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*Engaging the Community
In Offender Reentry*

About This Series of Papers on RPI

The Office of Justice Programs of the federal Department of Justice has developed a series of system-wide reentry initiatives that focus on reducing the recidivism of offenders. The initiatives include: 1) Reentry Partnership Initiatives (RPI) which includes formation of a partnership between criminal justice, social service, and community groups to develop and implement a reentry process; 2) Reentry Courts which are modified drug courts that focused on the ex-inmate; and 3) Weed and Seed-based reentry partnerships. The RPI and Reentry Courts are demonstration efforts that do not include any funding for programming; OJP has provided technical assistance to the eight RPI sites and nine Reentry Court sites. The eight RPI sites include: Baltimore, Maryland; Burlington, Vermont; Columbia, South Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; Lake City, Florida; Las Vegas, Nevada; Lowell, Massachusetts; and Spokane, Washington. This paper is part of a series on system efforts to address the problem of offenders returning to communities after periods of incarceration.

This series is the result of a formative evaluation of the Reentry Partnership Initiative (RPI) conducted by the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) at the University of Maryland, College Park. The evaluation was conducted to examine how the eight demonstration sites pursued the implementation of RPI, with a focus on the organizational development across agencies to construct new offender reentry processes. BGR used qualitative research methods, including interviews, focus groups, network analysis surveys of stakeholders, and review of documents, to measure the fidelity of the implementation during the early stage of the RPI process. Many of the sites devoted their efforts to one component given the complex multi-faceted aspects of the offender processing issues. In fact, many of the sites found that the

development of the interagency approach fostered new discussions in areas that had long been considered “off-limits” or limited opportunities including: targeting offenders for services, overcoming societal barriers to reentry, envisioning roles and responsibilities of key agencies and staff, and using of informal social controls along with formal criminal justice agencies. The reports provide an overview of complex organizational challenges that underscore new offender processes. To that end, this series of papers reports on the conceptual framework that the Office of Justice Programs envisioned and the issues that the RPI sites encountered as they began to implement the new model. The papers are part of a series devoted to this end that includes:

- From Prison Safety to Public Safety: Innovations in Offender Reentry
- Emerging Roles and Responsibilities in the Reentry Partnership Initiative: New Ways of Doing Business
- Engaging the Community in Offender Reentry
- Offender’s Views of Reentry: Implications for Processes, Programs, and Services
- Targeting for Reentry: Matching Needs and Services to Maximize Public Safety.

The project team included Dr. Faye S. Taxman, Mr. Douglas Young, Dr. James Byrne, Dr. Alexander Holsinger, Dr. Donald Anspach, Ms. Meridith Thanner, and Ms. Rebecca Silverman. We wish to thank and acknowledge the RPI sites and their staff for sharing their experiences with us and acknowledge their tremendous efforts to craft new processes. We would also like to thank our National Institute of Justice program manager, Ms. Janice Munsterman, for her guidance in producing these series of papers.

Introduction and Overview

People who have devoted their careers to community corrections often at first find the growing interest in offender reentry unsettling. Certainly they're right that "reentry" is simply a new—or at least newly fashionable—label for a process that is very old. They're probably also right that the new interest could usefully coalesce around long-standing initiatives that have lost momentum, such as intermediate sanctions. But community corrections practitioners who have taken a longer look at the recent reframing of offender reentry acknowledge that it can potentially spur important advances and opportunities. In states that have focused in the past almost exclusively on more punishment for offenders under community supervision, some policymakers have come to acknowledge that extending treatment or other needed services can aid reintegration and reduce the odds of failure. Other benefits of the renewed interest include fresh opportunities to achieve a long sought, but largely unrealized goal of many in community corrections—to engage the community in the reentry process.

Reentry initiatives have created roles for boards or panels that include citizen representatives, or for individuals—family members, guardians, community advocates—who serve on teams that help manage the process of transition from prison and community reintegration. This paper describes the efforts of the OJP-supported Reentry Partnership Initiatives (RPIs) to establish a collaborative role for communities. Lessons learned in designing and implementing the community base of the RPIs, observed in our national, NIJ-sponsored process evaluation of these eight programs, are interwoven in the discussion. As background, we first consider how reentry partnerships fit within the evolving landscape of community justice. We also discuss why it is important to involve the community and who comprises or represents the community in the context of offender reentry.

A. The Community Factor

Reentry Partnerships, Community Justice, and Public Safety. Looking to the community as the vehicle for addressing the myriad weaknesses of the criminal justice system has gained favor in recent years (Clear & Karp, 1998; Petersilia, 1999). Now gathered under the rubric of community justice, efforts to involve the community in the usual business of criminal justice—policing, prosecution, adjudication, corrections—have become ubiquitous (Goldstein, 1990; Stone, 1996; Rottman, 1996; Corbett et al., 1999). Initially stimulated by early writings and demonstration projects in community policing, massive federal funding for community policing and, to a much lesser extent, community courts and prosecution, helped bring community justice to the forefront in the early and mid 1990s. The inherent attractiveness of restorative justice concepts also gave fuel to this “more ambitious vision of justice...[that is] about building better community-driven responses to crime that activate and empower local social control and support processes” (Bazemore, 2000, p. 228).

