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Returning Citizens: Promising Practices and Recommendations for the District of Columbia

The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration
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Returning Citizens:

Promising Practices and Recommendations for the District of Columbia

Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration

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For the Justice Policy Institute (JPI)

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PROJECT RATIONALE

The journey of returning citizens from prison to living as fully functional members within society is not an easy journey and we believe that Washington, District of Columbia ("D.C.") should take steps in making that journey more accessible and attainable for its returning residents. According to the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, "nearly three of five D.C. individuals experiencing homelessness (57 percent) have been incarcerated, according to a 2019 assessment, and 55 percent reported that incarceration had caused their homelessness. This means that almost one-third of individuals who experience homelessness in D.C. connect that to their incarceration" (Coventry, 2020). Over half of returning citizens struggle with homelessness as they are re-entering society (Coventry, 2020). These individuals may struggle with finding long-term and sustainable employment, access to education, job skills, and health services, and a solid and supportive community – all challenges which may lead to recidivism.

This report will shed light on the issue of homelessness and the related challenges experienced by individuals that re-enter society upon release from incarceration, also known in report as returning citizens. The report will analyze the intersectionality of these issues and discuss the many factors that contribute to the barriers and struggles faced by returning citizens as they re-assimilate into society. An intended outcome of this report is to discuss the challenges surrounding this issue and provide recommendations for the Washington, D.C. area on how the city should move forward when formulating policies and programs. Various agencies serving D.C. area returning citizens agree that "securing housing is the most important need and biggest challenge for them. Housing is the most critical step to successful reintegration because it establishes stability for other needs to be met such as employment, substance abuse, and mental health treatment" (Coventry, 2020). The intersectionality of these issues is a key aspect of the report as the challenges of homelessness extend beyond just securing safe and stable housing.

This report will provide recommendations that could support the journey of returning citizens within the District of Columbia. A goal of this report and its related recommendations are to provide our client with a strong foundation of researched effective methods in addressing these problems. Homelessness cannot be the norm among returning citizens as this just serves

to create hardships and adverse challenges for an already vulnerable population group (Delgadillo, 2020). The D.C. government and private organizations must add policies and programs likely to make reentering society easier for returning citizens and create a sustainable and long-term model for returning citizens attempting reintegration. Addressing the issue of homelessness among returning citizens can also have a positive impact on some of the other significant challenges in the D.C. area, such as crime, violence, substance abuse, mental health, and more. Neighborhoods will become safer once individuals possess a strong, secure, and safe foundation around housing, since this will provide them with an alternative to criminal activity for survival. Furthermore, positive changes around homelessness could promote economic growth around the city as families may lay their roots in areas all over D.C., so that not just certain wards and businesses will thrive in the city (Wurden, 2018).

While this report analyzes the issue of homelessness through a D.C.-centric lens, the recommendations put forth may be applicable to other geographic locations. All returning citizens attempting to re-enter society deserve to have the tools and resources available at their disposal, that would enable them to have a fair shot at doing so. Although resources and programs go a long way in providing returning citizens with opportunities that increase the likelihood of successful re-entry (i.e. receiving an educational degree, addressing mental health challenges, and having familial connections while incarcerated), it is important to remember that returning citizens must have the ambition and strength needed to persevere and successfully reintegrate back into society. In other words, there must be a partnership between criminal justice reform advocates providing program resources in connection with returning citizens that are willing to learn and grow, as individuals. Resources and special programming alone, cannot guarantee successful reentry since the individuals receiving the services hold great power in the direction and outcomes of a program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Justice Policy Institute's (JPI) mission is dedicated to reducing the use of incarceration in the justice system by promoting fair and effective policies. With this goal in mind, the GW team chose to dive deep into the flaws and challenges of the re-entry system. The District of Columbia currently does not have policies and programs in place that make re-entering society easier for returning citizens. These individuals face many obstacles, including employment struggles, a lack of access to education resources, a lack of resources for mental and behavioral health, and many more. However, the main problem addressed in this report is the access to housing for those who are re-entering society. The Justice Policy Institute requested an examination of the concept of homelessness and recommended practices that could be adopted by Washington D.C. to accommodate those re-entering society, referred to as returning citizens throughout this report. This report will examine the current literature surrounding this issue, analyze interviews with executives within this field, and establish promising practices by utilizing identified key components. Finally, recommendations were provided to JPI for their use in advocating for policy change on this issue.

Methods

The GW team used a qualitative approach to address the Justice Policy Institute's interest in accessible housing for returning citizens re-entering society after being incarcerated. This began with conducting an in-depth analysis of secondary resources and research of the intersectionality, both external and internal factors, of this issue. This research includes issues such as employment, mental health and substance abuse, gender, and sexuality. The approach also analyzed literature encompassing the experience of returning citizens by researching how prison treatment affects an individual's experience and how the length of an individual's time in the system affects his or her behavior and lifestyle once he or she is released. The second methodology is based on semi-structured interviews. Four interviews were conducted with members working within this field to gain more knowledge of the challenges facing those who are re-entering society. The first round of interviews contained two interviews and the second round of interviews included two interviews. A two-stage interview model strengthened the

accuracy of information gathered as well as increased the effectiveness of recommendations for the client. The final methodology centered around identifying four promising practices and conducting an analysis of those practices. Through analyzing the literature and conducting interviews, key components were established. These components assisted in identifying four promising practices. Recommendations based on this analysis are provided at the end of the report.

Key Findings

After conducting the literature review and semi-structured interviews, the GW team was able to identify five themes that propelled the deeper dive of the four promising practices. The following table demonstrates the overarching themes, as well as their sub-themes:

Thematic Analysis Matrix

Overarching Themes	Sub-Themes
Housing	Insufficient, Accessibility, Discrimination, Familial Ties, Homelessness, and Housing Insecurity
Employment	Discrimination, Expungement, Ban-the-Box, Financial Instability, and Illicit Activities
Resources	Wraparound Services, Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse Services, Employment Opportunities, Job Development, and Mentorship
Administrative Processes	Leasing Applications, Identifications, Banking, Technology Gap
Interagency Collaboration	Communication, Coordination, Partnerships, and Decision-Making

As well as these key themes, the GW team was able to identify four promising practices based on key components. The four promising practices that were identified and analyzed to produce the set of recommendation included: Freedom Commons (Syracuse, New York), D.C. Ready Center (Washington, D.C.), Changing Perceptions (Washington, D.C.), and Community Resources for Justice (Boston, MA). Looking at the strengths and limitations of the collective promising practices, all these programs utilized wrap-around services, which encompasses a key finding of the literature and analysis. However, all four of the promising practices lacked the financial resources to effective fund these programs for long-term success. While these promising practices adopted many of the key components that were identified through the literature

review and semi-structured interviews, each program had room for improvement. This thorough analysis of the strengths and limitations led the GW team to create recommendations for Washington D.C. organization, agencies, and policymakers.

Recommendations

After conducting our research, interviews, and analysis, our team was able to draw recommendations that will allow Washington, D.C. to implement a successful re-entry system:

- A successful housing program will abstain from taking a one-size fits all approach to re-entry services. It is imperative to acknowledge the diversity of needs and the wide variety of services that are necessary for a successful reintegration.
- Having an emphasis on interagency collaboration is instrumental to connect returning citizens with comprehensive services that fully address all of their diverse needs. Interagency collaboration can be defined simply as having different departments and agencies working together for the betterment of a specific group, in this case, returning citizens.
- The offering of mentoring services to returning citizens encourages a successful re-entry as it increases the likelihood that returning citizens will become productive members of society.
- A successful re-entry program must take a holistic approach, with the intent of encompassing the diverse needs of returning citizens. It is important for D.C. stakeholders to remember that there is no one size fits all when it comes to the enactment of criminal justice policy and programming since all social issues are interrelated and connected.

KEY TERMS

Returning Citizens: Individuals that re-enter society, upon release from incarceration. These individuals depend on a variety of services to meet their needs, to reduce barriers to successful re-entry. If the complex needs of returning citizens are not met, then they are likely to recidivate, in connection to trauma.

Homelessness: An individual who is in a situation where they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate residence or is or unstably housed.

Sexual Minorities: An individual or group whose sexual identity/orientation and race differs from the social or cultural majority.

Housing Insecurity: Illustrates the narrow definition of homelessness. Under this umbrella system, the definition of homelessness serves to expand returning citizens that are experiencing homelessness (both sheltered and unsheltered) and those that live in marginal housing, such as rooming houses, hotels, and motels.

Carceral: Refers to correctional institutions, i.e., jails and prisons. Carceral citizens are individuals that have had exposure to correctional institutions, and for the purposes of this paper, represent returning citizens. Although carceral citizens may have access to special programs and services, their access to resources is limited due to the negative connotation associated with their status.

Re-entry Process: This process is defined as the time-period in which returning citizens are released from incarceration and are required to transition back into society. Re-entry is often deemed a challenging process for returning citizens that are impacted by mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, poverty, educational deficiencies, racism, stigma, and trauma, which each represent a barrier.

Wrap-around Services: Services designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable populations through utilizing a holistic-based approach. These types of service recognize that there is no one-size fits all approach to providing successful re-entry services.

Recidivism: The percentage of returning citizens that are unable to reintegrate back into society successfully, and as a result, become re-incarcerated.

Trauma: The existence of significant and adverse events and/or experiences that consequently lead to problems tied to mental illness, and substance abuse, in addition to a multitude of other challenges.

Stigma/Discrimination: Stigma is defined as being viewed in a negative way due to a particular label. Stigma results in discrimination. In other words, Discrimination signifies that a person is being treated negatively because of that same label. Returning citizens often must live with an "ex-con" label, making it harder for them to receive stable and secure employment, find stable and secure housing, in addition to making and maintaining long-term relationships.

Area Median Income (AMI): This represents the midpoint of a region's income distribution with half of residents making more money and half of residents making less money. It can be argued that the 50% of residents making less than the AMI are more prone to participate in criminal activity due to the relationship poverty shares with food insecurity, homelessness, and unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

In Washington, District of Columbia, returning citizens face many barriers when re-entering society due to the lifelong stigma and other effects associated with incarceration. Systemic inequities, coupled with a broken criminal justice system, create an array of obstacles for successful reintegration. Every year, thousands of returning citizens return to their former locations, only to discover that they have no home. Returning citizens often leave prison with no financial security, poor mental health and substance use challenges, in addition to the high probability of possessing broken family ties (Coventry, 2020). These barriers incite a feeling of isolation and create a sense of hopelessness, which can lead an individual to resort to methods of unconventional social mobility, such as crime to simply survive. In connection to unintentionally, returning citizens may find themselves tripping on technical violations that can be triggered by the smallest of behaviors such as not keeping appointments with probation or parole officers, using alcohol or other drugs, and not paying required fees associated with their reintegration (PEW, 2019). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, during a 10-year follow up period from 2008-2018, about 66% of returning citizens released across 24 states in 2008 were arrested within 3 years, and 82% were arrested within 10 years (Antenangeli, 2021). In an attempt to mitigate this startling statistic, housing can serve as an important deterrent to recidivism by creating a stable foundation that provides returning citizens with the necessary tools to successfully reintegrate into society. Unfortunately, many returning citizens have virtually no opportunities to find suitable employment and affordable housing because of their limited education and their prior involvement with the justice system. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, almost half (40%) of returning citizens do not hold a high school diploma or GED (Prison Policy Initiative, 2018). This lack of high school education—compounded by a criminal record—leaves returning citizens with no other option than to work for low-wage jobs or find other alternatives. As of 2022, the Fair Market Rent estimates the average monthly price for a one-bedroom apartment in Washington, D.C. is above $1,400, which presents a significant challenge for returning citizens to be able to secure stable and affordable housing (Coventry, 2020).

The objective of the report is to provide essential context surrounding the challenges and barriers faced by returning citizens during the re-entry process with a special emphasis on the importance of suitable and affordable housing. The report also sheds light on the importance of addressing some of the other barriers faced by returning citizens that makes it virtually impossible to reintegrate into society successfully, such as discrimination, mental health conditions, substance use disorders, limited employment opportunities, long periods of time in prison, and broken familial ties. The report collected and analyzed a variety of existing programs or promising practices of nonprofits and other organizations addressing the issue of homelessness and housing insecurity among returning citizens that are attempting to re-enter society. As a result of the various programs and promising practices available, the report focused on four promising practices that were selected through a strict process of identifying key components to provide the Washington D.C. area with critical information and recommendations on specific programs or models that can be implemented to assist returning citizens in the D.C. area with securing housing and mitigating the other challenges and barriers of re-entry. The report utilized a combination of qualitative methods to answer the three research questions below:

1) What does the literature review tell us about the re-entry process for returning citizens?
    a) What are some of the major challenges and barriers?
2) How does secure and reliable housing connect with and relate to other issues that returning citizens encounter when attempting to re-enter society (i.e., obtaining employment, education, mental health conditions, substance use disorders, etc.)?
    b) How are nonprofit programs helping returning citizens?
3) What are four practices that can be highlighted to best inform how Washington, D.C. can approach the re-entry process for returning citizens?

