

*FROM CELL TO STREET: A PLAN TO SUPERVISE INMATES AFTER RELEASE*

*JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT*

*[http://ksnotes1.harvard.edu/research/wpaper.nsf/d745629e080d1fe88525698900714934/a79ad5a2bacebeb685256b52007588b9/\\$FILE/celltostreet.wp.doc](http://ksnotes1.harvard.edu/research/wpaper.nsf/d745629e080d1fe88525698900714934/a79ad5a2bacebeb685256b52007588b9/$FILE/celltostreet.wp.doc)*

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*Recidivism*

From the standpoint of public safety, is there reason to be concerned about the release of inmates? The answer is a definite yes. Several recent reports indicate that those behind bars tend to be poorly positioned to succeed in conventional society.<sup>1</sup> They tend to have low levels

of educational attainment, are quite likely to have substance abuse or mental health problems, generally do not have access to permanent housing, and may or may not have family support to assist them in the transition from life behind bars to civilian life. Their term of confinement may make locating employment and housing more difficult, as some employers and landlords are excluded from hiring or renting to ex-offenders and many others prefer not to interact with this population. Given past criminal behavior and these barriers, it is no surprise that many of those released from prison and jail end up returning, some of them quite soon after release.

The most extensive national study of recidivism of those released from prison found very high rates: over 60% of releasees were rearrested for a serious offense and over 40% were reincarcerated within three years of release. Most of the recidivism occurred within the first year.<sup>2</sup> Recidivism rates of prisoners from the Massachusetts Department of Correction are quite similar. The DOC measures recidivism as reincarceration in a Massachusetts correctional facility for at least 30 days. Of those released from DOC custody in 1995, 44% were reincarcerated within three years. Half of

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those who were reincarcerated within three years did so in the first year following release.<sup>3</sup> Reincarceration indicates one of two things: either the releasee was convicted of a new offense or he or she was returned due to a “technical violation,” meaning he or she violated the terms of parole.<sup>4</sup> Such high rates of reincarceration indicate that reintegration into society after release from confinement is not simple.

The national recidivism study shows us who is most likely to recidivate. Younger prisoners had higher rates of recidivism than older prisoners. At the same time, those with more extensive criminal histories were particularly likely to recidivate. Putting these two facts together, the study found that young inmates with extensive criminal histories had extremely high rates of failure. Indeed, 94 percent of prisoners aged 18-24 with 11 or more prior arrests were rearrested within 3 years.

In addition, the period just following release appears to be particularly important in preventing recidivism. Within 6 months of release, 25 percent of prisoners had been rearrested; 14 percent were rearrested within 1 to 3 months after release. Other research provides descriptions of the time following prison release. This research emphasizes the importance of the period immediately following release, including the first day out.<sup>5</sup> It appears that the time from release through the first year is a pivotal time for ex-offenders, determining whether they resort to old habits or make a fresh start.

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New England Aftercare Ministries, Inc. was formed to reduce recidivism in the criminal justice system. The Bridge House, located at 18 Summit Street in Framingham, MA, was opened in 1987 and now assists up to thirty-three male residents in their recovery from substance abuse and addiction. Hundreds of men and their families have been helped to overcome the devastating effects of addiction and incarceration. The Bridge House is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Abuse Services as a residential treatment program. Residents come from detox, family and professional referral, and the criminal justice system. They stay in resident treatment for six months, working full time in the community, and attending nightly meetings. Then they spend three months living in the community, under the supervision of Bridge House staff. New England Aftercare Ministries also provides individual and family counseling, addiction and recovery training, and prison ministry networking.

## Ex-offender makes strides in parole housing program

A job fair for hard to employ individuals will be held on **April 21 from 9 AM to 12 PM** at the Quincy Career Center, 152 Parkingway, Quincy, Massachusetts.

The job fair is being sponsored by the Massachusetts Parole Board, Quincy Career Center, The Work-

Robert Byrd is one of 70 ex-offenders in Massachusetts participating in a housing program sponsored by the Massachusetts Parole Board, and funded by a Violent Offender Incarceration/Truth in Sentencing [VOI/TIS] grant. The four-month program provides housing and rehabilitative services to offenders who are on parole or have finished their sentences. The Parole Board has contracted with six housing agencies in the Commonwealth to provide beds and services.

Mr. Byrd is not a parolee. He recently wrapped up his sentence after spending about 12 years in and out of prison for drug-related offenses. While still incarcerated, he heard about the Parole Board's Regional Reentry Centers [RRC's] and its housing program. He saw both opportu-

nities as a blessing and agreed to be taken to the Framingham [Region 9] RRC upon release. All ex-offenders discharged from state and county facilities are given the opportunity to go to one of eight RRC's throughout the state. RRC's offer parolees and ex-offenders assistance in finding jobs, housing, counseling, medical care, and other services.