This same vision is evident in the design of the most ambitious Reentry Partnership Initiatives. On paper at least—all of these programs are still in early stages of implementation—RPIs embody much of community justice framework described by architects in the field (e.g., Clear & Karp, 1998; Bazemore, 2000). For the most part, Karp and Clear’s (2000, pps. 327-330) “five core elements” of community justice are well represented in the reentry programs we studied. Consistent with the first of these elements, all the RPIs are geo-based and operate at the neighborhood level. The initiatives typically target one or two zip codes that encompass historically defined neighborhoods that are well known by local residents. RPI planners often select the area after mapping offender release statistics, targeting neighborhoods with high per capita rates of prison releases.

Second, RPIs are proactive, problem-solving ventures. In selecting target neighborhoods, some RPIs have conducted inventories of services and informal institutional supports, such as churches or community groups, which can benefit offenders upon release. Planners have sought to fill gaps identified in these assessments, and to build support for the RPI among existing resources. At the individual level, reentry case management teams work with offenders prior to release to identify risk and protective factors, and devise plans that are responsive to these factors. Third, these are reentry *partnerships* where authority and accountability are decentralized. To join the federal initiative, states had to agree that the RPI would be designed, operated, and monitored by representatives from diverse agencies and groups drawn from both formal and informal institutions of social control. Preliminary analyses of the frequency and quality of communication among these interagency oversight boards (using a statistical technique known as social network analysis) suggests that many sites are working collaboratively, sharing ownership, accountability, and achieving consensus over roles and responsibilities of the partnering groups (Young, 2001).

In two areas, the Reentry Partnerships Initiatives fall somewhat short on Karp and Clear's elements of community justice. The RPIs do not, at this point, place priority on a community's quality of life. Obviously, the quality of community life will improve if these reentry programs' achieve their priority goal—increased public safety through reduced recidivism of their participants. But the RPIs' focus on the individual offender departs conceptually from this core element of community justice. So far, none of the RPIs have tackled the larger mission of “strengthening the capacity of communities for self-regulation and realization of the collective aims of welfare—what others have called ‘collective efficacy’” (Karp & Clear, 2000, p. 329). To address community-wide goals in the future, RPI sites must first fully embrace the fifth

element of community justice, involving citizens in the justice process. The later sections of this paper are largely devoted to this issue, reviewing and assessing the varied and sometimes innovative strategies RPI sites have developed to engage different aspects of the community in offender reentry.

Karp and Clear (2000) further describe an “integrity model” by which to judge the “construct validity” of initiatives in terms of conforming with their expansive theoretical model of community justice. If and when they are fully implemented, the best reentry programs will come close to matching the processes and outcomes articulated in Karp and Clear’s model—closer, certainly, than the vast majority of current efforts in community corrections or community policing that attach themselves in title to community justice. Moreover, in our view, the distance between the RPI model and the ideal community justice model is both necessary and good, at this very early stage of RPI development. In an earlier paper (Taxman, Young, Byrne, Holsinger & Anspach, 2001), we describe an integrity model developed specifically for offender reentry programs that mirrors some but not all of the components of the community justice model. Most important, our integrity model also emphasizes issues that are given moderate to low priority in community justice circles—public safety and the growing, empirically-based consensus over effective practices in correctional interventions. For the most part, the community justice model does not address issues of intervention or service delivery, largely because it is assumed that the community will provide for needed (and effective) services as part of the process of “owning” and achieving justice.

In several recent essays, scholars have raised concerns about the conflicting currents of restorative justice, public safety, and best practices in offender rehabilitation; notably, all hold hope for their synthesis (Smith, 2001; Levrant et al., 1999; Altschuler, 2001). Reentry

partnership initiatives, we submit, are experiments in resolving these conflicts and capturing the compatibilities among these paradigms. Reflecting their public safety orientation, RPIs are focused foremost on changing offender behavior, but in our integrity model they seek to do so through a mix of empirically-derived programs and services, and risk-based, team case management (or a reparation panel) that holds the offender accountable and supports both reparation and reintegration. Members of the team include agents of formal and informal social control, including victims, family members, and other community representatives. In their most collaborative, boundary-spanning form, reentry partnerships begin to reflect the fundamental structural and operational transformations envisioned by advocates of both restorative justice and public safety approaches. In practice, the RPI demonstrations we have studied have a long ways to go before achieving the integrity envisioned in our ideal model. As further evidence of their position as hybrids of these approaches, the RPIs struggle with all and more of the challenges anticipated by both advocates and critics of restorative justice, public safety, and best practices orientations.

Who or What is a Community? In establishing a role for the community in criminal justice, there has been considerable consternation over the definition and identification of a community. Researchers reflecting on implementation problems in community policing, for example, have questioned whether the notion of community is overly abstract or, in some areas beset by decades of poverty and racism, unachievable (Grinc, 1998; Mastrofski, 1988). Conceptualizations of a community range from a street corner to a judicial district. The rhetorical nature of the term has inhibited efforts at developing community-based interventions, and created uncertainty as to the appropriate role of citizens in different justice processes, from law enforcement to sanctioning.