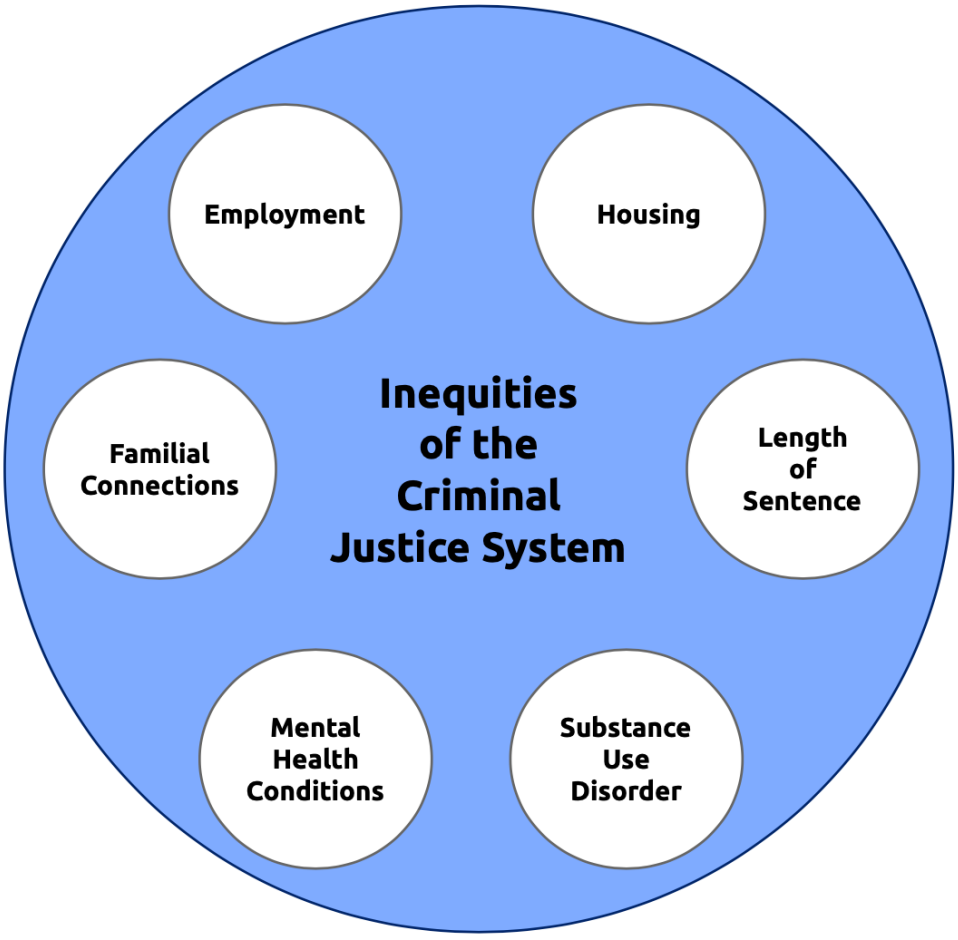
The report is divided into four major sections to address the three research questions mentioned above. The first section includes the literature review that provides the background and context around the related challenges and barriers that returning citizens face before, during, and after their release with a focus on the importance of affordable housing. While there is an array of challenges and barriers faced by returning citizens, the report will only highlight a few key ones,

such as the discrimination and stigmatization around the "ex-con" label, the prevalence of mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders, the supply and demand barriers around securing employment, the heightened challenges faced by minorities, and the effects that differences in lengths of sentences and familial ties have on returning citizens after release. The second section of the report will include the methodology and data collection plan to explain further, and, in more detail, the three qualitative methods utilized to collect the necessary information and data to address the research questions above. The methods utilized included (1) a literature review and secondary data analysis, (2) semi-structured interviews, and (3) identification and analysis of four promising practices. The third section of the report analyses the four promising practices that were identified through government agency reports, academic journals, and non-profit organizations by a set of strict key components. These four promising practices were identified and analyzed to provide an in-depth and holistic understanding of the challenges of re-entry and to highlight how it relates to other societal stressors, in addition to informing on some of the recommendations for the Washington, D.C. area. The fourth and final section provides the actual recommendations for the Washington D.C. area that can build the foundation to address some of the key barriers and issues associated with the re-entry process.

THE CHALLENGES OF RE-ENTRY

Without the proper support, programs, and services, returning citizens often face discrimination, housing insecurity, homelessness, a lack of employment opportunities, mental health conditions and substance abuse disorders, and broken familial connections that create serious challenges surrounding meeting their everyday needs (Leadership Conference, 2017). The label of "ex-con" can present a set of challenges and barriers that limit returning citizens from having access to important programs, services, and opportunities that are crucial for reintegration. Moreover, a significant number of returning citizens are minorities, with nearly half being Black and nearly a fifth being Latino or Asian (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003). As a result, if these returning citizens belong to minority groups and/or identify as part of the LGBTIQ+ community, those challenges and barriers are further compounded. Furthermore, there are two major factors that play an instrumental role in a successful reintegration for returning citizens—

housing and employment. However, these are also two of the major areas where returning citizens face the most discrimination because of the stigmatized identities derived from a criminal record, race, and ethnicity (Label 2017). Returning citizens often suffer from labor-market discrimination and exclusion and are less likely to be provided with the sufficient employment opportunities and benefits needed to successfully reintegrate back into society. In general, Black men continued to face significant discrimination relative to all other groups at the hiring stage (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003). Without a stable job and income, housing opportunities become virtually impossible for returning citizens, making housing insecurity and homelessness an unfortunate reality. While stable and secure housing and employment opportunities are critical for successful reintegration for returning citizens, there are another set of barriers that also need to be addressed to ensure a successful reintegration: mental health conditions, substance use disorders, time spent in prison, and familial connections.



The prevalence of poor mental health conditions in correctional institutions make returning citizens more susceptible to the dangers of financial instability, unemployment, homelessness, and re-incarceration (Baillargeon, Hoge, and Penn 2010). Individuals in state prisons with mental health conditions were an estimated twice as likely to experience homelessness the year prior to their arrest than those without a mental health condition (James and Glaze 2006). In addition, substance use disorders tend to be a negative predictor for recidivism due to problems with maintaining abstinence and parole conditions such as drug testing, which can serve as a gateway back into the criminal justice system for returning citizens. Furthermore, returning citizens are more likely to return to a home environment that is like the one prior to their incarceration, which is often still plagued by easy access to substances, interpersonal conflict, and little to no positive social support. This type of environment continues to serve as a reinforcement of social and emotional traumas that can potentially lead to higher rates of recidivism (Chavira and Jason 2017).

There are two other important factors to consider regarding a successful reintegration process for returning citizens. The time spent in prison and familial connections can have a significant effect on the ability of returning citizens to successfully transition back into society. The time spent in prison becomes critical because it can negatively affect all aspects of a returning citizens' ability to find and maintain sustainable and affordable housing, employment opportunities and benefits, access to mental health and substance use resources and services, and strong familial connections. While the criminal justice system justifies longer prison stays due to the intended effects on recidivism, there are an array of negative consequences derived from longer prison terms. As it is to be expected, longer prison sentences have a significant effect on housing opportunities as returning citizens have been gone for long periods of time and their former home or housing might no longer be an option. Moreover, longer sentences in the criminal justice system prevent individuals from accumulating private sector or employment experience that can be beneficial in the long-term search for employment. Additionally, prisons are not the most adequate environments for individuals to receive the services and resources necessary to address some of the barriers and challenges they are facing, such as any mental health condition or substance use disorder that require proper resources and treatment. As for

familial connections, these connections are extremely important for returning citizens during their time in prison as supportive familial relationships during the time of incarceration can promote psychological and physiological health for individuals who are incarcerated. After release, familial connections can serve as positive support systems and resources during the reintegration process for returning citizens. For starters, familial connections can be critical for returning citizens to find temporary housing right after they are released as they might be able to stay with family members.

THE INEQUITIES OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

From a racial and cultural perspective, returning citizens from the Bureau of Prison (BOP) facilities are overwhelmingly Black and male. In 2015, nearly 95 percent were Black and nearly 96 percent were male (Coventry, 2020). Officers are more likely to stop Black drivers and, once stopped, are more likely to search them as well. People of color are also more likely to be arrested than whites (Coventry, 2020). Additionally, people of color are more "likely to be charged more harshly than whites; once charged, they are more likely to be convicted; and once convicted, they are more likely to face stiff sentences – all after accounting for relevant legal differences such as crime severity and criminal history" (Coventry, 2020). These percentages reflect the racial discrimination and disparities in police interactions, arrest, and sentencing. For example, white people engage in drug offenses at a higher rate than Black people nationally, but Black people are incarcerated for these offenses at a rate that is ten times greater (Coventry, 2020). Furthermore, research shows that men are incarcerated at higher rates than women. In addition, gender differences play a significant role in understanding why women and men engage in crime. Lastly, sexual minorities have an incarceration rate three times higher than the general population (Meyer et al, 2017). Understanding the complexity and diversity of these groups will only improve the re-entry process since historically, intervention practices have been targeted towards men and have ignored women and sexual minorities-specific issues.

Women

Research suggests that women experience lower recidivism rates than men, even when enrolled in comparable re-entry programs. However, women in the criminal justice system are more likely than the general population to suffer from several mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, borderline personality disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Poverty, economic marginalization, and substance use disorders are important factors that drive women to participate and engage in criminal activity. It is no surprise that women are usually arrested for drug-related or property crimes for the purposes of acquiring drugs. Women's substance use disorders and criminal activity can be linked to childhood maltreatment, dysfunctional families, and mental health conditions. Unlike most men, most women that are incarcerated are parents to children under the age of 18 (Miller 2021). Women in prisons have reintegration needs that are quite different from that of men due to their disproportionate victimization from sexual or physical abuse and responsibility for their children. Thus, the criminal justice system affects women differently, so the re-entry process for women should be unique and tailored to their specific expectation of complying with supervised release conditions, achieving financial stability, accessing health care, locating housing, and trying to reunite with their children (Bloom, Owen & Covington 2003). As a result, women that are incarcerated are disproportionately affected by the additional demands for successful re-entry that are a direct result of their gender. Just like gender, incarceration and re-entry can be significantly different for individuals belonging to groups that have historically been discriminated against, such as members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Sexual Minorities

According According to the American Journal of Public Health (AJPH), in the years 2011-2012, the incarceration rates of lesbian, gay, or bisexual persons was 1,882 per 100,000 people. In fact, a 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, which studied nearly 28,000 transgender adults, showed patterns of frequent harassment, profiling, and abuse by law enforcement officers and high rates of incarceration (Anafi, Tobin, De La Torre et. al 2018). In 2017, 2% of the survey respondents had been incarcerated, more than twice the rate of the general population. The incarceration

rate was higher among transgender people of color and low-income individuals. In 2007, one in ten (9%) Black transgender women were incarcerated (approximately ten times the rate of the general population). Similarly, one in six (16%) respondents in the 2008–09 National Transgender Discrimination Survey had been incarcerated, with the rate skyrocketing to 47% among Black transgender people. In addition, research shows that the transgender community is more likely to be subjected to higher and more inappropriate levels of trauma during their time in prison due to systemic biases.

The National Center for Transgender Equality reports that jails and prisons can have traumatizing effects on members who do not fit the binary gender stereotypes. Individuals in jails who identify as neither female nor male are subject to physical and sexual abuse. Oftentimes, individuals that identify as transgender are placed in solitary confinement as a solution to prevent any conflict or violence that can arise from being with the general prison population. According to federal data, individuals that identify as transgender are nearly ten times more likely to be sexually assaulted than the general prison population. Almost half of transgender individuals (40%) in state and federal prisons reported a sexual assault during their time in prison (Beck 2018). The high number of sexual assault reports are more likely as jail facilities house transgender individuals according to their sex assigned at birth, which only increases the chances for discrimination, abuse, assault, and violence (Anafi, 2018, p.4). To address some of the sexual harassment and assaults happening in the criminal justice system, the federal government required the U.S. Department of Justice to develop certain standards and measures to mitigate these sexual harassment and assault concerns. As a result, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003 was enacted, which was meant to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse (Anafi, 2018, p.10). Although PREA standards have been in place since 2003, the misplacement of transgender prisoners continues to be present at jails across the country, which continues to lead to sexual harassment, assault, and violence against transgender individuals (Anafi, 2018, p.10).

A LIFELONG SENTENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

Returning citizens may experience an array of stigmatized identities that are derived from their previous involvement in the justice system, substance use disorders, mental health conditions, sexuality, and lastly, race (Label 2017). As soon as returning citizens set foot outside of a correctional facility, they will be tagged with an "ex-con" label, which will only compound the multitude of challenges and barriers that they will experience such as relegation to the bottom of the labor market, frayed connections to family and friends, and the pressures of navigating the varying demands of criminal justice and welfare state bureaucracies (Hamlin and Purser 2021; Label 2017; and Goodman 2020). While access to housing and employment have been shown to have the most significant impact on successful re-entry to society by returning citizens, one of the biggest hurdles to this access is the stigmatization of their previous involvement in the justice system as it negatively affects any action, move, or attempt to re-enter society.

To properly address some of the challenges faced by returning citizens, some argue that there must be a resounding change around this stigmatization, starting with the language that is utilized to refer to this specific group of individuals. Nancy La Vigne (2016), Director of the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center, explained that "[l]language is powerful. When we talk about people who come into contact with the criminal justice system and refer to them as 'offenders,' 'inmates,' or 'convicts,' we cause these people's offenses to linger long after they've paid their debt to society" (Label 2017). Accordingly, the language must change and become more humanizing to respect and reflect the dignity of all people, especially vulnerable groups that are attempting to become meaningful contributors to society. If the language remains dehumanizing, then it will become more difficult to hold society accountable for the stigmatization of and discrimination against these individuals because accountability, language, and labels matter.

Carceral Citizenship and the Principle of Least Eligibility

Returning citizens are part of a specialized population once they are released from a prison, creating a paradoxical experience in which they are allowed access to specific services and programs while also remaining restricted from accessing other services or programs (Hamlin

and Purser 2021; LeBel 2017). In essence, returning citizens become what is known as carceral citizens, which is a term utilized to illustrate the special services, programs, and entitlements that returning citizens have access to as opposed to those other sectors of society with no criminal history. However, these carceral citizens are also subject to a different set of rules, expectations, and responsibilities that are often "administered extrajudicially" (Hamlin and Purser 2021). Additionally, returning citizens are affected by what is commonly known as the "principle of least eligibility," a principle that suggests returning citizens should not be given access to any goods or services in "excess of those available to people who have lived within the law" (LeBel 2017). This principle translates into laws, policies and therefore society's perception and treatment of returning citizens, turning them into the individuals "least eligible" to receive social benefits, supports, entitlements, or services. As a result, returning (carceral) citizens may have access to certain special programs and services, but their overall access to resources is severely limited by their status and far less than any other non-carceral citizen. In addition, the majority are subject to a different set of standards that perpetuate stigmas, discrimination, and carceral supervision and control. These stigmas often disproportionately limit returning citizens' access to one of the most basic human needs – housing.

HOUSING INSECURITY AND HOMELESSNESS

In the 1990s, the United States began to move away from public housing strategies towards more private opportunities and initiatives to address the housing crisis for vulnerable populations (Vale 2013). In 1999, the United States enacted the Faircloth Amendment, which essentially prevented housing authorities from building more housing projects or units that surpassed the number of public housing units that were already present at the time the amendment was enacted (Brey 2021). In other words, the availability of public housing units in the United States has never surpassed the number of units that were available in 1999. As a result, the only way to create new subsidized housing must be through a public-private partnership, which has mostly resulted in voucher programs that subsidize the rent in the private market (Rosen 2020). This presents a challenge for various vulnerable groups, including returning citizens, as they become susceptible to discrimination in an already very limited housing market.

In a study completed in New York State, 42.7% reported that rejection occurred at least sometimes when attempting to secure housing (LeBel 2017). As a result, it becomes virtually impossible for returning citizens to find any type of housing as they are either legally barred from certain public housing units or discriminated against in the private housing market (LeBel 2017; Equal Rights Center 2016; Travis et al. 2014). Without safe and stable housing, returning citizens face the dangers of homelessness.

Broad Definition of Homelessness

It is important to keep in mind that there are several definitions of "homelessness" as experienced by returning citizens. Housing insecurity includes returning citizens that are experiencing homelessness (both sheltered and unsheltered) and those that live in marginal housing, such as rooming houses, hotels, and motels (Couloute 2018). Research shows that even though 203 out of every 10,000 returning citizens experience homelessness, approximately three times as many (570 out of every 10,000) are housing insecure (Couloute 2018). Although the research is very limited as it relates to national statistics that illustrate the issue of housing insecurity, it has been proven that housing insecurity is linked to incarceration (Couloute 2018). Housing insecurity increases the likelihood of incarceration as vulnerable individuals are more susceptible to criminal activity to survive. It can also be stated that the re-entry process increases the likelihood of housing insecurity because of the financial barriers returning citizens face when attempting to find employment and suitable housing. It is also worth mentioning that occurrences of housing insecurity are much higher for men with criminal history records in comparison to those without (Lutze, Rosky, and Hamilton 2014). One study found that men with criminal records were twice as likely to become affected by housing instability, four times more likely to experience homelessness, and those most recently incarcerated are 69% more likely to experience housing insecurity (Lutze, Rosky, and Hamilton 2014).