Robert was provided with sober housing from the South Middlesex Opportunity Council [SMOC], and received substance abuse treatment from Substance Abuse Coordinator Steve Bisson at the Region 9 RRC.

SMOC staff are proud of Robert and feel that his recovery is going well. "Robert is a great guy to work with," said SMOC Program Manager Jeff Feeley. "He's

a hard working gentleman who has been successful at every turn. Robert is committed to a great recovery program and is well liked and respected by his peers," said Mr. Feeley.

Robert grew up in Hyde Park, Massachusetts. At age 15, he began experimenting with alcohol and marijuana and hanging out with a group of older guys. By age 17, he had started using heroin. It wasn't long before his attitude toward life began to change, he said, and he started to get in trouble with the law.

During his last prison term at MCI-Concord, Robert took a long look at his life. Instead of just counting down the days, he tried to prepare himself for the day of release. He spent a lot of time reading and developing  
(continued on page 6)

## Chairman Walsh praised for victim focus

This excerpt taken from the March, 2006 Newsletter

[http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eopsmodulechunk&&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Eeops&b=terminalcontent&f=pb\\_parole&csid=Eeops](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eopsmodulechunk&&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Eeops&b=terminalcontent&f=pb_parole&csid=Eeops)

## **Reentry Housing Program Overview: VOITS- Violent Offender Incarceration/ Truth in Sentencing- initiative (Parole and DOC)**

Both offer housing for four to six months, as well as counseling and assistance finding employment and permanent housing. From the Parole Board

The Reentry Housing Program is a housing search program for offenders leaving Department of Correction custody. Funded by the Department of Correction and administered by the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC), the program provides individual assistance to eligible offenders with every step of the housing search process including budgeting, credit repair, transitional, public and private housing options. Housing specialists from SMOC complement the work of the Department of Correction's Reentry Services Division by providing referrals for offenders to access appropriate community-based agencies which support successful transition to community living.

Additionally, the housing specialists provide follow-up and program support for up to six months for those released offenders who received housing placement services prior to their release. Stabilization includes home visits and, when needed, tenant-landlord mediation.

Since the program began receiving referrals in July 2003, 378 cases have been referred to the network of housing specialists. The 378 referrals represent appx. 10% of releases to the street from July 2003 to January 2005. While a majority of these referred offenders are still in custody, the remainder have been released. Of the referred and released offenders, all were successfully placed in appropriate housing prior to their release. A significant majority of the referrals (30%) were for our sex offender population. Of the offenders referred to the Reentry Housing Program, 86% were to be released via an expiration of sentence while the remaining 14% were to be released to parole supervision.

### **Reentry Planning Process**

The Correctional Program Officer at each Department of Correction facility will screen offenders who are six months to a release date to assess housing plans. Those offenders who do not have a defined housing plan, or who refuse to disclose to the Correctional Program Officer what their housing plan is, will be considered at risk for homelessness.

This is the target population that is eligible to receive services from the network of Housing Specialists. An offender identified by the Correctional Program Officer as at risk for homelessness will be referred to the Reentry Services Division.

Once the referral is approved and returned back to the inmate's Correctional Program Officer, that staff person will forward the case to the designated Housing Specialist. This step begins the process of the aggressive in-reach strategy where Housing staff meet with offenders while they are still in prison. The Housing Specialist will respond to the site and conduct an extensive intake interview with the offender. During the course of the intake, the offender will be

asked to sign a Release of Information The Housing Specialist will conduct an Intake/Assessment to identify the following information:

**Criminal history**  
**Substance Abuse history**  
**Mental Health history**  
**Employment history**  
**Housing history**

This step in the process is critical to identify the potential barriers the offender will face in their search for permanent housing. The Housing Specialist will continue to gather the following information:

**Where does the offender want to live?**  
**Does the offender believe that there is a sufficient support network in that community? If so, what is that network?**  
**What does the offender feel he or she needs in a housing placement upon release? (eg., a structured environment, a supportive environment, independence)**  
**Does the offender have geographic triggers of any kind.**

The next step for the Housing Specialist is to make a recommendation to the Correctional Program Officer, based on the intake and assessment. This recommendation will include the identified barriers presented and recommendations on how to combat the barriers, along with a recommended housing placement for the offender. The Housing Specialist and the Correctional Program Officer will work as a team to identify the most appropriate option based upon the recommendation.

The Housing Specialist will then develop the Individual Service Plan (ISP) for the offender. The goals of the ISP are twofold:

**To address the barriers to securing housing; and**  
**To outline the short and long-term goals that will result in the offender successfully transitioning into housing.**

The housing search process begins once the ISP is complete. Once the housing placement has been secured, the Housing Specialist will coordinate support services through established community resources.