Each discipline within criminal justice has had to reach its own conclusions regarding what is a community. In the context of reentry, we believe that community is best viewed as *people who, by virtue of their natural (extra-legal) relationship with the offender, have the greatest potential impact on the offender's behavior, or are most affected by that behavior.* In this view, community is relative and specific to the individual offender. The definition implies that critical features of the community are the geographical area in which the offender resides (and is therefore accountable to) and those who live and work in that area and have a stake in the offender's impacts on them and the area. The definition is intentionally functional; it implies that reentry program developers should aim to engage the best exemplars of community—those most affected by and most influential in—that individual's reentry.

Why Involve the Community in Offender Reentry? Probably the most straightforward reason to involve the community in justice processes is that studies have consistently shown that informal social control agents are more powerful than formal agents of control in achieving and maintaining behavior change (Sampson, 1988; Gottfredson & Hirshi, 1990). Formal agents of control represent the institutions that have traditionally been responsible for offender reentry—parole boards and officers, corrections agencies, judges, prosecutors, and police. Community members, by our working definition, are informal agents of control—victims, family, friends, neighbors, clergy, local citizen representatives, service providers, employers, and other business people. These individuals have been referred to elsewhere as “natural guardians” or supports (Smith, 2001; Nelson, Dees & Allen, 1999). By one definition, natural guardians are “people who have an intimate or supervisory relationship to potential offenders (whether the offenders are under correctional supervision or not), and people who are responsible for places where the two may come together” (Smith, 2001, p. 2).

Practitioners, including parole and probation officers, intuitively know that informal control agents are potentially more effective in both monitoring and responding to offender behavior. Compared to officers working eight hour shifts in offices, the community is literally closer—more proximate—to the offender on a round-the-clock basis, and thus can observe and react more quickly to both positive and negative behavior. A related tenet of community policing applies similarly to reentry: compared to formal institutions the community has a greater familiarity and understanding of the offender, and can thus anticipate behavior and respond appropriately (e.g., by removing triggers to reoffending for that individual). This more intimate knowledge about both the offender and the local neighborhood also positions community representatives to better assess and inform the offender's plans in such areas as housing and employment.

Another, potentially more powerful advantage unique to the community and informal agents of control is their inherent connection to the offender, and a sense of ownership and accountability that is not present among formal agents who are involved with the offender because it is their job. This personal sense of engagement can generate from multiple, sometimes divergent forms. One is the victim (and family and friends attached to the victim) who seeks reparation and assurance that there will be no repeated offense. On the other side is the partner, parent, or sibling who has family and emotional ties that bind them to the offender. Between these poles are citizens who seek to be involved in monitoring released offenders out of concern over neighborhood (and familial or personal) safety, or those who want to support their reintegration out of some sense of altruism or ideology. In each case, these actors can potentially contribute immeasurably more to the reentry process than parole or police officers working through bulging caseloads or drawers spilling with paperwork.

In addition to a deeper motivation and knowledge about the offender, community members bring a broader, more varied set of responses they can use in reacting to offender behavior during reentry. A major reason for the limited effectiveness of formal sources of control, again replicated in several research studies, is that they rely heavily on punitive responses, or at best, negative reinforcement, rather than rewarding positive behavior (Marlowe & Kirby, 1999; Taxman, Soule, & Gelb, 1999). Outside of specialized settings (e.g., drug courts) or populations (e.g., youth participating in police athletic leagues), formal control agencies are not built to provide positive reinforcement; staff are not trained or acculturated—nor do they have the mechanisms—to reward ex-offenders. There is also a mutual set of expectations formed by offenders and formal agents of control that further limits their interactions and relationships. Inmates returning from long prison terms may have particularly distrusting views of parole officers, police, and even agencies that provide services that they are mandated to attend. The contrast between these largely punitive and coercive, one-dimensional associations and those that most offenders share with partners or family members are obvious. Less apparent is the potentially rewarding roles and relationships that some of the RPI sites (Washington, Vermont, Maryland) have constructed using neighbors and community-based housing, employment, and treatment providers, as described further below.

Finally, involvement of the community sends a message to offenders that the community has a vested interest in their success. Released offenders come to understand that they have a place in the community, that they are accepted, that others in the community will provide support to facilitate their reintegration, and, by the same token, that the community is harmed by and will not tolerate negative behavior. Supportive involvement of the community goes a long way in breaking down the sense of stigma and alienation experienced by returning offenders. It can

also provide the offender with the means for repairing past harms, and for altering behavior patterns that had been harmful to the community.

Unsupervised, Unconditional Releasees. One of the factors driving development of the RPIs in several states is the increasing number of offenders being released to the community with no supervision obligations. As a result of truth-in-sentencing laws, “unconditional releasees” now account for nearly one-fourth of those leaving prison (Beck, 2000). There are significant numbers of unsupervised releasees in four of the eight states that developed RPIs, and in Massachusetts and Florida they represent nearly two-thirds of all prison releasees. If these states are to meet the challenge of targeting this population for reentry programming and facilitating their success in the community, involvement of the community in the reentry process is imperative, as community members offer the only direct means of encouraging victim reparation and reintegration. Discussed below, states have employed different strategies in this regard, creating a very prominent role in reentry for community representatives or for a formal control agency (e.g., the local police department) that has a strong community orientation.