Homelessness as a Risk Factor

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, returning citizens are nearly ten times more likely to experience homelessness than the public (Couloute 2018). Instances of homelessness are more common in individuals that have been incarcerated more than once, in addition to

individuals that are recently released from prison, followed by women, and minority groups (Couloute 2018). Individuals that have been to prison just once experience homelessness approximately seven times more than the public. Individuals that have been incarcerated more than once experience homelessness thirteen times more than the public (Couloute 2018). Additionally, research shows that up to 15% of incarcerated individuals experience homelessness in the year prior to being incarcerated (Couloute 2018). This shows that there is a relationship between homelessness, crime, and times in prison. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, spending less than twelve months in prison has a sheltered homelessness rate of 127 per 10,000 people. In comparison, spending 120 months in prison or longer has a homelessness rate of 69 per 10,000 people. On the other hand, spending 120 months in prison or longer has a rate of 409 per 10,000 people living with roommates, in a hotel or in a motel, in comparison to spending less than twelve months having a rate of 368 per 10,000 people living with roommates, in a hotel or in a motel (Couloute 2018). Moreover, instances of homelessness and housing instability increase cases of social stigma, and promote association with poor role models, such as antisocial peers, victimization by others, and "shadow work" such as panhandling, scavenging, and street vending, which has become criminalized in a variety of jurisdictions (Lutze, Rosky, and Hamilton 2014). Furthermore, in addition to homelessness serving as a re-entry barrier, it is also a fast-track back into the criminal justice system as homelessness is becoming more and more criminalized.

Criminalization of Homelessness

In addition to acting as a re-entry barrier for returning citizens, homelessness also increases the likelihood of being arrested in connection to laws that continue to criminalize homelessness (Couloute 2018). Research from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness shows that city, town, and county officials utilize criminalization measures as a strategy for implementing a zero-tolerance approach to street homelessness and to temporarily decrease the visibility of homelessness in communities (Robinson 2017). Some examples of common offenses that criminalize homelessness include sleeping in public spaces, panhandling, and public urination (Robinson 2017; District of Columbia Courts n.d.). In fact, in Washington D.C., public urination and aggressive panhandling are considered misdemeanors and upon conviction, guilty parties are subjected to fines up to $500 and/or imprisonment of no more than

90 days (D.C. Code n.d.; Council of the District of Columbia n.d.; District of Columbia Courts n.d.). Furthermore, every year, more and more cities are placing restrictions and bans on public sleeping, sitting, loitering, sleeping in a car, and some cities have even gone as far as banning "public feeding" of the homelessness and preventing people from gifting homeless individuals with survival items such as blankets (Robinson 2017). In fact, between 2011 and 2014, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness found that the number of U.S. cities banning daily life activities of individuals experiencing homelessness increased dramatically (Robinson 2017). 34% additional cities banned public sleeping, 43% additional cities banned sitting or lying down, 60% additional cities banned "public camping," and the number of cities banning sleeping in cars increased by more than double (Robinson 2017). Research also shows that homelessness among returning citizens may increase instances of parole violations and recidivism; a Georgia study concluded that the likelihood of arrests increased 25% each time individuals on parole changed addresses (Roman & Travis 2006). All in all, it can be argued that the current system is set up to punish returning citizens as opposed to helping them, making it more likely that they will experience homelessness and other major barriers that will prevent them from re-entering society successfully, thus creating the never-ending cycle of homelessness, crime, and incarceration.

Broad Barriers to Finding Sustainable Housing

According to Evans et al., there are many barriers that prevent returning citizens from sustaining and maintaining adequate housing (2019). Returning citizens are prone to having a more difficult time finding employment that would allow them access to resources necessary for housing, such as income. The combination of fees, a security deposit and first month's rent discourage returning citizens from accessing affordable housing. Even if returning citizens can afford housing, their application may be declined due to their criminal history (Evans et al., 2018). In addition to the obstacles that come with having a criminal record, returning citizens most likely do not have the required credit history, which forces them to rely on references (Evans et al., 2018). However, based on the individual's criminal record and employment history, personal or professional references may dissuade the landlord from accepting them into their building. However, there is some movement towards mandating the removal of conviction history

questions from employment applications. As this policy develops, this concept could expand to housing applications. There are currently fifteen states that have mandated the removal of conviction history questions from employment applications: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington (Avery and Lu, 2021). In addition to these policy changes, there are also non-profit organizations and for-profit organizations that solely hire returning citizens. For example, Dave's Killer Bread is launching the Second Chance Project. The new program gives formerly incarcerated individuals a place to share their stories of life out of prison and back at work (Kincaid, 2017). In conclusion, more companies, both private and public, and state governments are moving towards inclusive policy making.

Homelessness in the LGBTIQ+ Community

Homelessness and recidivism among the LGBTIQ+ community appear to be a cyclical issue, but there are more social factors to consider. In a 2019 report, Fraser, Pierse, Chisholm, and Cook recognized that people who identify as LGBTIQ+, in addition to people who are experiencing homelessness, face a lot more barriers during the re-entry process than accounted for. The key themes faced by people who identify as LGBTIQ+ and are experiencing homelessness can be grouped into three different categories. The first grouping identifies homelessness causes, including poverty, ethnicity and racism, substance use disorders, and mental health conditions. The second grouping consists of systematic failures that have led to homelessness, such as sexual abuse, foster care, discrimination and stigma, and family. The third grouping is composed of experiences during homelessness which includes survival sex and sex work, physical ill-health and HIV, and shelter inaccessibility. This systems-thinking approach to LGBTIQ+ homelessness is meant to identify the intersectional themes that lead LGBTIQ+ people to experience homelessness with hopes of informing support programs and addressing chronic homelessness to prevent crime. As a result, until these intersectionality themes are fully addressed, members of the LGBTIQ+ community will continue to face discrimination and chronic homelessness, which can ultimately lead to incarceration and recidivism.

An Updated Guidance on Housing Inclusion

While there have been some guidelines and recommendations made that attempt to address the obstacles returning citizens face when searching for housing options, these have yet to be turned into formal policy. On April 4, 2016, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued a guidance that warned housing providers that admission policies resulting in discrimination violate the Fair Housing Act, which would apply to returning citizens. Also, within this guidance, "arrests can no longer be used to deny admission to applicants; only convictions can be considered. Under this guidance, HUD asked housing providers to reassess their admission policies and procedures to confirm nondiscriminatory practices and provide evidence for policies that use criminal backgrounds to protect resident safety and the property" (Walter Viglione, Tillyer, 2017). This guidance should push landlords away from discriminatory application processes and practices and push them towards policies that are more inclusive, especially towards African Americans and Hispanics since they are disproportionately arrested, convicted, and imprisoned (Walter, Viglione, Tillyer, 2017). Even though an issued guidance from a federal agency holds impact, this guidance has not translated into policy, which would legally force landlords to make the necessary changes against any discriminatory housing practices. At a local level, On May 10, 2019, Mayor Bowser signed an order directing District agencies to address housing affordability in the District of Columbia. The *Housing Framework for Equity and Growth* is the District's response to Mayor Bowser's call to action. To start, the "District needs to create 36,000 new residential units by 2025 with at least 12,000 affordable for low-income residents to ensure all residents can live in the city without being burdened by housing costs. An additional 6,000 affordable homes need to be preserved" (DC Department of Housing and Community Development, 2022).

EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

There is a documented connection between an individual's status in the workforce and the likelihood that he or she will subsequently commit a crime. Employment after one's release from prison has shown to be an effective tool for personal rehabilitation, allowing for these individuals to return as productive, law-abiding members of society. However, returning citizens

face substantial obstacles when it comes to finding and retaining employment. This issue is highly intersectional with other factors like mental health conditions, substance use disorders, education level, and housing circumstances each playing their own role in the employment outcomes of many returning citizens. Researchers subsequently analyzed the litany of factors which maintain a causal relationship between employment and time spent in the criminal justice system (Holzer, Raphael, Stoll 2003). The barriers to employment can be divided into two sections: Supply-Side Barriers and Demand-Side Barriers. Supply-Side Barriers arise due to returning citizens' characteristics, greatly limiting their employment opportunities, and earning capacities. Demand-Side Barriers are due to a mismatch between what employers are seeking and what they perceive as the typically sub-standard qualifications of returning citizens.

Based on the research, it is quite difficult to paint an accurate picture of the employment situation that many returning citizens face. This arises from the limited availability of data on the employment and earning of returning citizens (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003). Most surveys used to measure and better understand the labor market do not inquire as to one's history or involvement in the criminal justice system. Additionally, responses may not be truthful for fear of employment discrimination because of one's status as a returning citizen (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003). The limited availability of data has encouraged those researching the relationship between employment and re-entry to look at state-level administrative data such as unemployment Insurance records, which, when matched with existing data on incarcerated populations, "enables the researcher to infer employment and earnings both before and after the spell of incarceration has occurred" to gather and paint a better picture (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003).

Supply and Demand Side Barriers of Employment

Supply-side Supply-side barriers include the following characteristics and traits among returning citizens (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003): limited education attainment, limited work experience, substance use disorders, and other mental health conditions. Researchers maintain that merely securing employment is not sufficient to facilitate a successful re-entry for returning citizens as it is likely that those jobs that they are able to find pay low wages and provide few benefits that drive upward mobility (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003). As a result, many returning

citizens may subsequently decide to forego these limited legal employment options as they would not do much to ameliorate or improve their circumstances. Additionally, it is possible that they accept jobs temporarily, but do not retain them for long periods of time as they find themselves in other illicit activities that might provide better economic stability.

There are various barriers on the demand-side of the labor market that impact returning citizens' opportunities for employment. Most returning citizens have limited job prospects for two reasons: first, there is a mismatch between an employer's expectations and a returning citizen's qualifications, and second, employers significantly prefer not to hire workers with criminal histories (Solomon, Johnson, Travis, and McBride 2004). The mismatch between expectations and qualifications is multifaceted as most "unskilled" jobs require a high school diploma and/or prior work experience.

It is important to note that many returning citizens completed a variety of work assignments while incarcerated and, indeed, do have what can be called "work experience." However, since these jobs were completed while in the prison system, for the most part, these experiences do not "provide work experience that appeals to employers" (Solomon, Johnson, Travis, and McBride 2004). The jobs assigned to individuals in correctional facilities are connected with assisting operations within prisons, and while they may provide certain skills to individuals that are incarcerated, they largely miss the mark when it comes to equipping returning citizens with marketable skills for the labor force after their release. With respect to the challenges those returning citizens face when it comes to finding employment, it is continuously noted the reluctance among potential employers to hire those with a criminal background (Solomon, Johnson, Travis, and McBride 2004). However, this is not to say that employers are uniform in their opposition to hiring returning citizens. Employers can be encouraged to do so under the right circumstances such as when the returning citizen has a criminal record for a non-violent drug offense or when there is an intermediary organization involved in the process to provide support. This support can be in the form of drug testing, referrals for social services, or other services that deal with certain problems that might otherwise interfere with one's ability to find and maintain employment, such as a mental health condition or substance use disorder.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

Serious mental health conditions make it challenging for individuals to receive consumer and family-oriented community care, which creates higher instances of repeated hospitalizations, homelessness, and incarceration (Smith and Sederer 2009). The criminalization of individuals with mental health conditions is a growing concern as of the last fifty years. The deinstitutionalization has resulted in about a 95% reduction in the quantity of psychiatric beds in the United States. It is predicted that the U.S. needs approximately 96,000 more psychiatric beds to meet the minimum standards of treatment. This high reduction in available psychiatric hospital beds and services has contributed to an increase of individuals suffering from mental health conditions to experience homelessness, incarceration, and concentration in emergency rooms for treatment (Baillargeon, Hoge, and Penn 2010). It is estimated that only half of individuals with a serious mental health condition receive mental health treatments. To make matters worse, research shows that only around 7% of these individuals are receiving evidence-based treatment practices (Smith and Sederer 2009). Another common obstacle preventing individuals with mental health conditions from receiving treatment is the fact that many mental health centers require abstinence from substances before treatment can be provided (Galleta, Fagan, Shapiro, Walker 2021). Furthermore, it is estimated that 30% to 60% of individuals with a serious mental health condition fail to take their recommended medications (Smith and Sederer 2009). As for substance use disorders, a significant number of drug treatment programs are unable to treat patients that possess comorbid diagnoses, such as a mental health condition (Galleta et al 2021). As a result, it is estimated that under 20% of individuals with a substance use disorder receive formal treatment (Chamberlain, Nyamu, Aminawung, Wang, Shavit, Fox 2019).

Prevalence of Mental Health Conditions and Substance Use Disorders in Prisons

It is estimated that approximately 15% of incarcerated individuals at the state and federal level have a serious mental health condition. These mental health conditions can include schizophrenia/other psychotic illnesses, bipolar disorder, or major depressive disorder

(Baillargeon, Hoge, and Penn 2010). Evidence also suggests that a mental health condition significantly increases recidivism rates. Approximately 25% of individuals in state prisons and jails that had a mental health condition had served three or more prior incarcerations, compared to only one fifth of those without a mental health condition (James and Glaze 2006). In addition to a mental health condition being the cause of incarceration, studies show that incarceration only serves to exacerbate these mental health conditions. Prison conditions such as overcrowding, social isolation, exposure to violence, solitary confinement, and anxiety concerning re-entry serves to only harm the mental health of incarcerated individuals due to increased exposure to trauma (Armour 2012). Mental health conditions and substance use disorders comorbidity is also common in incarcerated individuals as an estimated 42% of individuals in state prisons and 49% of individuals in local jails struggled from both a mental health condition and a substance dependency or use disorder (James and Glaze 2006).