The Housing Specialist will work with the offender to appeal housing placement denials.

Many transitional programs do not accept offenders on parole status. Other housing providers may deny offenders based upon criminal history.

Recognizing that sustained housing placement requires the identification of appropriate community-based services, the Housing Specialist and the Reentry Case Manager will ensure that the offender is appropriately matched to mental health/substance abuse services, counseling, education, etc. in the community.

## **Stabilization services for released offenders:**

The last phase of the housing placement process is the most critical in addressing recidivism. The last phase is stabilization services. This phase is for those offenders who have received the assistance of a Housing Specialist while in custody and are now released. The Housing Specialist who had worked with the offender will work with the offender for at least six months after permanent housing to ensure that the placement is successful.

Stabilization consists of, but is not limited to:

**Minimum of two case management meetings a month**

**One home site visit in which the Housing Specialist ensures that the housing unit is being kept clean and in good repair**

**Another office visit in which the Housing Specialist will address any difficulties/issues offenders are experiencing and make any further needed referrals to services**

The goal of the stabilization services is to ensure successful reintegration into the community and to prevent recidivism. Stabilization will consist of continued extensive case management of the offender after placement. If the offender is not placed initially into permanent housing, the Housing Specialist will continue aggressive case management with the offender in the transitional housing program until permanent housing is secured.

This also applies to those offenders who are placed in a shelter setting. While shelter placement is not considered an acceptable placement, there are instances where there are no other immediate options and such placement for a limited period of time is nearly unavoidable.

Once permanent housing is secured, the Housing Specialist will continue stabilization services for a six month period. Stabilization also involves maintaining excellent relationships with landlords. What contributes to successful placement is the opportunity for local landlords to turn to the Housing Specialist to help intervene on housing issues without the landlord getting directly involved with the ex-offender

## **Regional Reentry Center Initiative**

The Department of Correction is collaborating with the Massachusetts Parole Board in its reentry initiative to provide services for inmates discharging from prison. Both agencies are developing new strategies and models to more effectively address the issue of offender reentry. One of these strategies is the Regional Reentry Center (RRC) initiative. This initiative will establish Parole Board managed and operated regional centers dedicated to providing all individuals reintegrating back into the community with enhanced opportunities for successful reentry.

The purpose of the RRC is to reduce recidivism rates of offenders returning to the community by better preparing them for release and, once released, to provide a continuum of treatment and support in the community where the offender is returning.

In order for the Parole Board to more effectively and appropriately build a community based accountability system and administer services to offenders, RRCs located in Mattapan, Quincy, Brockton, New Bedford, Worcester, Framingham, Lawrence and Springfield, will provide a menu of services and options to smoothly transition offenders back into the community. Offenders being released from custody without parole or probation supervision will be transported to the RRC closest to their planned residence by the Department of Correction.

The Department of Correction works collaboratively with the Parole Board to share information regarding offender institutional adjustment, program involvement, and reentry plans. As an offender nears release, the Department of Correction places greater emphasis on the release plan to aid the offender for successful reentry and provide the Parole Board access to this information via shared technological systems.

The goal is to provide links to the community especially in the areas of housing, mental health counseling, substance abuse counseling, and employment

**[Regional Reentry Center Initiative](#)**

**[Region One - Quincy Area](#)**

**[Region Two - Mattapan Area](#)**

**[Region Four - Worcester Area](#)**

**[Region Five - Springfield Area](#)**

**[Region Six - Lawrence Area](#)**

**[Region Seven - Brockton Area](#)**

**[Region Eight - New Bedford Area](#)**

**[Region Nine - Framingham Area](#)**

**Prisoner Reentry Throughout the Past Decade**

The Governor's Commission on Criminal Justice Innovation highlighted the public safety crisis surrounding prisoner re-entry which has reached epidemic levels across the nation, where each year approximately **600,000** inmates are returning back to the communities from jails and prisons: sixty-two percent of whom are expected to be re-arrested within three years. Massachusetts is not immune to this problem, where approximately **20,000** inmates return home each year from incarceration, often without appropriate treatment while incarcerated or a solid release plan for post-release supervision. Worse yet, under current sentencing practices, nearly half of all state inmates, who have historically been categorized as the most serious and violent offenders, have no post-release supervision at the end of their sentence and simply leave the prison setting with neither support nor supervision to assist in their reentry. The end result is that public safety is being compromised.

### **How Supervision Can Make a Difference**

At first glance, one could ask the question "Why are we spending our scarce resources on individuals who have committed crimes and have proven to be a burden on society?" The answer is that, regardless of the type of crime or crimes committed, these offenders are returning back to our communities.