B. Reentry Partnerships and Program Structures

Figure 1 outlines a model of the reentry process that we have described in detail earlier (Taxman et al., 2001). Comprehensive reentry initiatives are designed to intervene at each of the three overlapping phases—the institutional phase, the structured reentry period just before and after release, and the ongoing reintegration phase. Two basic operational structures were evident in our process evaluation of the eight RPI sites. One state, Vermont, designed and implemented their partnership initiative around a restorative justice model that grew out of the state’s larger commitment to this philosophy. Vermont’s design calls for participants to begin developing a reparative plan for reentry immediately upon admission to prison, and a community-led

reparation panel to be the structural centerpiece of the program. The other seven sites have developed variations on a case management model, where individuals or teams of representatives from the partnering agencies (corrections, parole, service providers, etc.) work with the offender through pre- and post-release stages of transition and reintegration. This is not a rigid distinction, as some of the seven latter sites have created hybrid models that integrate restorative justice concepts through victim involvement, programming, or monitoring boards. Missouri, for example, employs reparation panels that meet with offenders after release and Maryland uses a variation on circle conferencing; both cases reflect principles and program elements adapted from restorative justice.

The role of the community varies considerably within these structures—and this role is evolving. The remainder of this paper discusses how different elements of the community have been integrated in the RPI structures in different states. This includes the community agents listed earlier, as well as specialized efforts in some jurisdictions to change the traditional role of formal social control agents, police and parole in particular, to function more like representatives of the community.

C. Community Actors and Agents of Informal Social Control

Family Members. Family members are the most tangible, and potentially most powerful community representatives who can be engaged in the reentry process. No other source of support—formal or otherwise—is as likely to be able to address the set of basic needs presented by prison releasees, including housing, food and clothing, and emotional backing for the difficult transition and reintegration process. In many cases family members (which in this context can include partners, parents, grandparents or other guardians, siblings, or even close friends) most embody characteristics of the community outlined earlier: They can (and often do) closely

monitor the offender's behavior, administer swift and certain responses—both positive and negative—to that behavior, and often share with the offender a sense of ownership and accountability regarding his or her success in the community. These are some of the reasons why a recent study of offenders' first month out after release found that family support was the single most important predictor of a favorable status at the end of that period (Nelson, Dees & Allen, 1999).

Research has also suggested that reintegrating released offenders with their families has important benefits for partners and children who suffer from the loss of interpersonal and emotional support, as well as the loss of income as a result of the offender's forced removal from the family (Hagan & Coleman, 2001; Clear, Rose & Ryder, 2001). Over half of inmates in state prisons are parents of children under 18 (Mumola, 1999). Rebuilding family bonds during the transition from prison to full community reintegration can potentially reduce these children's risk of becoming delinquent, and repeating intergenerational cycles of crime. In some cases, the role of preventing intergenerational cycles of crime becomes an important goal for the offender, presenting a valued opportunity to repay for past harms and contribute positively to family cohesion and care.

There are significant exceptions here—relationships with family can be irretrievably forgotten, damaged, or destructive for either the family or the offender. Substance abusing offenders who have benefited from treatment in prison are often rightfully concerned about returning to a family situation that makes them vulnerable to relapse. Family members' wishes to *not* open their home and reunite with a releasee must also be respected. The fact that this can and does occur underscores the need for protocols that confirm reentry plans before release, and that keep close tabs on their implementation in the initial weeks of reentry. In some cases family

members may feel so vulnerable by the offender's release that the appropriate role for them in the reentry process is as a victim or victim advocate, a role discussed in the next section.

No one knows how prevalent malignant family problems are among prisoners. The proportion is probably substantial, but smaller than assumed by most corrections, parole, and police personnel, according to practitioners working in this area (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001). The tendency to underestimate the support available among family members may explain why only one of the RPIs featured a family role in their initiative. And even in this case (Missouri), the focus was on improving parenting and domestic relations, rather than involving the family to support and monitor the released offender. Unlike some specialized sex offender programs that use family members as collateral monitors of trigger behavior, the reentry projects have generally not facilitated use of the family to help monitor or contribute to the reintegration process.

Engaging families (especially parents) as a reentry strategy is an important component of many juvenile transition and aftercare models (Alexander, Pugh, & Parsons, 1998; Henggeler, 1998), but we must look outside the RPIs, to a storefront on Manhattan's Lower East Side, to see a program that has organized adult offender reentry around families (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001). As part of a demonstration effort with the state parole agency, staff of La Bodega de la Familia help broker home visits with parole officers for inmates about to be released to the program's catchment area. La Bodega assesses the needs of family members as well as offenders before the release point, to provide services required in preparation for release. Family case management continues at Bodega during the structured post-release period, as well as during ongoing reintegration; crisis intervention in the field is also available to clients as needed.