Substance use disorders are prevalent in prisons as 24% of individuals in state prisons and 19% of individuals in local jails were diagnosed with substance dependence or use disorders (James and Glaze 2006). Substance use disorders and criminal activity have a strong nexus as individuals suffering from substance use disorders often turn to criminal activities to fund the purchase of these substances (Chavira and Jason 2017). More recent research finds that 65% of incarcerated individuals meet criteria for a substance use disorder compared to only 8.5% of the general population (Chavira and Jason 2017). Furthermore, research shows that Pharmacotherapies, such as methadone maintenance treatment for opioid use disorder, are typically not offered in correctional institutions, making it extremely difficult for correctional institutions to be the appropriate setting for those with both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition (Chamberlain et al. 2019). In addition, due to the low availability of treatment and programs for substance use disorders after release, incarcerated individuals that use substances are 67% more likely to recidivate than incarcerated individuals that do not have a substance use disorder (Chavira and Jason 2017). These facts and figures illustrate that mental health conditions and substance use disorders are risk factors that compound the already complicated re-entry process that returning citizens face after release. The patterns associated with high arrest and re-arrest rates among individuals with a mental health condition suggest

that the needs of this specific vulnerable population are more intensive compared to the general population. Since trauma, mental health conditions, and substance use disorders are often the driving factors behind criminal activity, incarceration, and recidivism, the failure to address the treatment needs of returning citizens with a mental health condition and/or a substance use disorder will ultimately result in an unsuccessful re-entry process and potential re-incarceration, which will only continue to feed the never-ending incarceration cycle of vulnerable population groups.

The Challenges Associated with Mental Health Conditions and Substance Use Disorders Outside of Prison

Incarcerated individuals are more likely to experience barriers associated with securing sufficient community-based treatment for mental health conditions and substance use disorders, such as employment opportunities, financial stability, safe and secure housing, and criminal activity (Galleta et al 2021). In addition, abuse and trauma are very common in individuals with a mental health condition, making it likely that these individuals will have impaired relationships and poor social support systems as childhood adversities are common across individuals that have been incarcerated, such as exclusion from school environments and living far away from biological parents (Armour 2012). Individuals with a mental health condition that are arrested are also three times more likely to have experienced physical or sexual abuse than incarcerated individuals without a mental health condition (James and Glaze 2006). Furthermore, family problems connected to substance use disorders account for a higher likelihood of a mental health condition, which plays an important role in the relationship between risk factors and criminal activity. About 39% of individuals arrested at the state level that had a mental health condition reported that they grew up with a guardian that abused alcohol and/or drugs (James and Glaze 2006). As a result, supportive familial relationships and other positive support systems may be helpful for a successful re-entry process but can be undermined by substance users.

Without strong familial relationships and support systems, individuals with a mental health condition are also more likely to be unemployed and struggle financially upon release. As a result of unemployment, it becomes extremely challenging for returning citizens to obtain and secure housing over time. There are three main barriers individuals with a mental health

condition face when looking to secure employment: 1) their mental health condition interfering with job responsibilities, 2) a lack of access to rehabilitation programs that focus on employment skills, and 3) employer discrimination (Galleta 2021). According to one study, eight to ten months after release, 28% of men and 18% of women with a mental health condition reported income from legal employment. In contrast, 53% of men and 35% of women without mental health conditions reported income from legal employment (Baillargeon, Hoge, and Penn 2010). Unemployment and financial instability force some individuals with mental health conditions to turn to criminal activity to survive. About 28% of incarcerated individuals that had a mental health condition reported income from illegal sources (James and Glaze 2006). In conclusion, individuals with a mental health condition and substance use disorder are more prone to unemployment, financial instability, homelessness, and incarceration because the available treatment services and correctional institutions fail to fully address their comprehensive needs. Without appropriate treatment, stable employment, and suitable housing, unsuccessful re-entry is almost guaranteed, which will potentially lead to recidivism.

THE EFFECTS OF SENTENCING ON RE-ENTRY

Despite challenges and barriers that affect the re-entry process outside of the criminal justice system, it is crucial to also analyze another important factor, such as the effect that the length of prison stay can have on returning citizens after release. The criminal justice system justifies longer prison stays due to their intended effects on reducing recidivism as there seems to be a strong association between age and crime. Rhodes, Gaes, Kling, and Cutler (2018) posit that “because of the strong association between age and crime, longer prison terms produce inmates who are older at the time of release so that merely incapacitating offenders for longer periods will reduce the likelihood of crime absent any other intervention or causal mechanism.” In other words, longer prison terms produce older inmates, and therefore, older returning citizens, who are less likely to commit a crime. The United States Sentencing Commission argues that “offenders incarcerated for more than 60 months up to 120 months were approximately 17 percent less likely to recidivate relative to a comparison group sentenced to a shorter period of incarceration” (United States Sentencing Commission, 2020). In other words, they argue that the

longer an individual is in prison, the more likely they are to take advantage of rehabilitative tools and resources, and the older they will be, so that when they are released, the likelihood of them engaging in crime is lower (United States Sentencing Commission, 2020). There seems to be a possibility of an inverse relationship between length of incarceration and recidivism for incarcerated individuals serving more than 60 months in incarceration. In contrast, while there is literature that argues that the longer the prison sentence will decrease criminal activity once the individual is released, there is also literature that points out the consequences of a long-term prison stay.

The Urban Institute suggests that longer stays in prison are associated with declining frequency of contact with family members which significantly hinders the returning citizens' ability to facilitate reintegration into the community. Moreover, "participation in programs in prison decreased during this prison expansion, so a larger number of released individuals re-enter society not having participated in educational, vocational, or pre-release programs" (Lynch and Sabol 2001). Program participation and family contact are both vital to successful reintegration back into society. The longer an individual spends in prison, the more difficult it becomes to maintain strong and positive familial and community ties. Due to the fact that the length of prison sentences has increased over time, the effect on these connections will be greater among the current group of returning citizens than it was in the past (Lynch and Sabol 2001). For example, mentoring programs that offer a sense of community could possibly sway an individual's experience as they re-enter society. Not only do young people benefit from having their thinking challenged by trained and trustworthy mentors, but they in turn also begin to challenge and hold each other accountable. While most group participants have delinquent or criminal backgrounds, the group itself is a prosocial peer support network where youth remind and encourage one another to maintain their commitment to positive behavior (Austria and Peterson, 2017). Mr. Pollard (Changing Perceptions) furthered this notion by emphasizing the importance of mentorship and how a positive experience could shape an individual's future as they re-enter society (Interview 3).

The duration of time spent in prison also has a major impact on the supply-side barriers of employment that returning citizens face. Lengthy stints in the criminal justice system prevent

individuals from accumulating private sector or work experience that can be beneficial in the long-term search for employment. Moreover, long durations in prison also “erode whatever job skills, positive work habits or connections to employers they might have had beforehand” (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003). Economists call this the “depreciation” of human capital which occurs when certain skills are not used, as is often the case during periods of incarceration (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003). Pollard's organization, Changing Perceptions, offers many services that help returning citizens return and maintain an employment status. For example, they offer resume workshops and help returning citizens create LinkedIn profiles (Changing Perceptions, 2022). Services like these allow returning citizens who have been incarcerated for a long period of time to ease back into society and overcome the challenges they encounter.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILIAL CONNECTIONS

The importance of familial bonds and relationships begins even prior to the re-entry process. Supportive familial relationships during the time of incarceration can promote positive psychological and physiological health for individuals who are incarcerated and their loved ones, at a time when everyone’s health is otherwise deteriorating (Wang, 2021). A proper visitation program can ease anxiety in children and mitigate some of the impacts on strained interpersonal relationships. Serving families at this most critical period simply makes communities healthier (Wang, 2021). Based on this information, it may be more difficult for individuals in the D.C. area to maintain relationships with their loved ones during their time in the criminal justice system since Washington D.C. does not have its own prison system (Coventry, 2020). Family members may not be able to afford transportation and other travel costs associated with visiting incarcerated family members if they reside in a prison far away from home.

For familial relationships to thrive throughout the re-entry process, there are certain processes that need to take place both during the time of incarceration and after release. There are three concepts that need to be considered when analyzing the effect of familial relationships on re-entry. According to Bobbitt and Nelson, the re-entry process can cause stress on family members. Most organizations provide a platform for discussion groups, such as providing families with details about prison life so they will better understand how different that experience is from

life outside of the prison system and the challenges that returning citizens may face (Bobbitt and Nelson, 2004). Many times, throughout this process, resentments and anger can occur for both family members and individuals who have been incarcerated. For the family, this anger can stem from the behavior that led to the incarceration or anger at what feels like desertion, and for the returning family member, there may be anger and resentment surrounding the idea that life has moved on and family relationships may have changed (Bobbitt and Nelson, 2004). When the discussion is properly handled, this anger can be addressed by empathic listening, followed by a discussion of how to solve the problem that is causing the anger (Bobbitt and Nelson, 2004).

This idea of facilitation leads into the next step of the familial support process, planning for return. The best plans are concrete and enlist familial support in deciding where it would be best for the returning member to live, how family members can help him or her get a job, and what local resources can assist. Such plans also include specific timelines and identify resources for employment, recreation, child support or visitation, treatment, etc. (Bobbitt and Nelson, 2004). Family members agree to help the returning member implement the plan, both in logistics (providing housing or references for a job) and emotionally, by agreeing to hold the person accountable for following through (Bobbitt and Nelson, 2004). As well as identifying and supporting the returning citizen through the stresses of re-entry, family members serve as an important support for making a concrete plan around the legal requirements after release. The family will need to review parole or after-care requirements, some of which affect families directly. Organizations may explain the conditions of parole, like home visits and searches, curfews and curfew checks, and the need to maintain regular contact with the assigned officer (Bobbitt and Nelson, 2004).

Returning citizens who are unable to secure housing most often end up turning to their family for support (Evans et al., 2018). However, returning citizens may face homelessness if their family members decide not to have any relationship with them because of their criminal record. In this case, returning citizens may turn to their parole officer or local shelters for housing resources (Evans et al., 2018). There are many circumstances that can easily strain family relationships, like traveling great distances to get to the correctional facility, visiting procedures that are uncomfortable or humiliating, anger and resentment of the situation, and concerns

about children's reactions to in-prison visits (Urban Institute, 2002). Also, procedures for communicating with families, whether that be by phone, mail, or personal visits, are highly regulated by correctional facilities, with the primary concern focused on security issues. This translates into policies that do not necessarily promote or facilitate maintaining connections with family while the individual is incarcerated (Urban Institute, 2002). Even if family members wished to support and provide housing for their returning citizen, they may reside outside of the parole range and would therefore be disqualified from hosting them. Finally, if family members live in public housing, they may face stricter residency restrictions, which leaves returning citizens looking for other housing options (Evans et al., 2018).

Urban Institute provided a study showing the feelings of emotional support that a family member provides, as well as the physical material, or tangible support the returning family member provides (Fontaine et al., 2012). Ms. Crenshaw described the importance of a strong community, whether that be the individual's biological family or a group of loved ones, and how that affects the re-entry of an individual. For example, the communities that Ms. Crenshaw works with are members of the LGBTQI+ community and may not have strong ties to their family, which may contribute to them having interactions with the criminal justice system or experiencing homelessness. The emotional and tangible support that a strong community can provide could be essential for a successful re-entry process (Interview 2).

Benefits of Familial Connections

Feelings of Emotional Support that a Family Member Provides to Returning Citizen	Physical, Material, or Tangible Support Returning Citizen Provides to Family Member
• Spending time together • Communication • Feeling less stressed or worried about the formerly incarcerated family member • Planning for future goals • Family bonding • Happiness • No longer feeling alone • Friendship and love • Having positive outlooks on life • Being able to help guide and support the returning family member • Being able to relate to the returning family member • Helping the returning family member better himself	• Helping around the house (including cleaning, cooking, fixing things, car maintenance) • Helping with children (whether or not the returning family member was the father) • Financial support • Transportation (including driving and errands) • Safety (protecting the respondent or increased perception of safety) • Helping respondents with a physical restriction (including the elderly and those with a physical disability or serious medical issue) • Helping the respondent to find work or resources

THE CASE OF WASHINGTON D.C.

Washington, Washington, D.C. often ranks at the top of lists of cities in the United States with the highest cost of living. Included in this high cost of living is the incredibly expensive housing market. The monthly Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a one-bedroom apartment in the District of Columbia is $1,561 (Coventry, 2020). A D.C. resident earning minimum wage must, thus, work 91 hours per week to afford this rent (Coventry, 2020). For these reasons, many D.C. residents, who do not have prior involvement with the justice system, experience housing instability. Returning citizens face greater challenges because their prior involvement with the justice system puts them at greater risk of experiencing homelessness. The main barrier for many Washington, D.C. residents that are experiencing housing insecurity is their inability to simply afford housing. This becomes compounded for returning citizens who oftentimes have very limited job opportunities and low incomes. Many returning citizens do not have employment secured after release, which contributes to further time spent without an income (Coventry, 2020). Very few of those returning citizens have the funds necessary for even security deposits and the first month's rent (Coventry, 2020). In addition, benefits from the federal government, lost during incarceration, must be reapplied for, meaning that returning citizens may go months without receiving any benefits (Coventry, 2020). At the end of the day, once employed, previous incarceration is associated with an income loss between 10 to 30 percent (Coventry, 2020). As discussed previously, returning citizens also experience higher rates of mental health conditions than the general population, which makes it even more difficult for them to secure and maintain employment, but also find and maintain stable housing (Coventry, 2020). Furthermore, it is probable that many returning citizens experiencing mental health conditions did not receive satisfactory services while they were incarcerated. The BOP classifies only three percent of its incarcerated population as having serious enough mental health needs to warrant regular treatment (Coventry, 2020). By contrast, between 20 to 30 percent of those with mental health needs receive regular treatment in the state prison systems (Coventry, 2020). Mental health needs are a contributing factor to homelessness and the higher rate of mental health conditions among returning citizens is consistent with their struggle to find and maintain housing upon their release from the justice system.

Unique Set of Barriers and Challenges

Washington, D.C.'s returning citizens face unique obstacles that make obtaining and securing housing even more difficult. First, D.C. returning citizens may face incarceration far away from their original community since Washington D.C. does not have its own prison system. In this case, individuals are sent all over the country to serve their prison sentence. If an individual is required to serve their sentence in a location far away from Washington D.C., it may be difficult to maintain familial relationships or any type of connection to home, which could cause challenges upon returning (Coventry, 2020). As well as not having a sovereign prison system, D.C. also must respect the boundaries of federal agencies that tend to dissuade inter-agency coordination. For example, the BOP, CSOSA, Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and Core Service Agencies, nonprofit behavioral health providers who contract with D.C., understand that there are overlapping responsibilities and duties in providing services to returning citizens. DBH argues that "there should be increased coordination among agencies and private partners as these consumers face additional barriers that make obtaining stable housing more challenging" (Coventry, 2020). Second, without the proper support and services, returning citizens most likely will struggle to obtain employment, and therefore, any income to afford housing or any basic needs. This translates to returning citizens not being able to afford a high security deposit and first month's rent in a city, such as D.C. where these numbers are very high in general. Employment is not guaranteed within the prison system, but if individuals are able to access employment during their sentence, it would range from 12 cents to $1.15 per hour (Coventry, 2020). Finally, returning citizens within the D.C. area are facing discrimination as they attempt to re-enter society. According to the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, "clients regularly are discriminated against when they apply for housing" (Coventry, 2020). As the D.C. Fiscal Policy has stated, the discrimination within the city is overwhelmingly affecting Black men (Coventry, 2020).

