

Prisoner Reentry: Taking Stock and Moving Forward



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States Sentencing
Commission Symposium on
Alternatives to Incarceration

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Presentation Overview

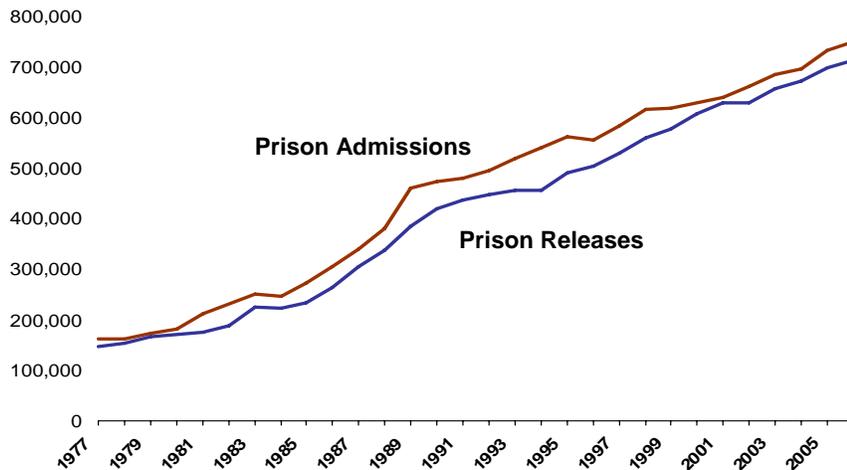
- Reentry – scope of the problem
- Reasons for optimism
 - Growing knowledge base
 - Public opinion supports reentry
 - Ex-offender attitudes are positive
 - Substantial reentry activity
- Taking stock and moving forward
- Resources for the field

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713,000 People Released from Prisons in 2006

Sentenced Prisoners Admitted and Released from Federal and State Prison, 1977-2006



Source: The Urban Institute, 2007. Based on BJS National Prisoner Statistics.

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Prisoner Reentry: Magnitude of Problem

- > 700,000 leaving state and federal prisons annually
- 12 **million** leaving local jails
- Costs are substantial
 - Recidivism rates – 2/3 rearrested; 1/2 reincarcerated
 - Fiscal - \$60B on corrections
 - Social – public health, homelessness, social fabric

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Individual Challenges are Substantial

Substance Use is high

Unemployment is high, wages are low

Health is worse than general population

Housing is unstable and uncertain

- high prevalence of problems
- some in-prison interventions
- evidence of intervention effectiveness
- few linkages to community services

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Reentry Impacts Families and Communities

- 1.5 million children have a parent in prison
 - 2% of all minor children (<18 yrs)
 - 7% of African-American children
- 7.3 million children have a parent involved in the criminal justice system
 - 10% of all minor children
- Returning prisoners are concentrated in a few already disadvantaged communities

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The Big Question

What can we do to increase the odds that individuals will not reoffend and will be more likely to work, stay sober, support their families, pay taxes, and be productive members of society?

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Reason for Optimism #1: Growing Knowledge Base

Reentry programs should:

- Take place mostly in community vs prison
- Intensive (at least 6 months)
- Focused on high-risk individuals
- Use cognitive-behavioral treatment techniques
- Match therapist and program to learning styles of individual
- Provide vocational training and job enhancing opportunities
- Provide more positive reinforcers than negative

Petersilia 2004

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Reason for Optimism #1: Growing Knowledge Base

Programs that adhere to characteristics = cost-effective

- See WSIPP report “Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates”
- Findings
 - Some programs reduce crime, some don’t
 - Most of the successful programs produce favorable returns on investment
 - Public policies incorporating options can positively impact prison construction needs, state and local CJ costs, and crime rates

Aos et al, 2006

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Reason for Optimism #1: Growing Knowledge Base

Cautions

- No one “magic bullet” program
- Reductions in recidivism aren’t as big as we’d like, and don’t last for as long as we’d like (5-15%)
- Limited by evaluations of “programs” not “strategies”
- Comprehensive, collaborative strategies may be our best hope, yet to date they are untested
- SVORI findings will help fill gap

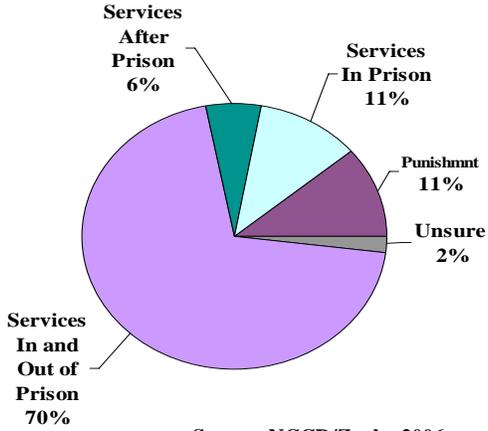
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Reason for Optimism #2: Voting Public Supportive of Reentry Planning

- 2006 NCCD/Zogby poll of 1000 U.S. voters
- 80% concerned or fearful about returning prisoners
- 87% believe prisons should attempt to rehabilitate inmates
- 20% think “once a criminal always a criminal”

What would you prefer the state implement?