La Bodega's experience suggests that RPIs might improve their success rates with greater attention to family involvement at all stages of the reentry process. Realistically, for RPI sites that target unconditional releasees with no obligation requirements, family monitoring and support may present the only opportunity to influence the offender in the community. As past victims of the offender, family members often have ambivalent feelings about renewing relationships and sharing their residence with a newly released offender. La Bodega has found that the offer of external support to the family can shift their perspective, making them more amenable to and capable (through family case management and other brokered services) of reconstructing a mutually supportive relationship with the releasee. Beyond improving parenting skills or spousal relations, reentry initiatives can further family cohesion and functioning, raising the offender's stakes in conformity and his or her sense of responsibility to others (i.e., to "the community"). Family relationships offer perhaps the best chance for reconnecting the offender with the community, and providing a place for the offender in society. As a member of a family, as one loved and cared for by others, offenders can develop attachments that are stronger than the immediate gratification that one can achieve from criminal endeavors.

Community Representatives and Victim Advocates. In fields ranging from corrections to crime prevention, programs seeking to promote their community roots have taken to using the term "community representatives" to mean almost anyone who is not employed by a formal social control agency. As noted earlier, however, there are considerable differences across the continuum implied by our definition of community. In the context of reentry, there are several dimensions that determine the degree to which someone is an effective and appropriate representative of the offender's community. These include familial, social, and psychological attachments to the offender, as well as these same types of attachments to the

offender's victims. Other dimensions include proximity to the released offender's residence, and personal and financial stakes in the releasee's neighborhood. The community representative's professional status may also influence their effectiveness as contributors to reentry programs. Offenders and other members of a reentry team or reparation panel may regard unpaid citizen volunteers with strong community ties as more credible representatives than paid professionals working for service programs, community groups, or churches. With specialized skills, experience, and training, however, professionals may be more effective in working with offenders and meshing as members of case management teams or reparation panels.

Viewed from this perspective, the RPI sites can be seen as engaged in a series of experiments about the utility of different community representatives in reentry. One of the more intriguing models is being developed in Washington state, where residents of the releasee's neighborhood participate as volunteer "guardians" on a case management team that spans the pre- and post-release phases of reentry. The state Department of Corrections distinguishes between these natural guardians (which can include neighbors, local clergy or employers, family members, or friends) and agency or service provider guardians, who are counselors and other staff of service programs that work with offenders. DOC guardians work closely with the community corrections officer (CCO) who leads the case management team. Laid out in the offender's "accountability plan," their role can range from providing support behind the scenes, such as helping with housing arrangements or making inquiries with potential employers, to directly assisting the offender with rides to job sites or the local supermarket. DOC guardians also conduct informal monitoring of conditions around the offender's residence and, in a very limited way, his or her compliance with release conditions (e.g., not being at home during hours of employment or staying away from local bars and liquor stores in the event of a "no alcohol"

condition). In addition to aiding in offender reentry, guardian duties include service development around victims' issues and building and maintaining an inventory of local service and employment resources for offenders. Another important guardian role is community education—making presentations to community groups and programs about offender reintegration and Washington's risk-based "offender accountability" process.

In Spokane, the site of the state's RPI demonstration, the level of interaction guardians have with offenders seems suited to the comfort level of the individual; guardian role expectations would seem to require this kind of flexibility. There are important safety issues, of course, in creating this new role for citizens. Washington DOC tries to address these through careful hiring, training, and deployment policies. Guardians must complete an application, submit to a criminal background check, and participate in specialized training for the position. They are subject to all rules and regulations of the DOC and are held to the same expectations as DOC employees. While safety concerns were not raised by the guardians we visited with in Spokane, others involved in RPI case management acknowledged that certain scenarios could possibly put them at risk, such as a vengeful family member or associate who believed the guardian had provided information that led to a severe sanction. DOC officials believe they have built in sufficient safeguards to prevent this from happening.

Vermont is the only other RPI site that, as a rule, engages unpaid volunteers who reside in the same neighborhood as the offender. Some other RPI sites also engage nonprofessionals who participate voluntarily in the reentry program, as affiliates of victim advocacy organizations; these individuals are not necessarily drawn from the same neighborhood to which the offender is returning. Both volunteers and professional staff from agencies supporting victims of domestic violence (and in rare cases, victims themselves) are included in RPI programs, either as members

of case management teams (e.g., Washington, South Carolina) or reparation panels (Vermont, Missouri). Victim representatives can play multiple roles. One is to ensure that offender reentry plans and release conditions respect the desires of the victim and her safety. Another is to advocate for the offender's participation in treatment or community service programs where, through providing unpaid labor, they symbolically repair harms caused to the community. Victims and their representatives may also be given the opportunity to provide input in making sanctioning decisions on offenders who violate their release conditions.