Positive Developments in the District

Washington, Washington, D.C. has recently seen some positive developments in the way in which they are addressing homelessness among returning citizens in the District. In 2020, the D.C. Department of Human Services (DHS) inaugurated Project Reconnect which is a Diversion

and Rapid Exit Program for unaccompanied adults experiencing homelessness. The Diversion aspect seeks to assist residents in avoiding shelter, if possible, while the Rapid Exit aspect assists those already in shelter with leaving quickly (Coventry, 2020). The program gives priority to returning citizens who are immediately eligible for participation in recognition that the days after release from incarceration are among those when the returning citizen is crucial as it represents the time of highest risk of recidivism (Coventry, 2020). In addition to Project Reconnect, D.C. government has recently expanded the D.C.'s READY (Resources Empower and Develop You) program to include those citizens returning from Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facilities as well (Coventry, 2020). The program was originally restricted to citizens returning from Department of Corrections facilities. The READY Center assists returning citizens with accessing vital documents, housing, employment, health care, and educational services (Coventry, 2020). Furthermore, D.C.'s program for residents facing chronic homelessness, Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), is prioritizing returning citizens with high service needs and high likelihood of recidivism (Coventry, 2020). While these have been positive developments in recent years to address the homelessness experienced by returning citizens in the District of Columbia and is a good start, these programs are by no means sufficient to adequately address on their own the instability in housing, employment, and health that many returning citizens face upon their release from incarceration. The D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute argues that creating and expanding medium-term housing options for returning citizens in the first years following incarceration are especially important to set a foundation that will help with securing employment, long-term housing, access to services and programs, and an overall better opportunity for a successful reintegration (Coventry, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This section will describe in more detail the methodology approach utilized to complete the report. The GW team utilized a combination of qualitative methods approach to answer the research questions mentioned above and complete the report: (1) a literature review and secondary data analysis, (2) semi-structured interviews, and (3) identification and analysis of four promising practices. This section provides a more detailed description of how the data was collected and analyzed for each method.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

Collection Instrument(s) and Protocols

The GW team gathered and assessed literature through several different sources including peer reviewed journals, scholarly articles, governmental organization reports, nonprofit organization reports, and research organization reports. Some of these sources included, but were not limited to Sage Journals, Google Scholar, Springer, Wiley Online Library, and JSTOR, with most of the sources and databases being accessible through GW's library. The GW team also reviewed secondary sources from governmental sources (Council of the District of Columbia and District of Columbia Courts), research organizations (D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute) and nonprofits such as the Urban Institute and the Prison Policy Initiative. It should be noted that some of the sources used for the literature review are over 10 years old. Also, the samples in the studies used as sources may differ across geographic areas. The GW team recognized this as a limitation when conducting the literature review, however, the team tried to identify the most relevant and

update studies and sources. Additionally, the GW team also worked closely with JPI to find any other relevant sources for the project.

Data Organization and Analysis

To organize the literature and identify certain themes related to this complex topic, the GW team utilized a thematic analysis approach, which included an annotated bibliography and synthesis matrix. Sources were organized according to its specific theme, purpose, and intended usage for the final project. The GW team included sources related to practices utilized to support returning citizens reintegrate back into society successfully, sources that illustrated the many barriers that returning citizens face during the process of reintegration, and how this impacts their ability to secure housing. As a result, the GW team was able to collect and analyze these sources to expand on the different barriers that impact the re-entry process for returning citizens such as housing, employment, mental health conditions, substance use disorders, sexuality, familial connections, and discrimination and stigmatization.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Collection Instruments(s) and Protocols

The GW team conducted four semi-structured interviews with individuals who are directly involved with the topic and/or programs. The first round of interviews contained two interviews and the second round of interviews included two interviews. A two-stage interview model strengthened the accuracy of information and provide a functional understanding surrounding the re-entry process and interrelated systems that are working to resolve some of the barriers faced by returning citizens. These individuals represented an array of key stakeholders, which included executive directors, program directors, and/or other staff members who have knowledge of these programs, the services and resources, and the project topic overall. Each interview was completed in a span of one hour to an hour and thirty minutes depending on the interviewee's responses. The GW team completed the four interviews in the month of March to allow for sufficient time to analyze the responses and notes. The GW conducted the interviews using the interview protocol and questions that can be found in the appendix of the report. An

informed consent form was also included as part of the interview protocol to obtain informed consent from the individuals being interviewed. The GW team utilized the interviews for the purpose of collecting first-hand perspectives of the programs or approaches that have had successes and for supplementary information for the project. The interviews were also utilized to confirm information and data that was collected during the literature review. Another aspect of conducting these interviews was to collect quotes to be utilized to provide some background and context. The GW team completed the following interviews:

Ms. Psalm Rojas, Chief Administrative Officer at Marian House, Baltimore Maryland

The first interview the GW team conducted was with Ms. Psalm Rojas, Chief Administrative Officer at Marian House located in Baltimore, Maryland on March 7th, 2022. During the interview, Ms. Rojas shared her main responsibilities which included administration, advocacy, and grant writing. Ms. Rojas mentioned that she is a social worker by study and has been working in the field for about 8 years. At the beginning of the interview, Ms. Rojas shared that Marian House is a transitional and permanent housing and support services program for women and their children experiencing homeless located in the Better Waverly and Penn Lucy neighborhoods of Baltimore City. Program services offered to their residents include counseling and case management, on-site addiction treatment services, family reunification, educational services, employment assistance and placement, supportive community environment, and life skills training. She shared that approximately 86% of women who are in Marian House had previous involvement with the justice system, in addition to noting however that not all their services strictly cater to only meeting the needs of returning citizens.

Ms. June Crenshaw, Executive Director at Wanda Alston Foundation, Washington D.C.

The second interview the GW team conducted was with June Crenshaw, Executive Director of the Wanda Alston Foundation (WAF) in Washington, D.C. on March 9th, 2022. Ms. Crenshaw is a resident of the District of Columbia and has been working in addressing poverty in the LGBTQ community for 35 years, the last six at WAF. In this current role, she works to have resources allocated to programs that foster safe environments for LGBTQ youth and she oversees all aspects of WAF's operations. WAF is the only housing program in Washington, D.C. solely

dedicated to offering pre-independent transitional living and support services to LGBTQ youth (ages 18 to 24) in all eight wards who are experiencing homelessness or are at-risk. The Foundation provides shelter and wrap-around services for those youth as well as dedicating resources to support individuals who are reentering society, advocating before the D.C. City Council on homelessness issues, and providing job development programs. Ms. Crenshaw offered an expert perspective on a community that has experienced homelessness and its hardships at an extremely high rate in comparison to their overall proportion in the population in the Washington D.C. area. While WAF does not specifically focus on returning citizens who are experiencing homelessness, many of the people they serve have prior involvement with the justice system.

Mr. Monte Pollard, Executive Director at Changing Perceptions, Baltimore Maryland

For the third and fourth interviews, the GW team intended to interview one individual at a time on March 23rd, 2022. However, both Mr. Monte Pollard, Executive Director of Changing Perceptions, and Troy Burner, an Associate at the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), attended the scheduled interview. As a result, the GW team had to pivot and adapt their interview process to facilitate the additional voice and perspective. Changing Perceptions is a non-profit organization that supports previously incarcerated citizens as they re-enter communities throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The organizational model is client-centered and focused on initiating and expanding public-private partnerships for the development and implementation of strategies that address barriers to re-entry. Each participant at Changing Perceptions receives individualized services and is supported in a family-like atmosphere which fosters care, growth, and inspires positive expectations. Changing Perceptions also offers workforce development training and educational courses in conjunction with civic-minded local businesses who have partnered with us. Additionally, the program offers entrepreneurial training in industries with the most demonstrable potential to recover, grow, and hire in the post-global pandemic era. JPI is a national nonprofit organization developing workable solutions to problems plaguing juvenile and criminal justice systems. JPI does research and analyses of effective programs and policies to disseminate their findings to the media, policymakers and advocates, and provide training and technical assistance to people working for justice reform.

Data Organization and Analysis

The GW team conducted all interviews with at least two group members, which included an interviewer and note-taker. The interviews were recorded to ensure proper note taking with the opportunity to revisit the responses in case any important information was omitted or not recorded. The interview notes were finalized 72 hours after the completion of each interview. The interviewer and the note-taker were responsible for presenting the questions, recording the responses, and sharing the notes from the interviews. The responses and notes were coded by at least two members of the team to identify some of the common themes related to the problem. After analyzing the responses, transcripts, notes, and recordings, the GW team was able to identify an array of themes related to the topic. The GW team was able to condense most of the themes into five major categories: employment, housing, accessibility to resources, administrative process, and interagency collaboration. It has become very evident through the literature review and the semi-structured interviews that both employment and housing are critical for any returning citizen attempting to re-enter society. All the interviewees were adamant that without employment and housing, re-entry is virtually impossible, making the role of housing vital to successful re-entry, as it provides the necessary stability for returning citizens to access other opportunities, such as employment and social services. Moreover, interviewees highlighted that while there are resources available for returning citizens, there is an array of barriers or red tape that returning citizens are faced with during their process of re-entry. For example, there might be too many requirements for returning citizens to access specific resources. Furthermore, another major theme revolves around administrative processes. One of the challenges faced by returning citizens after release include the lack of knowledge around completion of basic administrative processes such as obtaining identifications (a birth certificate or social security card), completing a leasing application, opening a bank account, etc. The final theme was around the imperative need of interagency collaboration as returning citizens will require an array of support and services to successfully re-enter society.

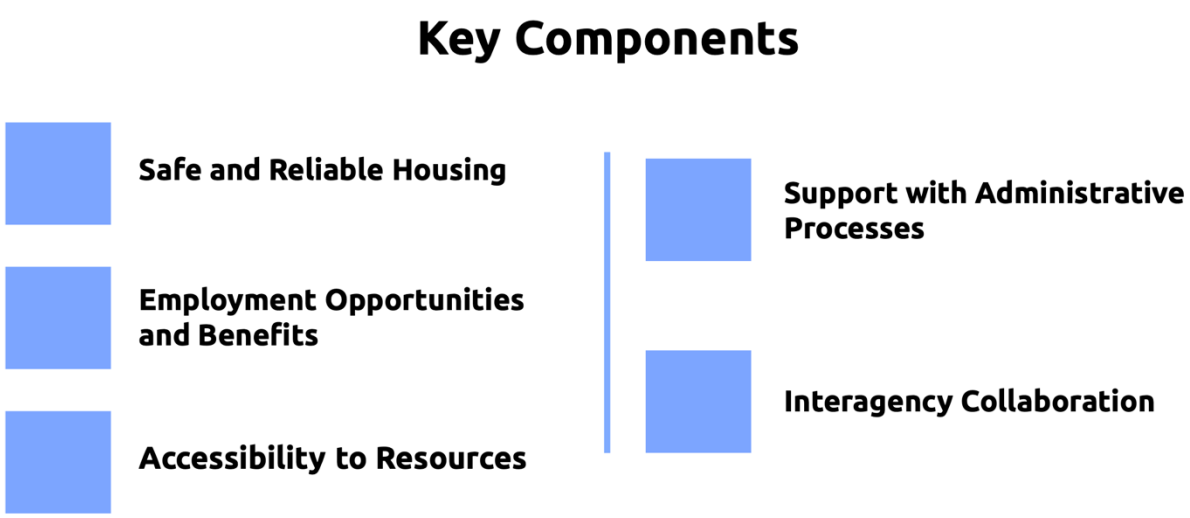
Thematic Analysis Matrix

Overarching Themes	Sub-Themes	Sample of Coded Text
Housing	Insufficient, Accessibility, Discrimination, Familial Ties, Homelessness, and Housing Insecurity	There needs to be more affordable housing, fairer minimum wage comparable to market rate of housing, and returning citizen (or people in general) shouldn't need four jobs to afford a two-bedroom apartment.
Employment	Discrimination, Expungement, Ban-the-Box, Financial Instability, and Illicit Activities	When employers see the background check, they only see the background check, they see you as an inmate not a person. You can't tell your story, so they come to their own assumptions.
Resources	Wraparound Services, Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse Services, Employment Opportunities, Job Development, and Mentorship	There needs to be more wraparound services (resources) dedicated to supporting individuals that are re-entering society from the criminal justice system.
Administrative Processes	Leasing Applications, Identifications, Banking, Technology Gap	They come home like newborn babies, they don’t understand forms, bank cards, booklets, and the resources available.
Interagency Collaboration	Communication, Coordination, Partnerships, and Decision-Making	There needs to effective communication and collaboration between agencies to ensure returning citizens are informed and receiving the services and resources necessary for re-entry.

PROMISING PRACTICES ANALYSIS

Collection Instrument(s) and Protocols

The GW team analyzed four promising practices to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the topic and to learn how they relate to other societal stressors. The promising practices were identified through government agency reports, academic journals, and non-profit organization reports. The GW team identified these practices by conducting an annotated bibliography, synthesis matrix, an extensive literature review, semi-structured interviews, and a thematic analysis that highlighted some of the most pressing barriers faced by returning citizens. By understanding some of the major barriers faced by returning citizens, the GW team was able to establish the following key components to identify and select the promising practices that could potentially best serve returning citizens:



The GW team was able to identify these key components as important components of any re-entry program attempting to support returning citizens on their journey to come home. Each GW team member was tasked with identifying, selecting, and collecting various promising practices utilizing the key components to create a list of potential promising practices that have had success with supporting returning citizens through the re-entry process. While the GW team understood that there are limitations and that not all promising practices can include most of the components deemed to be necessary for a successful re-entry process, it was critical for the GW

team to select promising practices with the most comprehensive services and programming. As a result, the GW team was able to create a comprehensive list of potential promising practices that will be utilized to inform the recommendations for returning citizens in the Washington, D.C. area.