Certainly punishment and incapacitation play an important role in controlling the prison population. However, without appropriate treatment and rehabilitative programs, both inside and outside the prison walls, the consequences of our policy decisions and budget allocations are clear. Prisoners, once released, are ill prepared to overcome such barriers as substance abuse, housing, mental and physical health issues, and employment. Without the adequate balance of these opportunities, offenders, more often than not, return to a life of crime. Given the fact that **97%** of the offenders will be released at some point in time during their sentence, attention needs to be focused on rehabilitation and effective programs to assist the inmate in returning to the community. The return on this investment would be tangible in the correctional dollars that would be saved and more importantly, in the decrease in recidivism. Simply stated, preventing new crime and criminal behavior by offenders being released from prison is one of the greatest challenges and priorities of the Administration.

### **Regional Reentry Center Initiative**

While there are no guarantees in any fields that involve human behavior, we believe that the opening of the **Regional Reentry Centers** ('RRC's') will result in more offenders successfully returning to the community and will, in the end, result in a safer Commonwealth.

Solid practices and policies addressing the reintegration of offenders make sense from both a public safety point of view as well as a fiscal one. Given the high recidivism rates of inmates returning home, the number of new victims also increases as does the cost to the community.

If evidenced based practices that have been proven to lower recidivism were implemented in the Commonwealth, not only would there be fewer victims, but we would have fewer inmates and the costs of re-incarceration would be significantly reduced. By addressing the barriers to successful reentry such as lack of employment potential, lack of adequate housing, and the availability of substance abuse monitoring and counseling, there is a greater likelihood is that the individual will not return to a criminal lifestyle.

The Regional Reentry Centers concept was initiated by the Executive Office of Public Safety (EOPS) as an initiative between the Department of Correction (DOC) and the Massachusetts Parole Board after reviewing the recommendations of the Governor's Commission on Criminal Justice Innovations and the Governor's Commission on Corrections Reform. Each report highlighted the need for reform regarding the transitioning of offenders back into the community from the moment of incarceration.

The focus of the RRC effort is to enhance public safety and restore confidence in the criminal justice system by reinventing the traditional model of parole based on philosophies and practices of a correctional reform that is emerging nationwide. Specifically, the RRC 's will serve as the nucleus of reentry services for all state offenders released from a correctional facility. These centers will be operated in our existing community based field operations in Mattapan, Quincy, Brockton, New Bedford, Framingham, Lawrence, Worcester, and Springfield.

[View Regional Reentry Center Locations](#)

As three main objectives, the RRC proposal will attempt to improve information sharing between criminal justice, law enforcement and social service agencies, reduce duplicative efforts in order to maximize and leverage existing resources and strengthen the reentry component for offenders not supervised on release (as well as parolees).

### **The Regional Reentry Center Initiative focuses on:**

#### **Enhanced information sharing:**

Parole officers will provide local police departments with updated intelligence information and photographs of offenders being released to their communities. Home plans will be verified prior to and upon release from a correctional institution. The Department of Correction will transport the offender to the regional site to which they are returning.

**Enhanced accountability of sex offenders:**

Classified level 2 and 3 sex offenders will be transported to police department in the community they are returning to facilitate their registration requirement. In addition, parole officers will conduct (address) audits on classified level 0 and 1 sex offenders residing in the communities.

**Parole Aftercare Services**

Services will be made available to offenders who complete their sentence without supervision as well as to parolees in the areas of employment, mental health, substance abuse services, vocational training and housing.

**Enhanced victim services**

Victim service case managers will be assigned to the RRCs and work within these respective communities to provide services to crime victims such as safety planning as well as information and access to available services.

The reality that we face in the Commonwealth is that we need to develop and implement realistic and effective reentry strategies. The reintegration of offenders back into society needs to be better coordinated to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. This collaborative initiative involves public and private agencies and departments including the Departments of Mental Health, Public Health, Transitional Assistance, Employment and Training, Sex Offender Registry Board, Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership and the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance.

## CURRENT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS

[▼ DOC'S RE-ENTRY UNIT](#) / [▼ PRE-RELEASE PLANNING](#) / [▼ PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES](#) / [▼ LOW-SECURITY PROGRAMS](#) / [▼ RE-ENTRY HOUSING PROGRAM](#) / [▼ COMMUNITY ROLE](#) / [GLOSSARY](#)

Although the Massachusetts Department of Corrections (DOC) and local county corrections facilities undertake re-entry efforts, there are several factors that limit the overall effectiveness of existing programs. Strict sentencing impedes a “step down” approach to transitioning inmates back into society. Also, a lack of pre-release and work-release centers, lack of coordination within the corrections department and between corrections and community organizations, the exclusion of reformed ex-offenders from re-entry initiatives and the sheer lack of capacity within existing programs to accommodate the housing and other needs of thousands of ex-offenders released each year, undermine existing DOC re-entry efforts.