Another variation on the community representative role is found in the Maryland RPI program. All of the RPI sites include community-based service providers as part of the reentry team or panel and, as discussed below, a few sites (Maryland included) have created a community case manager position that is filled by private provider personnel. Developers of the Baltimore-based RPI have created another position, distinct from these staff, known as a community advocate. Similar to Washington's guardians, community advocates provide assistance to the offender in carrying out the reentry plan, and help the parole agent or community case manager ensure compliance with that plan. Ideally, community advocates also reside in the offender's neighborhood. Unlike guardians, however, community advocates do not participate as volunteers, but as employees of private service organizations based in that neighborhood—the same agencies that employ the community case managers working in the Baltimore reentry initiative.

In this model, the case managers bring expertise in treatment and direct service delivery, while the advocates play a supplementary role focused on instrumental assistance (temporary housing, transportation) and providing steady encouragement to meet release requirements, including obtaining and maintaining employment, attending mandated treatment programs, and

making life changes needed to stay crime free. In this regard, community advocates bear some resemblance to the community “tracker” or monitor role seen in some intensive community supervision models for juveniles (Altschuler & Armstrong, 1994). On paper there is logic to these distinct roles for community advocates, case managers, as well as parole agents, police, and institutional staff—all of which are part of the Maryland RPI. There is also much room for conflict over responsibilities and decisions (e.g., in requirements, referrals, sanctions), and always the possibility that, with too many actors, no one takes the lead. Like all the reentry partnerships, the Baltimore site is still in early stages of implementation, but the model merits continued monitoring.

Community-based Organizations, Service Providers, Clergy, and Employers. With reentry program positions and structures as novel as those in Vermont, Washington, or Maryland, it would be easy to overlook the more conventional role played by community-based agencies in the RPI sites. Providers of housing, vocational services, substance abuse treatment and other rehabilitation programming are involved in all of the reentry initiatives. And in nearly all cases, this role involves some important novelties, including meeting with the offender in prison before release, meshing with services provided in the institution, and working collaboratively on teams overseeing transition and reintegration. These organizations also function in traditional ways, providing services to offenders through parole mandates, often as part of an ongoing association with the state corrections or parole agency.

Echoing themes discussed earlier, these private organizations can differ in their degree of “community-ness,” particularly as it relates to the releasee’s neighborhood. Some reentry sites make use of community-based service providers, which have no connections to the RPI target community, and may simply have a historical or contractual relationship with the parole agency

or other site partners. Typical of a more neighborhood-focused approach taken by some sites, the South Carolina RPI has worked extensively to build support among service providers and other community groups that are rooted in the North Columbia neighborhood where that site's RPI clients will reside upon release. Vermont, Florida, and Missouri are other partnership programs, which have engaged service agencies that are based in their target areas. The Maryland RPI has formed alliances with three community-based multi-service organizations, each of which has long-standing ties to the three distinct neighborhoods targeted by that initiative. Community case managers employed by those agencies take the lead role in ongoing client assessment, and developing, managing, and monitoring reentry plans for offenders in the Maryland program who are released with no parole supervision obligations. The Nevada reentry partnership has similarly developed a community case manager position; however, in Nevada, this individual works closely with a parole agent whose role has been relegated to surveillance and sanctioning.

Sites working with agencies that are grounded in their clients' communities are better positioned to build support for reentry efforts among other local residents. As one administrator explained, "these agencies are invested in their communities—they have connections and they have credibility" with neighborhood leaders and citizens that can't come from public or citywide agencies. This kind of focused, localized attention, particularly when it involves an issue as salient as offender reintegration and, especially, public safety, can help build a sense of shared accountability between the organization and the community, and expand the net of both support and surveillance for the released offender.

Private community-based organizations involved in offender reentry are not always traditional service providers, although there is a surprising dearth of other groups, such as

churches and faith-based organizations, involved in the eight reentry partnership initiatives. The Missouri RPI site has two members of the clergy participating on their reparation board. One is the assistant pastor of a large church located in the Kansas City neighborhood targeted by the program, while the other is a regional representative of Prison Fellowships, a national Christian-based organization working with offenders. The Spokane program also includes employers from the target community on their pre- and post-release case management teams.

D. Formal Social Control Agencies

The national movement toward a stronger community orientation among formal control agencies was noted earlier. Still, jurisdictions differ markedly in this regard, and planners who are seeking sites for reentry programs should consider local assets, building around strong community-oriented policing departments or corrections or parole agencies that have established linkages with victims, families, residents, and community groups. In this section we discuss RPI sites that have done that, and the potential advantages of involving public agencies that have strong community ties.

Police. More so than any other formal control agency, police departments have the opportunity to form strong partnerships with community members in preventing and responding to crime. No other public agency has the kind of close, constant presence in the lives of local residents. Police are best positioned to detect changes in communities and local crime patterns that can place reentering offenders at risk of failure. They have wide discretion in responding to warning signs of failure and can fashion preventive solutions that include brokering needed services or linking to supportive family members or community institutions (Uchida and Forst, 1994; Greene and McLaughlin, 1993). In the best models of this policing style, individual

officers, precincts, and whole departments can be *of* the community, representing it in the daily business of policing, including facilitating and monitoring offender reentry.