Data Organization and Analysis

A major interest throughout this process was identifying promising practices that will support returning citizens with the resources necessary for a successful re-entry process, with the intention of reducing recidivism. The four promising practices were identified through the set of established key components generated by the GW team with the assistance of the extensive literature review and the semi-structured interviews. The GW team was strategic when selecting some of the promising practices to ensure that not all of them came from Washington D.C. to ensure diverse perspectives, programs, and ideas. As a result, there were a total of two promising practices from the Washington, D.C. area and two that were from different cities with similar demographics as the D.C. area. The promising practices from the D.C. area included Changing Perceptions and the Resources to Empower and Develop You (READY) center. The promising practices from outside the D.C. area included the Community Resources for Justice in Boston, Massachusetts and Freedom Commons in Syracuse, New York. A major criteria when selecting each promising practice was that it met all of the components or at least had most of the components to provide the best opportunity for a successful re-entry. The GW team provided a summary, the strengths, and limitations of each promising practice. With the information gained from the literature review, semi-structured interviews, and the analysis of the four promising practices, the GW team was able to produce a set of detailed recommendations for re-entry programs, services, and policies in the Washington D.C. area.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Introduction

In In this section, the report will be analyzing four promising practices that have proved to be successful re-entry programs for returning citizens. Two of the programs that have been analyzed reside within the boundaries of Washington, D.C., while the other two programs are located outside of D.C. in Syracuse, New York and Boston, Massachusetts. Changing Perceptions and the D.C. Ready Center are the two programs that the report has analyzed within the D.C. area. By analyzing these two programs, the report will be able to inform recommendations for an expanded Washington D.C. policy plan for re-entry policies. Freedom Commons and Community Resources for Justice are the two programs that the report has analyzed outside of the D.C. area. By analyzing two programs that have a similar demographic population to D.C., Syracuse and Boston, the report will be able to analyze and formulate recommendations from programs outside of the Washington D.C. area. This will allow us to draw comparisons and conclusions in the final section for how Washington D.C. should move forward with the policy recommendations. For each promising practice, a summary of the program will be included that highlights the services and resources offered by the program. After the summary of the program and what it provides individuals who are re-entering society, there will be a section that breaks down the strengths and limitations of each program. By breaking these sections down, it will lead into the final conclusion and recommendations section.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR JUSTICE: BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Community Resources for Justice (CRJ) is a non-profit organization that has worked for over 140 years to meet the needs of returning citizens. Tracing its origins back to the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice, founded in 1878, CRJ in its current form comes from the mergers of several organizations involved in different aspects of social activism. Today, CRJ works on issues including returning citizens re-entry, prison conditions, public safety, crime prevention, and mental health treatment. The organization is split into three divisions: Social Justice Services, Community Strategies, and the Crime and Justice Institute. Each division operates in a different

policy area and serves different populations. Social Justice Services is the branch of the organization responsible for returning citizens as they transition out of the justice system and back into their communities. They do this by providing residential and non-residential services and programming that is built upon the Risk-Need-Responsivity model of care, which is comprised of different techniques proven to promote positive behavior change, reduce the probability of recidivism, and increase opportunities to enhance prosocial success (Community Resources for Justice, 2022). CRJ Social Justice Services' Residential Re-entry Centers provide housing for men and women leaving the prison system as they transition back into society. In their eight residential re-entry centers operated under contracts with federal, state, and county agencies, the program offers returning citizens assistance in obtaining steady employment, stable housing, education and workforce development opportunities, mentoring programs, intensive outpatient programs, as well as services to address substance abuse and mental health conditions (Community Resources for Justice, 2022). In Fiscal Year 2021, CRJ Social Justice Services reported 497 people successfully completing their stay in a CRJ residential re-entry program, 96% of whom successfully transitioned to stable housing upon their completion of the CRJ Social Justice Services residential re-entry program (Community Resources for Justice, 2022). Furthermore, 77% of individuals who successfully completed their stay in a residential re-entry program left the program with a valid form of ID (Community Resources for Justice, 2022). In their non-residential programs, CRJ Social Justice Services expands its services to less traditional efforts to assist returning citizens. These include, Overcoming the Odds, a non-residential program that, until its operation ceased in 2016, worked with high-risk, incarcerated persons before their release from the prison system, offering them services from employment to addiction counseling. Social Justice Services also provides an additional program, geared towards young adults, which focuses on working with young people, ages 18-22, in treating histories of trauma-based diagnoses and cognitive disabilities (Community Resources for Justice, 2022). In each of their program areas, CRJ Social Justice Services follows evidence-based practices in accordance with EPICS (Effective Practices in Correctional Settings) making sure to document and measure each program's progress (Community Resources for Justice, 2022).

Strengths of Community Resources for Justice

Community Resources for Justice is a great example of how an organization can effectively and successfully administer re-entry programs. The strength of their programs lies in the versatility of the services they offer. Instead of simply choosing one aspect of a program such as mental health counseling or addiction services or residential programming, CRJ Social Justice Services rather incorporates the various needs of returning citizens into their programs. For example, Social Justice Services operates a program specifically for young adults who have cognitive disabilities or who may have trauma-related diagnoses. Furthermore, they administer residential re-entry centers as well as non-residential programs, innovatively tailoring their program to the needs of the individuals they are serving. In recognition of the fact that success upon re-entry is intersectional with a host of issues in addition to housing security, Community Resources for Justice incorporates job training, education opportunities, workforce development, substance abuse services, and other counseling into each of their programs to ensure that participants are equipped with the necessary tools to succeed upon their departure from the program. All of the services and programs are also operated in line with EPICS standards, ensuring that the program is administered ethically and effectively so returning citizens have the best chance at successfully re-entering as productive members of society.

Another major strength of the CRJ programs is that they are not solely operated by the nonprofit organization. Instead, Community Resources for Justice partners with public sector institutions like governors' offices, state government agencies, legislative leaders, courts, corrections systems, law enforcement agencies, private foundations, and other willing actors to administer the programs in an effective and secure manner (Community Resources Crime and Justice Institute, 2022). This gives the program administrators access to a myriad of resources that they would not otherwise have. From the use of municipal facilities to partnerships with the Boston Police Department to the use of grants from the federal government. The partnerships between these institutions and organizations help the re-entry programs succeed and enhance the opportunities for those who are participating, empowering them to successfully return from their period of incarceration.

Limitations of Community Resources for Justice

A notable limitation of the programs that Community Resources for Justice provides is that they rely heavily on outside funding from the federal government. Because of their dependence on this outside funding, loss of federal dollars can be catastrophic for a program's operations and could even result in the program shutting down completely. This was the case with CRJ Social Justice Services' Overcoming the Odds program. Overcoming the Odds previously received a substantial amount of funding from the federal government from the Second Chance Act, a law enacted by the Congress that dispersed grants to states and localities to work to reduce recidivism and facilitate a successful re-entry for returning citizens (Jonas, 2017). Nonprofit organizations and state and local governments would apply for grants through the Act. However, in 2016 the organizations and agencies responsible for administering Overcoming the Odds were informed that their application for federal funding was rejected as the "program wanted to focus on funding new pilot projects to grow the number of re-entry programs nationally, and that funding established programs like Boston's was less of a priority" (Jonas, 2017).

Due to this substantial loss in funding, in the City of Boston, where CRJ operates, policymakers and program administrators subsequently had to scramble to put together budgets or private sector funding that made up for the loss of money coming from the federal government. However, the program was not able to be revitalized and, despite its strengths and the effectiveness it had in the community, Overcoming the Odds permanently ceased operations in 2016. This reliance on a specific, volatile source of funding is a major limitation for some of the programs that Community Resources for Justice operates. It adds an extreme level of unpredictability into the situation, especially when that funding originates heavily in Washington where partisan turnover in either house of Congress can potentially have a major effect on the appropriations for re-entry programs like those at CRJ. However, there is recognition among these organizations that most re-entry programs' needs "cannot be federally funded over time" (Jonas, 2017).

FREEDOM COMMONS: SYRACUSE NY

Freedom Commons, formerly known as New Beginnings, located in Syracuse, New York, is a housing program designed to meet the needs of returning citizens. This program is co-developed and co-managed by a partnership between the prisoner re-entry organization, Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) and the Syracuse Housing Authority (SHA), with technical support from the Fortune Society to address some of the major barriers faced by returning citizens during their reintegration process (Hamlin and Purser 2021; Dolgin 2022). Being only the second housing facility of its kind in the country, Freedom Commons can be summarized as:

> an illustrative site of collaborative poverty governance, wherein the disciplinary and dispositional project of prisoner re-entry intersects with the privatized terrain of subsidized housing for the poor. Given the extensive challenges that the formerly incarcerated face when it comes to finding housing—fueled not only by the generalized crisis of affordability, but by their historic exclusion from public housing and widespread discrimination in the private rental market—New Beginnings [Freedom Commons] can be regarded as a remarkable achievement, offering residents, irrespective of their justice involvement, a clean, affordable, and beautiful place to call home (Hamlin and Purser 2021).

Interestingly, Freedom Commons presented a significant departure from past housing strategies that were strategic about excluding individuals with past criminal histories, thus paving the way towards inclusivity and acceptance of one of the most vulnerable populations—returning citizens (Hamlin and Purser 2021; LeBel 2017; and Goodman 2020).

Strengths of Freedom Commons

A major strength of Freedom Commons is that program eligibility is targeted towards meeting the housing needs of vulnerable communities and at-risk individuals, such as low-income families. According to research, Syracuse is one of the poorest cities in the United States, with a median household income of approximately $34,000, which represents around half of the median household income in the United States, coupled with the highest rates of concentrated poverty in Black and Latino communities (Hamlin and Purser 2021). As mentioned by interviewee

Ms. Rojas, Chief Administrative Officer at Marian House in Baltimore, Maryland, affordable housing is one of the biggest barriers impacting returning citizens during their reintegration into society. The housing development at Freedom Commons, encompassing 54 units in total, reserves 43 affordable apartments for individuals and/or families with incomes at or below 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) in addition to reserving 11 permanent supportive units for individuals and/or families whose income is at or below 30% of the AMI and who have previously been impacted by homelessness, criminal justice involvement, or have an long-term disability (CCA n.d.; Hamlin and Purser 2021). Since this program is set up to meet some of the most basic needs of impoverished communities, this program can serve as a major deterrent for at-risk communities from engaging in criminal activity, and therefore, recidivism. According to interviewee Ms. Rojas, individuals impacted by poverty and justice-involved individuals (returning citizens) are often forced to resort to criminal activity to afford housing and other basic needs such as food and medical bills.

Another benefit of this program is that, in addition to serving as a resource for at-risk communities, this program also successfully advocates for the housing needs of returning citizens. The 11 permanent supportive units being reserved at Freedom Commons represent fully furnished apartments that are targeted towards meeting the needs of individuals with a history of incarceration, homelessness, and individuals that possess long-term disabilities (CCA n.d.; Hamlin and Purser 2021). In addition, Freedom Commons Academy supplies 11 beds for temporary housing for adult returning citizens (CCA n.d.). To be accepted into Freedom Commons Academy, individuals must be recently released from incarceration with no access to shelter; those accepted into Freedom Commons Academy, are provided with emergency housing in Freedom Commons' dormitory wing and are assigned with a case manager and resident advisors to adjust to re-entry (Dolgin 2022). Freedom Commons Academy residents have access to a bed, a shared place to store their belongings, a communal living room, a dining room, a kitchen, and a computer lab to apply to jobs (Dolgin 2022). As described by interviewee Mr. Troy Burner, Associate at the Justice Policy Institute, leasing offices are often not very "felon friendly." Thus, it can be incredibly challenging for returning citizens to find stable housing, which can result in returning citizens re-engaging in criminal behavior or activities, creating a never-ending cycle of

crime and incarceration. Providing returning citizens with housing also increases the chances that they will become employed. Ms. Rojas noted in her interview that having an address is often a prerequisite when filling out a job application. As a result, this program acts as an employment enhancer through offering housing to returning citizens.

A final strength of this program is that Freedom Commons offers a wide variety of services intended to meet the needs of a diverse group of returning citizens. When asked what aspects of a re-entry system are most effective in Baltimore, Maryland, interviewee, Ms. Rojas pointed out that pre-release services that successfully encompass all aspects of a person's life are crucial because the needs of returning citizens are complex, diverse, and not one-size fits all. Participant-centered re-entry services that are offered to Freedom Commons program participants include:

- Education
- Recovery Programs
- Employment Services
- Civic Restoration
- Housing Support
- Case Management.

Additional amenities consist of a computer lab and learning center, laundry facilities, a community meeting space, and a communal dining area (CCA n.d.).

In addition to providing returning citizens safe and secure housing, these individuals are also subjected to a different set of rules that included almost 35 hours per week of “constructive programming” (Hamlin and Purser 2021). This signifies that program participants are required to dedicate 35 hours of “productive activity” every week which may include volunteering, participating in specialized activity or working a job (Dolgin 2022). This encourages returning citizens to be productive members of society by preparing and motivating them to find employment, which has the power to reduce recidivism rates and improve public safety. According to Hamlin and Purser (2021), returning citizens could also use this time to receive on-site case management, outsourced recovery, and mental health services. Interviewee, Ms. Crenshaw, Executive Director of the Wanda Alston Foundation in Washington, D.C., stressed the importance of re-entry programs meeting the mental health needs of those who have

experienced trauma. Therefore, it can be argued that having 35 hours per week on “constructive programming” can have positive impacts on returning citizens' emotional and mental health, but also employability.

Limitations of Freedom Commons

Freedom Commons offers an array of services and opportunities for returning citizens, however, there are some major limitations such as the culture that fails to treat returning citizens as individuals separate from the justice system. Many returning citizens felt that participation in Freedom Commons perpetuated some of the carceral supervision and treatments experienced during their time in prison through the embracement of a dominant “security culture.” Freedom Commons is documented to do this in three main ways “by reproducing the stigma associated with a criminal record, by replicating some aspects of the prison environment including pervasive surveillance, and by subjecting tenants to disciplinary performance requirements that engendered a sense of ongoing precarity” (Hamlin and Purser 2021). While Freedom Commons provides returning citizens with stability through its housing units and holistic services, it also provides returning citizens with the instability that fails to promote a trauma-free environment in which participants feel like ordinary human beings that have left the justice system. In other words, the paradox of carceral citizenship and principle of least eligibility is ever present in the way that staff, management, and service providers treat these returning citizens at Freedom Commons. Although these returning citizens have special access to this new housing facility due to their past involvement with the criminal justice system, upon becoming residents to Freedom Commons, many returning citizens document that they were treated as the “least eligible” for simple things such as a maintenance request to fix anything that was wrong within their units and that staff would respond more slowly to the needs of permanent supportive housing tenants, i.e. those that were occupied by returning citizens, compared to the affordable housing tenants (Hamlin and Purser 2021).

Another limitation of the program is that it is designed to serve both returning citizens and impoverished individuals that need affordable housing. Hamlin and Purser 2021 contend that returning citizen program participants also felt stigmatized by other program participants that were not returning citizens. One program participant exclaimed, “Remember the ribbon cutting?

All they did was talk about 'We're criminals, we're criminals.' 'Second chances for people.' Like this whole building's for just people who haven't gotten a second chance (Hamlin and Purser, 2021)." Additionally, the program is inconsistent in meeting the needs of vulnerable groups. Although this program provides housing and array programs for impoverished individuals and returning citizens, it fails to do enough to address all the diverse needs of participants. Hamlin and Purser (2021) illustrated the experience of one participant as:

> while he chafed against each of these forms of participation, feeling them to be unnecessary and burdensome, he also detailed significant needs that were not being met by existing services: difficulty affording food and utility bills, furnishing his apartment to sufficiently sleep his custodial children on the weekends, and getting his kids to school across town without a car. He described a desire for tutoring services and wanted access to the computer room, one of the common spaces locked behind the shelter doors despite promises to the contrary.

