community Factors

- Offenders come from and return to a relatively small number of urban neighborhoods characterized by high crime rates, high rates of unemployment, low property values.
- Residents of these neighborhoods generally have less education, fewer job skills, lower income levels (poverty rate), poorer health and less work history than residents of higher socioeconomic neighborhoods.
- The demand for supports and services exceeds the supply. The supports and services are often not located in neighborhoods.

Suggestions for All of Us

- Be Champions for Equality, Justice, Respect, Value.
- Stay informed.
- Educate.
- Support partnerships and high quality research.
- Harness the power of community to engage in collective problem solving.
- Have high-standards, pursue goals relentlessly.

NEVER EVER
EVER
GIVE UP!



Closing Thoughts

- You must be the change you wish to see in the world.
Mahatma Ghandi
- There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because his conscience tells him it is right....**Martin Luther**
- Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.
Thomas Jefferson

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Contact Information

- Content questions about this webinar should be directed to:

Kathleen Gnall

38 Sycamore Dr.

Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

717-795-1753

Kathy.gnall@gmail.com



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(646) 383-5721

www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org

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