The RPI sites that take advantage of strong community-oriented policing departments mix this potentially supportive function with one emphasizing enforcement. The Massachusetts RPI, formed largely out of a partnership between state corrections and the Lowell Police Department, sends a clear message to clients about the Department's increased patrol strength and local officers' familiarity with the returning offender, and their plans for monitoring him or her during reentry. In Lowell and in other sites with substantial police involvement (e.g., South Carolina, Washington), police take advantage of prior relationships with community groups, service providers, and corrections agencies to present a more integrated, seamless network to the offender that, in the words of a police official at one site, "says to the offender we want you to succeed, and are willing to provide you the support you need to do that, but if you don't take advantage of these opportunities, we'll also be there to take you in."

We have been reminded of the value of prior relationships and credibility with the community on occasions when police are viewed with discomfort by other reentry team or panel members, or by the offender. In more than one RPI site, representatives from community groups and service agencies have reacted negatively to police involvement in the reentry program, due to an assumption the police had only an enforcement role in the initiative. We have also observed reentry pre-release team meetings with offenders where police staff announce "we're here to help" and "just give us a call if we can do anything for you," but they can't specify what that help might be, or how it might be transmitted on the street. And it is evident from the body language of the reentry participants in these meetings that they would never consider approaching the police for almost any kind of assistance. While police agencies have the most

potential for a strong community role in reentry initiatives, their histories in some communities will require them to articulate with greater strength what specifically they can do for offenders other than picking up the pieces of failure.

Parole Agents. While analysts and policy makers have for years implored states and localities “to put community back into community corrections” (Byrne, 1993; Petersilia, 1999; Corbett et al., 1999), most of this dialogue has gone on in academic and trade journals and has done little to affect the operations of most parole and probation agencies. Perhaps typical of the national state of affairs, only two RPI sites are employing parole in new ways that may afford greater community involvement in the reentry process. Washington’s neighborhood-based community corrections model, in fact, is not new in that state, as community corrections officers (CCOs) have been deployed regionally within the Spokane region for over ten years. In the Washington model, CCOs work in pairs out of local “cop shops”—neighborhood storefronts that are also manned by community volunteers and a beat officer assigned to the area. As in the community policing model, CCOs are to develop an implicit knowledge about the local area and its residents, and to build relations with individuals and community groups so they can anticipate and identify problems that lead to crime (or failure on parole), and marshal local support to provide assistance to releasees, monitor their compliance with reentry plans, and respond to early signs of relapse.

Maryland’s RPI developers have not explicitly tied that state’s new model of “proactive supervision” for probation and parole to their reentry initiative, but it merits attention as a potential contributor to the success of the Baltimore program. The proactive community supervision model seeks to establish a new relationship between agents and offenders based on the principles of effective interventions. Parole and probation agents are being trained to use

motivational interviewing skills to assess offenders, refer them to services, monitor behavior, and make appropriate responses to positive and negative behavior. Underscoring this model is the need to humanize the supervision process; officers are trained in verbal and non-verbal cues that signify respect and help build rapport between the officer and offender. Reducing the distance that is typical between offenders and formal agents of control, this rapport can raise the credibility of the supervision process and foster relationships more akin to those formed between the offender and community members.

Judges and Prosecutors. Unlike police and parole agents, who ordinarily have some interaction with the offender's community, prosecutors and judges typically only interact with community members who are victims or witnesses, or if they are involved in specialized community or family courts. A few of the RPI sites have included prosecutors as partners on their oversight boards; in each case, these are staff from the local district attorney's office who have responsibility for victims. Distinct from the Reentry Partnership Initiatives, Reentry Courts Initiatives were also begun as demonstration projects under the impetus of the Office of Justice Programs. With the same goals as the RPIs, the nine reentry court sites across the country are similarly organized around multi-agency structures, but seek to draw upon the authority of the court to promote positive behavior of returning offenders. We have not had the opportunity to examine or assess these initiatives, and so only mention them here as alternative reentry program models that will be of great interest to the field.

Conclusion

Some of the most important, innovative advances in criminal justice over the past two decades have involved constructing processes for integrating community members in policing, prosecution, and the criminal courts. A renewed interest in an old field, offender reentry, has

presented new opportunities to involve the community in that part of the criminal justice system where it arguably most belongs—corrections. In spurring the development of partnership initiatives, OJP has challenged states to acknowledge the realities of offender reentry—that “they all come back”—while embracing the demand for public safety. In response, corrections agencies have had to extend their traditional focus on the offender to include the community (Taxman et al., 2001). As a corrections administrator in one of the RPIs put it, “this isn’t a program for offenders, this is a program for the community.” In shifting the goal, these agencies are experimenting with new rules for getting there, forming collaborations that span traditional purviews.