In contrast, other program participants contended that this program helped them grow in connection to their mental health condition and substance abuse challenges and that this is a successful program for those that are 'struggling' (Hamlin and Purser 2021). In conclusion, even with housing programs that are specifically designed to address some of the major challenges faced by returning citizens, these programs come with another set of challenges and barriers that complicate or continue the stigmatization and discrimination of returning citizens, making it virtually impossible for them to return as productive, law-abiding members of society. In addition to being a crime prevention program, this program also reminds returning citizens of their trauma-filled past because of the dominant security culture that does little to foster a sense of freedom and comfort. This may also have a significant impact on the mental health of returning citizens in connection to post-traumatic stress disorder that can act as a barrier to long-term reintegration, decreasing the chances that returning citizens will successfully secure permanent housing. All in all, although Freedom Commons advocates for the needs of returning citizens, some participants felt that it contributed to stigma, and discrimination, highlighting the principle of least eligibility.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS: WASHINGTON, D.C.

Changing Perceptions is a non-profit organization that supports previously incarcerated citizens as they re-enter communities throughout the Washington, D.C. area. This organization makes the client their main priority, which has proven to be effective and successful. Changing Perceptions is focused on initiating and expanding public-private partnerships for the development and implementation of strategies that address the various barriers to a successful reintegration (Changing Perceptions, 2022). Each participant at Changing Perceptions receives individualized services and is supported in a family-like atmosphere which fosters care, growth, and inspires positive expectations (Changing Perceptions, 2022). Changing Perceptions, in partnership with civic-minded local businesses, offers workforce development and training and education courses for returning citizens. Changing Perceptions is creating innovative solutions to the most significant barrier for many returning citizens—housing. Changing Perceptions currently uses one house that serves as a central location for their current returning citizens. This location is more than just a place that provides housing, it is also an extensive support network that is critical for returning citizens, and more importantly, reducing recidivism. As Mr. Pollard, Executive Director at Changing Perceptions, suggested in his interview, housing is not a right once released from the criminal justice system so by providing that initial step for returning citizens, Changing Perceptions is already providing a strong foundation for these individuals (Interview 3). Based on its overwhelming success, Changing Perceptions is currently working to partner with multiple housing developers to address the pressing need of limited housing available for returning citizens (Changing Perceptions, 2022).

During the interview with Mr. Pollard, he stressed the importance of a mentorship program and the effects it could have on a successful reintegration for returning citizens (Interview 3). Changing Perceptions has devoted itself to building up a strong mentorship program. Changing Perceptions implements the IRAA Peer Mentorship Program through a recurrent grant awarded to Gallaudet University by the D.C. Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants. As a result of the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act of 2015, the grant allows Changing Perceptions to provide supervised social work peer mentoring and case planning support to returning citizens (Changing Perceptions, 2022). Every peer mentor has personally and

previously experienced incarceration (Changing Perceptions, 2022). By having peer mentors who have experienced incarceration themselves and have gone through similar experiences, it allows these individuals to connect and relate to have a more positive and successful mentorship experience. Peer mentors are living examples of successful reintegration, provide one-to-one mentorship with participants, and offer life stabilizing encouragement on a consistent basis. They help participants set and reach personal, physical, mental health, financial and professional goals. Peer mentors work together with Changing Perceptions leadership, engage appropriately with external agencies and services, and help set longer-term "changemaker" goals for their mentees (Changing Perceptions, 2022).

Along with the mentorship program, Changing Perceptions also provides returning citizens the option to begin the path to earning a living by engaging in their supportive and successful employment program in partnership with Washington, D.C.-based businesses (Changing Perceptions, 2022). The program consists of two 8-hour shifts per week of regular work in:

- Landscaping
- General Contracting
- Inventory Management
- One 4-hour Mentoring Session
- Work Preparedness
- Civil Skills
- Resume Writing

These basic professional behaviors, habits, and skills are successfully implemented before finding employment elsewhere. Changing Perceptions offers many other supportive services and programs to create a "social service ecosystem" for returning citizens (Interview 3). These are some of the client services and programs:

- Birth Certificate Referrals
- Identification Card Referrals
- Voter Registration Application
- Social Security Card Application Assistance

- SNAP Benefits Application Assistance
- Health Insurance Application Assistance
- Case Management and Re-entry Case Planning
- Resume and Cover Letter Writing
- Email Creation
- Online Employment Application Assistance
- Indeed Employment Profile Creation
- LinkedIn Social Profile Creation
- Peer-to-Peer Mentoring
- Transportation Assistance (mentorship program participants only)
- Housing Stipend for Security Deposit and First Month's Rent (mentorship program participants only)
- Grocery Gift Cards (mentorship program participants only)

According to the National Institute of Justice, almost 44% of individuals released from prison return before the end of their first year. At the conclusion of a three-year period, the Virginia Department of Corrections reported a 23.1% recidivism rate, while Maryland reported a 40.5% rate (World Population Review). Since its inception, Changing Perceptions has maintained a 0% recidivism rate with their participants (Changing Perceptions, 2022). The presence of wrap-around services, mentorship, as well as the immediate supply of housing for reentering citizens creates an environment where returning citizens feel supported and safe in their new life.

Strengths of Changing Perceptions

Changing Perceptions depicts many strong qualities that could be used to implement a successful re-entry program. Unlike many within the Washington, D.C. area, Changing Perceptions chooses to engage with other organizations who also believe that recidivism's cost to society is too high and wish to address this pressing issue faced by returning citizens (Changing Perceptions, 2022). Changing Perceptions looks to invest in programs that work, by engaging with national organizations that specialize in tracking, monitoring, and funding programs that address the correlating factors which contribute to this systemic issue. Recidivism is costly to individuals,

families, and communities, effectively reducing the chance for our society to evolve into its most optimal position for productivity (Changing Perceptions, 2022). They are working to create long-term employment opportunities for returning citizens. For example, Phase 2 of their workforce development series, the Launching Pad Program, is a long-term job placement initiative in partnership with local businesses (Changing Perceptions, 2022). This organization works to foster enfranchisement through business ownership for the returning citizens. Changing Perceptions is creating learning opportunities about starting a business and entrepreneurship for their participants, which will yield a great return on investment. Their business development programs include:

- Entrepreneurial Skills
- Financial Literacy
- Startup Planning
- COVID 19-related Training (Leading to Employment)

Changing Perceptions has created community building initiatives, which are designed to expedite the reintegration of their participants. These activities are inclusive of participants, families, friends, volunteers, and other members of the community (Changing Perceptions, 2022).

Limitations of Changing Perceptions

According to Mr. Monte Pollard, the obstacles facing organizations, like Changing Perceptions are outside of their control. For example, landlords of housing complexes are hesitant to rent to a returning citizen due to the risks associated, such as illicit activities and unstable income with individuals that possess a prior criminal record (Interview 3). For organizations like Changing Perceptions, this can be alleviated by directly offering housing to their participants. However, on a larger scale, the housing that organizations are providing will not be enough and will need to rely on city housing as well. Also, when discussing policies and wrap-around services, Mr. Pollard suggested that Changing Perceptions can only do so much with a limited number of resources. According to O'Brien and Lawrence (2007), the reality of implementing a successful re-entry program is challenging. The authors indicate that it is highly improbable that an implemented program will be able to achieve each component they have

pinpointed (criminogenic needs, multimodal programs, responsivity, risk differentiation, skills oriented and cognitive-behavioral treatments). This results from a variety of factors such as funding, staffing, among others. Rather, while re-entry program managers should strive towards these goals, the authors hold that it is not necessary to realize each one to implement a successful reintegration program (O'Brien and Lawrence, 2007). Organizations in and the government of Washington, D.C. have not been working together in unison to create a successful interagency collaboration that will aid and support returning citizens. Mr. Pollard suggested that there is a lack of communication, a disconnect between what returning citizens truly need and what organizations are offering, and most organizations and the city government avoid issues that are "out of sight and out of mind" (Interview 3).

THE RESOURCES TO EMPOWER AND DEVELOP YOU (READY) CENTER: WASHINGTON D.C.

The Resources to Empower and Develop You (READY) Center provides formerly incarcerated residents (returning citizens) of Washington, D.C. with vital services and resources to reintegrate successfully back into society. The goal of the READY center is to remove the burdens of the reintegration process by providing one-stop re-entry services on the jail grounds. The READY center serves District of Columbia residents released from the Central Detention Facility, Correctional Treatment Facility (within 24 hours of release or the next business day) and Federal Bureau of Prison (FBOP) (within 45 days of release) (D.C. Ready Center). The READY center works with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), the Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Department of Employment Services (DOES), Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), and the Mayor's Office on Returning Citizen Affairs (MORCA). The READY center connects with participants 30 days before their release. Then, the soon-to-be-released returning citizens complete forms and are screened so their needs are prioritized by their release date (D.C. Ready Center n.d.). The center is located behind the Correctional Treatment Facility (CTF), which is within walking distance from the Department of Corrections (GO Transcript). The location of the READY center is an integral part of the program, given that its location facilitates residents' access to a collection

of government agencies that can link them to wraparound services. Returning citizens face many re-entry barriers when coming back to society, creating a need for government services to get involved, so the READY center is the perfect example of cross-agency coordination and collaboration.

Strengths of The Ready Center

According to a report on the outcomes of re-entry collaboration, successful reintegration "requires a systematic assembly of criminal justice and social service providers to address the complex needs of offenders (returning citizens) and their communities" (Bond and Gittell, 2010). The READY center's mission is to address those complex needs, and it accomplishes those goals through their collaboration with different agencies. For example, due to the READY center, HSS can provide behavioral health services to returning citizens, the DMV can provide identification cards and driving record information, DOES can provide employment and job training services, MORCA can provide ongoing case management, and CBOs can provide referrals to other Washington, D.C. programs, resources, and services.

This idea of cross-agency coordination in the criminal justice system is reinforced by the feedback of local non-profit executive directors in the Washington, D.C. area. As part of the team's data collection method, the team conducted semi-structured interviews with individuals directly involved with re-entry efforts. The team's first interview was with Ms. Rojas of Marian House. Ms. Rojas provided the interviewers with an overview of Marian House services and mentioned the organization provides rehabilitative assistance and housing to homeless women and their children. She added that Marion House advocates for persons with prior convictions by providing access to care. In the interview, Ms. Rojas was asked the following question: "If you were to recommend changes to the re-entry system for citizens returning after a long period of time, what would you say are the next steps to improve housing outcomes, resources and processes for returning citizens?" In her response Ms. Rojas noted that "housing and corrections, substance abuse and behavioral health, and employment need to be intertwined because all of these areas are connected." She stated that "even state departments need to work together because all of these things affect one another. The big solution is that all of these separate

systems need to acknowledge that they are not separate." All in all, it can be illustrated that Ms. Rojas recommends a holistic rehabilitative approach to re-entry.

The second interview the team conducted was with Ms. Crenshaw of the Wanda Alston Foundation in the Washington, D.C. area. Ms. Crenshaw, a resident of the District of Columbia, has been working in addressing poverty in the queer community for 35 years, the last six at the Wanda Alston Foundation. In her current role, she works to have resources allocated to programs that foster safe environments for LGBTQ youth and she oversees all aspects of the Foundation's operations. While the interviewee and her organization do not specifically focus on homelessness for those returning from incarceration, many of the people they serve have prior involvement with the justice system. In the interview, Ms. Crenshaw stated that re-entry programs need to coordinate to provide care for youth. She mentioned that teenagers should not simply be dropped off at the door when they come back from incarceration. She added that there needs to be a connection of services between the parole office and case manager and this process should start prior to release. The READY center focuses on the approaches the two interviewees mentioned, and it has been rather successful in its process. In March 2021, the D.C. Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety held a performance oversight hearing on agencies under its purview and asked agencies to fill out a questionnaire to provide updates on their performance. The READY center had to abide by this requirement because the program is in the Office of the Deputy Director for Programs and Case Management which is part of the Department of Corrections. In the questionnaire, the READY center had to report how it measures its performance. The READY Center stated that it uses satisfaction surveys and participant testimonials (Committee on The Judiciary & Public Safety 2021). According to the questionnaire, since the implementation of the surveys, 95% stated that they felt empowered and better equipped to enter the community after their READY Center visit, 100% stated that they were very satisfied with the customer service, and 95% would recommend the READY Center to someone for support and resources (Committee on The Judiciary & Public Safety 2021). Consequently, the cross-agency coordination component of the READY center has positive outcomes that not only provide the tools for a successful reintegration, but also empower returning citizens as they return to their communities.

Limitations of The Ready Center

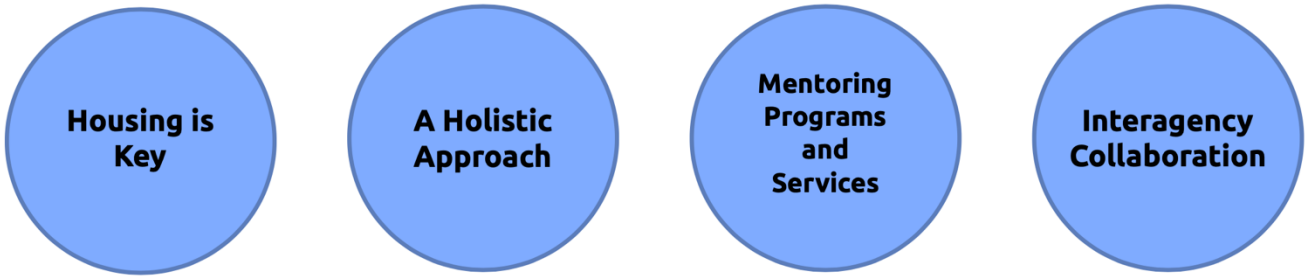
The benefits of agency collaboration also come with limitations. Cross-agency coordination is dependent on institutional sources, effective communication, and the relationship between local government and its agencies (Bond and Gittell, 2010). Limited resources such as time constraints, staff turnover, or limited funding can prevent agencies from effectively accomplishing their goal. The collaborative goal of agencies can easily get lost due to a lack of communication and effective conflict resolution. Competing priorities may also occur between local government and its agencies because the priorities of the funder (government) may not be in sync with the agency's mission and goals. To effectively address re-entry, both parties (governments and agencies) must overcome those challenges to create effective outcomes for returning citizens.

Conclusion

After analyzing the four promising practices, one consistent strength within each of the promising practices is the use of wrap-around services. The re-entry process is not a simple one, which is why organizations, like Changing Perceptions provide services, like resume building and basic financial literacy workshops. Almost every avenue of life is important for the re-entry process, so an abundant number of resources will always be a strength. As well as a shared strength among all of our promising practices, the number of resources is also a shared limitation among all four promising practices. These four promising practices all lack the financial resources to fully fund their wrap-around services and the loss of funding can be catastrophic. Wrap-around services require a large amount of funding from the appropriate government body and stakeholders. If programs are not able to meet the needs of their population, then their program will not be as successful as others. The next section will provide key takeaways and recommendations based on the work that is being done by these important organizations, both inside and outside of Washington D.C. to educate, influence, and inform the re-entry policies in the Washington D.C. area.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WASHINGTON D.C.