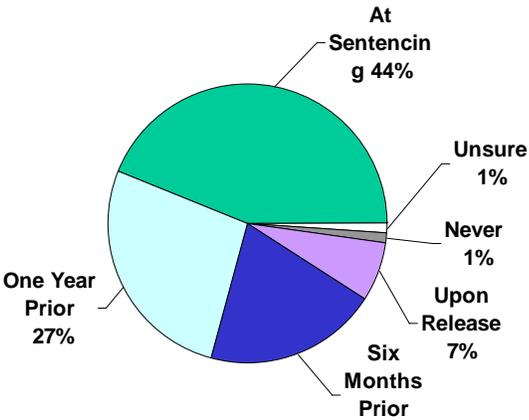
Source: NCCD/Zogby 2006

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Reason for Optimism #2: Voting Public Supportive of Reentry Planning

When Should Planning Begin?



Source: NCCD/Zogby 2006

- Lack of life skills, prison experience, and obstacles to reentry thought major factors in the rearrest rates.
- Job training, drug treatment, mental health services, family support, mentoring, and housing = “very important” services that should be offered

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Reason for Optimism #3: Ex-Offenders Released with Surprisingly Positive Attitudes

Vast Majority:

- Expect and receive support from families
- Will give up friends/hangouts that lead to trouble
- Report high spirituality
- Report excellent or good health
- Think they will not use drugs after release
- Want help finding job
- Think PO will be helpful

Double edged sword

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Reason for Optimism #4: National Momentum

Broad-based and Bi-Partisan

- **Federal** – SVORI, PRI, TPC, FBCI, 2nd Chance Act
- **State** – Re-Entry Policy Council, NGA Reentry Policy Academy, Justice Reinvestment, PCT PSPP
- **City/County** – USCOM, NACo, mayoral appointees/initiatives, police chief interest, local jail focus
- **Neighborhood** – Weed and Seed, PSN, Reentry Mapping Network, local reentry roundtables

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Taking Stock and Moving Forward

- Problem is large-scale and complex
- Knowledge base is growing
- Bi-partisan support
- Reentry activity widespread - business-as-usual is changing
- Level of implementation not there yet
- Hard to scale up and make a big impact in short time frame
- Need sustained effort to make lasting change

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Reentry and Sentencing

- Reentry embraced b/c NOT connected to sentencing
 - Starting point “they all come back”
 - Use time in prison and after to prepare for reentry
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- NOW - pressure on budgets, ready to consider sentencing reform?
 - Can we simultaneously hold people accountable in community [for part sentence]; protect public; rehabilitate; repair harm; save \$??

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References

- **What Works** in Prisoner Reentry? Reviewing and Questioning the Evidence. (Petersilia, 2004)
http://www.uscourts.gov/fedprob/September_2004/whatworks.html
- **Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates.** (Aos et al, 2006)
<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/pub.asp?docid=06-10-1201>
- **NCCD/Zogby poll** on attitudes towards reentry
http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/2006april_focus_zogby.pdf
- **SVORI Evaluation** website <http://www.svori-evaluation.org>

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Select Resources

- **Urban Institute** <http://www.urban.org>
- **Re-Entry Policy Council** <http://www.reentrypolicy.org/>
- **NGA Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy** www.nga.org
- **National Institute of Corrections** <http://www.nicic.org/>
- **Department of Justice** <http://www.reentry.gov/>
- **Public/Private Ventures** <http://www.ppv.org>
- **Department of Labor** <http://www.dol.gov/cfbci/pri-resources.htm>
- **Reentry Media National Outreach Campaign**
<http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org>
- **John Jay College Prisoner Reentry Institute**
<http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/centersinstitutes/pri/x.asp>
- **MORE!**

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URBAN INSTITUTE
Justice Policy Center

**For more information on prisoner reentry, please
visit the Urban Institute website at:
<http://www.urban.org>**

**To receive monthly email updates of JPC research,
send an email to jpc@ui.urban.org**



Themes and Implications

- Prisoners are optimistic about their futures
- Moment of release = moment of opportunity
- Family support plays a huge role
 - Support networks should be tapped and expanded
- Substance abuse → high need, often unmet
- Employment → most without stable job, need assistance
- Neighborhoods and peers → complicated story
- Positive attitude toward POs and want help with their transition
- DOCs and communities making strides, but ways to go

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What is Prisoner Reentry?

Prisoner reentry is the process of leaving prison or jail and returning to society. Nearly all prisoners experience reentry irrespective of their method of release or form of supervision, if any.

Reentry is not a program, not a form of supervision, not an option.

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What to Make of All the “Momentum”

**Few evaluations to date. SVORI findings a proxy.*

SVORI findings to date – the good news:

- All sites/states operational
- Coalitions in tact and delivering wide range of services
- SVORI participants > services than non-SVORI
- SVORI participants doing better across range of outcomes
- Most sites plan to continue and even expand

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What to Make of All the “Momentum”

SVORI findings to date – word of caution:

- While service levels are higher, *far* short of 100%,
- Program size small
- Outcomes positive but moderate

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