According to the *Massachusetts DOC*, over 3,000 inmates are released from DOC facilities per year. Thousands more are released from county correctional facilities. Some ex-offenders have a family home to which they can return; but the majority do not have a stable or welcoming place awaiting them upon release. For inmates who do not have a place to go, the DOC, as well as County correctional facilities provide referrals to various housing options. These services are not necessarily used by all inmates or may not be available to all who need them. Traditionally, the DOC has addressed re-entry by providing programs during incarceration such as educational and vocational programs, sex-offender treatment programs, anger management programs, cognitive behavioral programs and an array of other services targeted at preparing the offender for release. Although the focused Re-Entry Unit is relatively new, many programs aimed at release planning have been ongoing in DOC.

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### DOC'S RE-ENTRY UNIT

The DOC's Department of Re-entry has been fully staffed for approximately one and a half years; 21 staff members came to the newly created department from facilities closed by the DOC between 2001 and 2002. The DOC's Re-Entry Unit's services include:

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### Pre-release Planning

DOC provides release planning to all inmates one year prior to release (determined one year before the end of the sentence term for those inmates who complete their terms and upon receiving a favorable decision from the parole board for those inmates who are eligible for parole.) The DOC assigns a re-entry case manager to each facility to assist inmates in planning for their individual needs post-release, including housing, employment and community programs. DOC strives to match each inmate with those programs that best meet that individual's needs. While the release rate varies for each facility, the DOC releases roughly 250

inmates per month through sentence wrap-up or parole.

There are those in the DOC Re-Entry Unit and in the advocacy community who would like to see the DOC start to think about re-entry at the time of incarceration. Among these advocates there is consensus that front-end assessments of offenders are critical to determine what a particular offender needs in order to better ensure that he or she will not re-offend. While the DOC cannot force an inmate to participate in programs, the DOC does offer “good time” to offenders, providing an incentive to participate in educational, treatment, and other programs.

In addition, the DOC offers an optional Transition Workshop, which is conducted by one of its vendors, Spectrum Health Systems. The five-day workshop is designed to get the inmate to start thinking about life outside, and addresses topics such as health care, financial planning, family support, recreation, crisis planning and housing.

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### **Partnerships with Local Law Enforcement Agencies**

While there is typically no post-release supervision for ex-offenders who complete their terms, the DOC has forged re-entry partnerships with local law enforcement agencies. One example is the Lowell Re-Entry Initiative partnership, which is one of eight national pilot programs initiated by the U.S. Department of Justice in the early ‘90’s. This initiative is focused on any ex-offender released from DOC who will live in the city of Lowell, whether he or she is on parole or has “wrapped”.

Information on the ex-offender is provided to Lowell’s crime analysis unit. This information includes both classification and programs data (e.g., programs the ex-offender participated in as an inmate) and intelligence data (e.g., known gang affiliations). From this information, the crime analysis unit creates a one-page “poster” which is distributed internally to all members of the police department.

Approximately two to three weeks prior to the inmate’s release, he or she meets with a designated officer from the Lowell Police Department, the re-entry case manager from the facility in which the inmate is currently housed, and a representative from the Lowell Community Resource Center. The purpose of the initiative is two-fold: first, to convey to the soon-to-be-released ex-offender that the DOC and local law enforcement want to see the ex-offender succeed and second, to inform the ex-offender that future criminal activity will not be tolerated. During the meeting, those present will address particular pitfalls or past problems the ex-offender has faced and encourage the soon-to-be-released ex-offender to get involved in appropriate community programs.

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### **Low-security Programs**

The DOC offers other pre-release programs, such as work-release. Only inmates who are in pre-release facilities may take advantage of the work-release program. Statutory provisions prevent some inmates, such as sex-offenders, from attaining low-security status. Similarly, while inmates with mandatory drug sentences might reach a low-security facility, they are nevertheless ineligible for work-release.

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### **Re-entry Housing Program**

The DOC has a contract with the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) to assist soon-to-be-released ex-offenders who are at risk of homelessness. This program began offering services in July 2003.

Inmates at risk are referred to the Re-Entry Unit six months prior to release. If the inmate is deemed an appropriate candidate, he or she will be referred to one of SMOC's five housing specialists. In accordance with SMOC's contract, they will work with the ex-offender for six months after release, offering stabilization services in an effort to ensure that the ex-offender's housing situation will be sustained for the long-term.

The SMOC has extensive knowledge of available housing for ex-offenders and also possesses housing of its own. SMOC has expertise in the appeals process for state and federal housing regulations and will provide appeals process assistance for the ex-offender by showing that the ex-offender participated in educational or treatment programs while incarcerated. The DOC also has an agreement with the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) for accessing Publicly Accessible Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Reports (PubAcc Reports) for the purpose of facilitating re-entry. These reports are shorter versions of the full CORI reports and list only convictions. SMOC can access CORI information if the ex-offender signs a release for such access.