Finding roles for community members are central to charting this new ground. RPI sites are mixing at least three such roles, sometimes in a single position. One role is that of a sponsor who provides assistance in tackling both the day-to-day difficulties of transition—finding a residence, obtaining medical care, getting to work—and the crises that can occur in that process. Another role is the monitor, helping track the offender’s compliance with legal requirements of release, and responding to that compliance with rewards or sanctions. A third role is the facilitator, who fosters positive growth in offender attitude and behavior. Like the sponsor, the facilitator is largely in a helping role, but is more proactive and involved in advancing the ongoing reintegration process. Positions on reparation panels in Vermont and guardians in Washington State largely embody the sponsor and monitor roles. Sites with strong victim involvement (e.g., South Carolina) also have citizens in monitoring roles. The efforts in Kansas City to involve the family, and Maryland’s plans for a more assertive advocate position and citizen involvement through community conferencing, begin to incorporate the facilitator role. Studying the implementation and development of these various roles and their relative

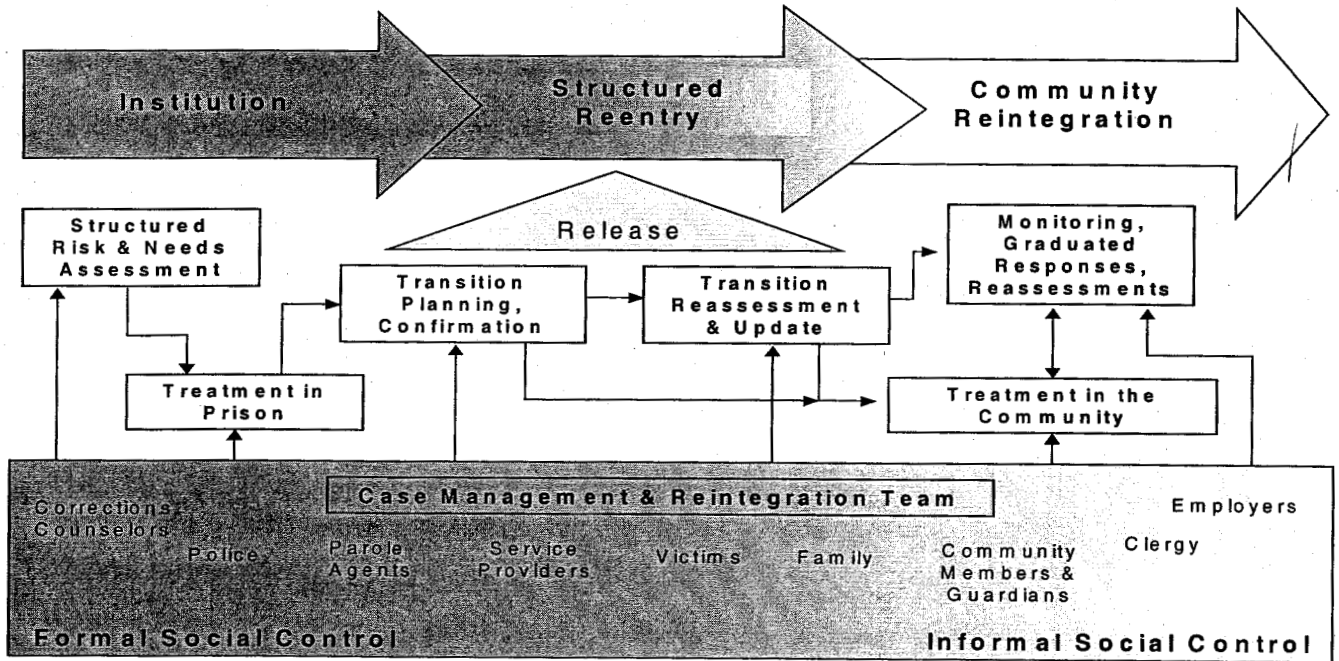
contribution to both individual and community-level outcomes are useful directions for future research.

Another productive area for research would involve identifying the circumstances under which states and localities include these positions in their program designs. It is important to note that the reentry sites, which have actually planned for and created unpaid positions for community members, represent a minority of the RPIs. While all eight of the partnership initiatives recognize the importance of involving community-based actors in both plans and implementation, with few exceptions they have done so by contracting for services; even the advocate role in Maryland, for example, is a paid position. It remains to be seen whether these contracted services can serve to enhance the natural, informal network of social controls in the community. What happens when the service is terminated, the contract ends, or the state is not able to provide the services? These are issues the RPI sites must address in both program design and implementation.

A related concern is the degree to which the community will support the reentry process. Planners hope that through thoughtful efforts in gaining media support and educating and involving the community, residents will develop more textured and sympathetic attitudes toward returning offenders. Some presume that by including the community, NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) issues will be reduced. As partners, the community should be more open and accepting of offenders' needs for housing, treatment, and other specialized services. However, in two of the RPIs, residents in the target neighborhood resisted the establishment of a storefront for program services and a transitional housing site. Developers of reentry programs should become conversant with lessons learned in this regard in implementing community policing initiatives (e.g., Skogan & Hartnett, 1997).

These and other lessons from community justice initiatives will form the foundation of offender reentry programs as they develop over the next several years. Grounded in the shared belief that new approaches are needed, the first wave of these programs are experimenting with novel, collaborative structures that cut across organizational barriers and span the traditional divide between institution and community. Their most important innovation, however, likely lays ahead, in engaging the full powers of natural, informal social controls that *are* the community and fully integrating offenders, in many cases for the first time, as members of that community.

Figure 1: Reentry Partnership Continuum



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