The DOC also has a loan program, funded by DOC and administered by SMOC. While there may be great need, not all ex-offenders will receive a loan. Because repayment of the loan is essential for sustaining the program and providing aid to future ex-offenders, only those who meet the loan program criteria will receive loans.

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### **Community Role**

While these pre- and post-release programs and services are highly valuable and may prove beneficial to many ex-offenders, it is important to note, as Lisa Jackson of DOC observes, "the majority of ex-offenders are released with no post-release supervision, underscoring the need for communities to accept and support an ex-offender's re-entry by providing needed services." This points to the importance of partnerships and alliances between the DOC and community organizations. Both are central to the work of re-entry.

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To view the entire Northeastern University School of Law *Community Lawyering Program* report on Ex-Offender Housing Discrimination including footnotes, [click here](#).

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/reentry/MA.htm>

# National Alliance to End Homelessness

## Preventing Homelessness Among Reentering Prisoners

### Massachusetts

[print-ready version](#)

The Massachusetts reentry initiative program will assess offenders' needs in housing, substance abuse, mental health, and employment, then address these needs by developing individual program participation plans. The grant will provide housing-related services and hire 6 full-time housing specialists.

#### **Target Population:**

The initiative will target those high-risk offenders aged 18-35 who are being released without supervision. These offenders tend to not otherwise access services and pose the greatest threat to public safety.

#### **Program Description:**

The Department of Corrections is committed to ensuring that each offender has safe and proper housing, with the understanding that emergency housing is not acceptable, safe, nor proper. With that commitment in mind, the Department of Corrections has created a one-year contract with the South Middlesex Opportunity Counsel and HomeStart in Boston (see Best Practice at <http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/homestart.htm>) to hire 6 housing specialists. The Department of Corrections itself will begin planning a year before each offender's release to find the services the offender will need, including housing. There is one case manager in each of the 18 Department of Corrections facilities. The housing specialists will complement the Department of Corrections's efforts, creating a two-tiered system. In the first tier, the Department of Corrections will work to house all returning offenders. In the second tier, the South Middlesex Opportunity Counsel and HomeStart will locate housing and stabilization services for those with out stable living arrangements and who have a rapidly impending release dates. HomeStart will provide one housing specialist to serve the Boston area and the South Middlesex Opportunity Counsel will offer placements in its own properties in Framingham, Fall River, Springfield, Lowell, and Wooster. The South Middlesex

Opportunity Counsel owns 113 buildings, which equate to a total of 867 units of affordable housing in 14 communities. These include emergency housing, reentry housing, sober housing, low rent apartments, and even some home-ownership properties. It is estimated that HomeStart and the South Middlesex Opportunity Counsel will serve 400 offenders per year.

**Funding:**

The Massachusetts Department of Corrections will receive \$1,000,077 from the Department of Justice.

**For more information, contact:**

Lisa Jackson  
Department of Corrections  
(978) 405-6695

***Substance Abuse Services***

**SMOC Mental Health and Addiction Services**

Sage House Family Shelter  
61 Clinton Street  
Framingham MA 01702  
Phone: (508) 626-258

**Primary Focus:** Mental health and substance abuse services

**Services Provided:** Substance abuse treatment, Halfway house

**Type of Care:** Residential long-term treatment (more than 30 days)

**Special Programs/Groups:** Persons with co-occurring mental and substance abuse disorders, Persons with HIV/AIDS, Pregnant/postpartum women, Women, Residential beds for clients' children, Men, Criminal justice clients

**Payment Accepted:** Medicaid, Medicare, Private health insurance

**Special Language Services:** ASL or other assistance for hearing impaired

More [Massachusetts Treatment Centers](#)

South Middlesex Opportunity Council -

***Forensic Services***

**PROGRAM LOCATION**

300 Howard Street, Framingham MA 01702 Telephone 508-879-2250 Fax 508 620-2637 and 133 East Main Street, Marlboro MA 01752 Telephone 508-480-0092 Fax 508-481-1504

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION/SERVICES**

Forensic Services is a specialized program that works with individuals who are involved with the criminal justice system such as law enforcement, legal system, court system and prisons.

The clients have either civil and/or criminal charges and may have a history of violence. The staff treating this population has an understanding of the legal system, of violent behaviors and is able to assess high-risk behaviors as well as a clear understanding of the effects of trauma on the psychological development of individuals.

A treatment provider in this program is an advocate to the client and the goal is to identify, reduce and if possible eliminate pain associated with trauma, interpersonal conflict and social unrest these clients are experiencing.

Other goals that govern forensic services are to ensure the following:

- safety within the community
- advocating for an under-served population
- a liaison to the legal and law enforcement through education and trainings on clinical issues faced by this population
- providing effective outcome based clinical services

Several populations we service:

- juveniles and adults involved in with the legal system and/or court system
- juveniles and adults with a history of violence that have lead to an impairment in functioning within interpersonal relationships and the community
- adults with a history of substance abuse and/or mental illness and/or trauma that has lead to civil and/or criminal offenses

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Women in Transition (WTP) Collaboration is a collaboration with the SMOC's WTP program and the Department of Mental Health to provide mental health evaluations to all enrolled WTP clients prior to release from prison. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the clinical needs of the inmates, to make recommendations for treatment and case management services. The goal of the collaboration is to help the inmate successfully re-integrate into the community. Current research has shown that women treated from a holistic perspective, attending to both their psychological, emotional and basic physical needs (such as housing, vocational training, etc) increases their chances of successful reintegration into the community.

These referrals may come directly from MCI Framingham or released inmates living in the community. The services provided are voluntary.

Criminal Justice Collaborative (CJC) is a partnership between the Framingham District Court and SMOC to provide substance abuse services to court referred clients. It provides treatment in three phases; each phase is 16 weeks. Phase I is a psycho-educational program dealing with early abstinence issues and relapse prevention. Phase II & III are both therapeutic programs primarily dealing with the effects of substance abuse on their daily functioning, impact on relationships with family, friends and significant others as well as developing a relapse prevention and closer to discharge an aftercare plan. If other mental health issues exist such as depression, anxiety and so forth, the clients are advised to seek individual counseling. Throughout enrollment in the CJC, the client is offered an array of case management services such as health care, housing, vocational training, family support and child-care.

Criminal Justice referrals come directly from the probation dept at Framingham District Court

## **WTP referrals come from the Mental Health Workers working in MCI Framingham**

### **FRESH START**

#### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION/SERVICES**

Short-term housing program targeted at individuals releasing from Massachusetts institutions on parole. Place individual referrals up to four months in housing in Framingham, Lawrence and Worcester. Individuals receive intensive case management services following housing placement in a sober housing setting. Individuals receive support in job search process and are also referred to other types of services including education, skills training, mental health and substance abuse.

#### **ANNUAL STATISTICS**

No data yet, program began July 1, 2005

#### **REENTRY HOUSING PROGRAM**

Established in 2003, the RHP consists of five mobile housing search specialists who serve all 17 Department of Correction institutions throughout the Commonwealth. These individuals serve inmates who are at risk of homelessness and are soon to be released back into the community. Staff do "in-reach" to the prison population from referrals provided by DOC re-entry counselors up to six months prior to release. RHP staff will identify the housing needs of a client and either work with them if they have chosen to stay within the region of their incarceration or work with the housing specialist in that region of relocation. The RHP staff person in the housing region will then secure housing prior to the inmate's release and meet the client on the day of their release to assist with the transition. RHP staff also work with re-entry DOC staff to secure other non-housing services such as mental health, substance abuse, education and employment services.

#### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

This is a closed referral program. All referrals come through the Department of Corrections.

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW COMMUNITY LAWYERING PROGRAM FOR THE STANLEY JONES CLEAN SLATE PROJECT RESOURCE LIST FOR EX-OFFENDERS AND ADVOCATES ASSISTING EX-OFFENDERS IN SEARCH OF HOUSING				
ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS	PHONE	CONTACT	SERVICES
SOUTH MIDDLESEX OPPORTUNITY COUNSEL ("SMOC")	300 Powers St. Framingham, MA 01702	508-620-2303	Jeff Handler	The DOC contracted with the SMOC and HomeStart ( <i>see above</i> ) to provide housing counseling for EXOs and to select qualified EXOs for housing loans provided by DOC funds. As a part of this campaign, SMOC will offer placements in its own properties throughout Massachusetts, which includes emergency housing, re-entry housing, sober housing, and low rent apartments.

Page 82 [http://cleanslateproject.org/NUReport4\\_2004.pdf](http://cleanslateproject.org/NUReport4_2004.pdf)

Page 17 [http://cleanslateproject.org/NUReport4\\_2004.pdf](http://cleanslateproject.org/NUReport4_2004.pdf)

The SMOC has extensive knowledge of available housing for ex-offenders and also possesses housing of its own. SMOC has expertise in the appeals process for state and federal housing regulations and will provide appeals process assistance for the ex-offender by showing that the ex-offender participated in educational or treatment programs while incarcerated. The DOC also has an agreement with the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) for accessing Publicly Accessible Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Reports (PubAcc Reports) for the purpose of facilitating re-entry. These reports are shorter versions of the full CORI reports and list only convictions. SMOC can access CORI information if the ex-offender signs a release for such access.

The DOC also has a loan program, funded by DOC and administered by SMOC. While there may be great need, not all ex-offenders will receive a loan. Because repayment of the loan is essential for sustaining the program and providing aid to future ex-offenders, only those who meet the loan program criteria will receive loans.

Page 89 [http://cleanslateproject.org/NUReport4\\_2004.pdf](http://cleanslateproject.org/NUReport4_2004.pdf)

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS ("DOC")	DOC has many facilities and offices throughout the state.  See web-site. <a href="http://www.state.ma.us">www.state.ma.us</a>	978-405-6695	Lisa Jackson, Director of the Re-entry Unit	The Re-entry program has a staff of approximately 20 people who case manage inmates one year prior to release. The DOC funds the Offices of Community Corrections which provide supervision and resources for EXOs, parolees, and probationees. The DOC has implemented various programs and contracted with SMOC and HomeStart ( <i>see above</i> ) to provide transitional assistance to EXOs. The DOC Commissioner, Kathleen Dennehy, has also expressed interest in working with advocates for EXOs.
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## ***Women's Transitional Program***

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION/SERVICES**

Located in the MetroWest career Center, the Framingham Women's Transition Program offers a safe and supportive environment where female offenders can get the support they need to make a successful transition to life in the community. Program participants are assigned a case manager who will assist them in developing an Individual Service Plan (ISP) designed to meet their personal goals.

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

**To be eligible for services, an individual must meet one of the following criteria: Recently released from a Massachusetts Correctional facility (within the past 6 months). Currently incarcerated at a Massachusetts Correctional facility (will be released within the next 6 months). Currently on Probation or Parole.**

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Call the MetroWest Career Center's main number at (508) 620-2377 to schedule an appointment with one of our case managers.**

### **PROGRAM LOCATION**

**MetroWest Career Center, 300 Howard Street, 2nd Floor, Framingham, MA**

Advocates has a contract to staff the ReEntry Center:

[http://www.mass.gov/Eeops/docs/pb/november\\_newsletter.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/Eeops/docs/pb/november_newsletter.pdf)

For Steve Bisson, the SAC at the Framingham Parole office, becoming a counselor was the natural choice, since he's always been fascinated with human behavior. Originally from Canada, where he found mental health and substance abuse counselor jobs scarce, he

SUBSTANCE ABUSE COORDINATORS, continued from pg. 5

moved to Massachusetts, where he received a Master's degree in counseling psychology from Assumption College in Worcester.

Prior to joining his home agency, Advocates, Inc., Mr. Bisson worked as a mental health counselor at the Worcester House of Correction, where he conducted suicide watch and psychological evaluations.

"I feel like we do so much more than just substance abuse counseling," said Mr. Bisson, who helps parole clients with everything from finishing their GED to getting eyeglasses and "finding places to develop spirituality."

Quotations from SMOC Contract Letter to Darcy C. Bens, Department of Corrections: February 6, 2003

“SMOC has a demonstrated commitment of providing services for high risk groups, including offenders, homeless men, women and families, DSS involved families, DMH clients, substance abusers, dually diagnosed clients, and single parents and young mothers. We already serve the reentry population at so many different points within our own continuum and we recognize the value and preference for a system-wide reentry partnership where collaboration is essential between state and county criminal justice agencies, social/human service agencies and community support organizations.”

Page 2 – Housing Experience

“Housing Search Experience: SMOC currently funds dozens of housing search specialists throughout the Commonwealth who serve a wide variety of populations including serious and violent offenders.”

“Mobile Stabilization Team – “The program is part of a larger statewide effort led by Homestart, Inc. in Boston, with whom SMOC subcontracts to serve the Metro West region. From November 1998 to November 2002 the program has served 171 individuals in the Metro West region alone.”

Page 8 –

“We know for a fact that offenders make up a solid percentage of the individuals we serve. In some programs there are the target population while in others the number is quite high.”

Page 9 –

“Statewide the Mobile Resource Team (MRT) has had extensive experience working with the offender population through its housing and employment search program. Since the focus is on “in-reach” to local shelters and transitional housing facilities, we know that upward of 40% of shelter guests have criminal records. In many instances MRT staff are already providing housing and employment services to the offender population. We estimate that close to 75% of MRT clients are classified as ex-offenders; ... SMOC has developed effective strategies to combat the barriers that ex-offenders continue to experience in their housing search.”

Page 11 –

SMOC Housing Specialists have also developed creative housing search techniques to address high risk, difficult to place offender subgroups, for example arsonists and sex offenders. .... Private SRO's and rooming houses where C.O.R.I. checks are not required are an enormous resource for placing these specific populations.”