Based on all the information gathered, the report has been able to identify some of the important components of programs and services to drive a successful re-entry process. As illustrated by the four promising practices that were identified in the previous section, a successful re-entry program for returning citizens will focus on housing, take a holistic approach in the provision of services, offer mentoring programs, and possess an emphasis on interagency collaboration. Refraining from taking a one-size fits all approach to re-entry services requires acknowledging the intersectionality of re-entry barriers and the diverse needs of returning citizens. The socio-economic issues of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, mental health conditions, and substance abuse are all interrelated and must be carefully addressed when supporting returning citizens. The underlying problem with re-entry services is that the various issues are not considered when thinking of a successful reintegration program. Acknowledging intersectionality is a key issue stakeholders need to consider when crafting a re-entry program. As the report explains, when the diverse barriers to re-entry are not addressed, it can lead to higher chances of recidivism.



Housing is Key

A successful housing program will abstain from taking a one-size fits all approach to re-entry services. It is imperative to acknowledge the diversity of needs and the different services that are necessary for a successful reintegration. For example, a housing re-entry program should not just focus on behavioral health, but it should also take a holistic approach to re-entry and offer substance abuse counseling, financial literacy, job training opportunities, and education.

Returning citizens have different needs. For example, some returning citizens are mothers who need to get their children back but need housing to do so. In this case, providing a returning mother with immediate shelter is not the answer. She will need guidance on how to get her children back and she will need to join a job training program to get a job and provide income for her children as well as financial literacy classes to understand personal financial management. A returning citizen who is ill might need immediate health care upon being released and then may need assistance to file a disability claim. A successful re-entry housing program needs to have funding and staff to aid with these types of situations. Failure to provide holistic services will make the re-entry transition for returning citizens more difficult than it already is.

A successful housing program for returning citizens will not be effective if it makes returning citizens feel stigmatized and/or involve traumatic experiences that reinforce criminal behavior. For example, the program "Freedom Commons" provides immediate shelter to returning citizens. Although the program provides housing, it treats returning citizens similar to how an "inmate" would be treated. Consequently, it is crucial that the environment of these types of immediate housing programs targeted to vulnerable communities and at-risk individuals do not emanate an overburdensome "security culture." Such an environment is ineffective regardless of whether the program offers comprehensive services.

A "security culture" environment can negatively influence returning citizens' mental health by recreating practices similar to a prison environment. Returning citizens are supposed to feel empowered and ready to re-enter society. An effective program should provide the tools to reenter society but most importantly, it should shy away from dehumanizing returning citizens because it can affect their already sensitive state. The unintended consequences of a "security culture" in housing programs can in the long-term lead to unemployment, financial instability, and homelessness. Recidivism can be avoided by refraining from discrimination and stigma. It is imperative for housing programs to try to find a balance between the excessive monitoring of returning citizens and a hands-off approach. Thus, successful reentry programs will provide supportive housing environments that treat ordinary citizens like ordinary people, free from both stigma and discrimination.

A Holistic Approach

A successful re-entry program must take a holistic approach, with the intent of encompassing the diverse needs of returning citizens. It is important for D.C. stakeholders to remember that there is no one size fits all when it comes to the enactment of criminal justice policy and programming since all social issues are interrelated and connected. To re-enter society successfully and obtain permanent long-term housing, returning citizens must receive services connected to education, financial stability, mental health, food security, and employment assistance.

Taking a holistic approach and implementing programs that offer comprehensive services to meet the diverse needs of all returning citizens will provide an equitable approach to re-entry, and therefore, to be more successful. The obtainment of services and assistance connected to employment opportunities, such as resume building, learning know to apply to jobs, cover letter writing, and work preparedness, will increase the chances for returning citizens to obtain and retain long-term employment, which often serves as a prerequisite in having stable income, food security, and affordable and suitable housing. Being able to afford safe and secure housing will also reduce the likelihood that returning citizens will encounter negative peer influences and crime-ridden environments that can potentially lead to recidivism.

Receiving services connected to mental health and addiction also benefits returning citizens by helping them learn how to deal and manage their mental health condition or addiction, in addition to learning how to control emotions and inappropriate reactions to triggers that remind them of their time spent inside prison. Having stable mental and emotional health, in addition to increasing the likelihood that returning citizens can retain long term employment, it also increases the chances that returning citizens will be able to create and maintain close relationships with loved ones and friends.

As mentioned in the literature review, one of the key barriers to successful re-entry is not having a positive support system. Being able to control one's mental health is often necessary to being able to produce and maintain long-term connections and friendships. Lastly, receiving educational courses can encourage returning citizens to find their passion and explore their true identity to become a productive member of society. All in all, providing returning citizens with

wrap-around services is just as important as providing returning citizens with housing assistance since it will increase growth and skill building.

Mentoring Services

The offering of mentoring services to returning citizens encourages a successful re-entry as it increases the likelihood that returning citizens will become productive members of society. As stated above, although the provision of housing assistance is necessary and helpful, there is no guarantee that returning citizens will be able to reintegrate successfully without obtaining important skills; the ability to reintegrate successfully also depends on the securement of employment, high educational attainment, and financial stability. Obtaining a job, receiving an education, and therefore, being financially stable, becomes negatively impacted when a person is not emotionally or mentally stable. Regardless of whether programs offer permanent long-term housing for returning citizens, returning citizens need to be able to adapt and grow and may need to become proficient in finding other housing options for the future (perhaps to relocate for work or have a fresh start for their emotional wellbeing).

The procurement of long-term housing and/or new housing will be dependent on the securement of stable income and stable mental health, which can be positively influenced by having a mentor. The enactment of mentoring services is also vital to providing returning citizens with a positive support system. At Changing Perceptions, peer mentors, those that have previously experienced incarceration, work together with Changing Perceptions leadership and with program participants to set longer-term "changemaker" goals. This makes it easier for mentors to help and support returning citizens achieve their goals associated with housing, employment, education, financial stability, and mental health, which will enable returning citizens to overcome hardships and past traumas to become productive members of society. All in all, although receiving mental health services can strengthen the mental health and coping skills of returning citizens, returning citizens are more likely to grow and listen to mentors that experienced the same pain and anguish they did, as opposed to ordinary caseworkers and social workers, due to high level of reliability and connection.

Emphasis on Interagency Collaboration

Having an emphasis on interagency collaboration is instrumental to connect returning citizens with comprehensive services that fully address all of their diverse needs. Interagency collaboration can be defined simply as having different departments and agencies working together for the betterment of a specific group, in this case, returning citizens. Re-entry programs must combine the varying expertise of different agencies since each agency represents a different need of returning citizens. A supportive re-entry program cannot provide one size fits all services as this would be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of returning citizens. Returning citizens have different needs and a successful re-entry program needs to provide tailored services to address the unique and diverse needs of the populations they serve.

The D.C. Ready Center provides tailored services to returning citizens depending on their complex needs. If a returning citizen needs a license, job readiness training services, or behavioral health counseling, the D.C. Ready Center is equipped to provide those services. The main objective behind this program is to facilitate the re-entry process for returning citizens as the Ready Center is meant to serve as a one-stop-shop. For instance, without a driver's license, a returning citizen is unable to apply to jobs, or go to government agencies to request public services. To reiterate, the intersectionality behind social issues, such as unemployment, results in financial instability which can lead to homelessness and unsuccessful re-entry.

The D.C. Ready Center facilitates the ID process by eliminating time burdens, wait time, and costs. If a returning citizen is interested in a job readiness program, the center can easily connect the returning citizen to different job training organizations. If returning citizens are suffering from a mental health condition and substance use disorder and need counseling services, the center can provide referrals to those services. Instead of leaving returning citizens to fend for themselves while they transition back into society (which is often a very different society from the one they lived in prior to incarceration) the D.C. Ready Center provides returning citizens with services that take on a holistic approach through its collaboration with different local agencies that act as stakeholders. These different stakeholders or organizations such as Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), the Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Department of Employment Services (DOES), Department of Health and

Human Services (HHS), Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), and the Mayor's Office on Returning Citizen Affairs (MORCA) meet a separate but equally important need for each returning citizen.

D.C. should consider partnerships with other D.C. local agencies to continue providing these wrap-around services. The intent of interagency collaboration and coordination should be to provide comprehensive services that aim to alleviate and/or reduce exposure to some of the most common re-entry barriers, i.e. unemployment, housing, inadequate means of transportation, mental health conditions, poverty, homelessness, educational deficiency, lack of social support, etc. As described above, future Washington D.C. programs should consider employing a comprehensive approach of services to accommodate those returning to society. To do this, local government agencies must be aware of the intersectionality issues that affect returning citizens upon release from incarceration. Returning citizens are not only struggling from housing affordability, but they also suffer from addiction, mental health conditions, unemployment, educational deficiency, and poverty. All of these issues are connected and intertwined, therefore, treating these issues separately will not be effective. D.C. programs should create re-entry programs that take on a holistic approach to target re-entry barriers, thus signaling the need for stakeholders to come together for the betterment of returning citizens.

CONCLUSION

Returning citizens possess unique needs in comparison to the general population. These needs only grow and become more comprehensive, each time returning citizens fail to reintegrate into society successfully and re-enter the justice system. Re-entry programs are intended to meet the needs of returning citizens upon release. When designed effectively, these programs reduce incarceration rates. Taking these matters into consideration, we recommend that D.C. stakeholders implement housing re-entry programs that offer skill building associated with mental health, education, and employment, in addition to the provision of employment and are designed to meet the holistic needs of returning citizens. The ascertaining of these skills will increase the probability that returning citizens are able to possess stable housing in the long-term.

Next, the receiving of mentoring services, specifically by people with prior convictions and experience with the justice system, increases the likelihood that returning citizens will be able to strengthen their mental health, have a support system, possess new skills, and therefore possess stable housing in the long-term, due to the fact that returning citizens are ought to trust those that come from similar backgrounds. Finally, successful housing re-entry programs must have an emphasis on interagency collaboration, to utilize the expertise of various agencies that each represent a different need of returning citizens. Therefore, before programs can be equipped to take a holistic approach, they must first communicate and engage with the appropriate stakeholders that are employed for the purposes of providing specific services. Altogether, programs that take a holistic approach, utilize interagency collaboration, and offer mentoring services carried out by individuals that returning citizens can relate to and trust, serve as promising practices for housing re-entry programs.

Limitations

As for the limitations, it is important to take into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic as it has severely impacted major sectors of our society such as the economy, healthcare, education, travel, and human interaction as a whole. While the report did not focus on the COVID-19 pandemic because of the complexity of measuring the overall impact that the COVID-

19 pandemic will have on this topic, the GW team did want to acknowledge that the effects of the pandemic on this topic need to be analyzed further. Another limitation was the limited availability of resources about this topic in the D.C. context, which pushed the GW team to analyze the literature outside of D.C. to develop a foundation for this report. In addition, the identified best practices outside of the D.C. area (Syracuse and Boston) that informed the recommendation presented for the D.C. context might not be as pragmatic or simple to undertake as there might be some important social, political, and economic differences. In other words, just because these programs or practices have been extremely effective in other places does not guarantee that they will be effective in the D.C. area. Moreover, the GW team faced an important time constraint to complete the report. Having more time would have allowed for the GW team to conduct more interviews to get a better perspective from the practitioner's point-of-view and, therefore, a better understanding to inform recommendations and policies. Furthermore, with more time, the GW team could have expanded to include more than four promising practices to provide a more comprehensive approach to the issue of re-entry. And finally, the D.C. housing market problem affects every level of society as it represents one of the most expensive and limited markets in the country, which could make it virtually impossible for anyone trying to re-enter society to find housing within the District.

APPENDIX 1

General Interview Questionnaire Consent Form

You are invited to participate in an interview under the direction of a capstone research team from George Washington University. This interview is primarily framed around discussing reentry programs for individuals who have experienced the hardships caused by the justice system over a long period of time. Participating in this interview is your choice. If you consent, we will begin a semi-structured interview that may last approximately 20 to 30 minutes. At any point during the interview, you may opt to not answer a question or terminate your participation.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and your interview will remain confidential. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview process, please note that you can skip questions or end the interview at any time. We sincerely appreciate your participation and are looking forward to hearing any thoughts you may have about reentry programs in the DC area.

You may choose to be anonymous; every effort will be made to keep your information confidential. Your name, title, and/or organization, will be replaced by a letter or a number (i.e. Person A, Expert B or Business 1). The data analysis presented in the final report will include summarized information from this interview or selected quotes to support the literature we have found.

By signifying "yes" to the researcher (orally) you acknowledge and understand the terms above and will provide relevant and accurate information to the best of your ability.

Verbal confirmation of participation and anonymity (Y/N)

Verbal confirmation of being recorded (Y/N)

Introduction:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. We recognize that your time is valuable, so we're grateful for the 20 to 30 minutes you have allotted to discuss Reentry programs for citizens reentering society after a long period in the criminal justice system.

At this time, we would like to confirm if you are available for this allotted time and if we are able to audio record the interview. If you are uncomfortable with being recorded, then we will not record.

Interview Protocol

Background Questions:

1. What role do you hold within your organization?
2. How long have you been involved within this field of work?

3. What experience do you have working and advocating for reentry programs and/or for those who have been imprisoned?
4. Do you live and/or work in DC areas where there are a high number of citizens who have been affected by the justice system?
5. **POTENTIAL PROBE**: Do you focus on a specific area in your line of work regarding housing reentry programs?

Updated Interview Questions:

1. What specific population do you serve?

Potential follow up: How do you define returning citizens? Does the individual need to be directly returning home, within a year out, or does this apply to anyone with a prior relationship with the criminal justice system?

2. How do you think being imprisoned for a long period of time may affect an individual's ability to re-enter and find viable housing options?

3. What are some of the biggest challenges with your organization's efforts associated with your organization helping persons with previous justice involvement get housing?

Follow up: What components are helpful or necessary for your program to be successful?

Potential Follow-up: What are some of the biggest challenges that the individuals you are trying to help face that affect their success in finding and retaining housing? Which of these challenges do you directly and indirectly try to address?

4. What are some of the biggest challenges associated with providing vulnerable populations with housing?

Follow up: What program components are necessary?

Potential follow up: How does your program specifically help with the unique needs of each vulnerable population served?

5. Why is it important for a person with a prior conviction to be able to find housing?
Probe: What are the potential consequences if they don't find housing in the short and long term?

6. Is there a connection between persons with prior convictions experiencing homelessness and the likelihood of them reentering the criminal justice system? In other words, what is the relationship, if any, between homelessness upon societal reintegration and recidivism?

Probing Questions:

- How does employment factor in?
- How does education factor in?
- How does mental illness factor in?

7. Who are the people in your organization or partnering organizations (or more specifically what are the skill sets of the persons) that should be involved to ensure the needs of persons with prior convictions are met when it comes to housing?

Follow up: Explain the idea of a network of providers.

8. If you were to recommend changes to the reentry system for citizens returning after a long period of time, what would you say are the next steps to improve housing outcomes, resources and processes for returning citizens?

Follow-up: What improvements would you suggest for DC reentry programs?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share about needs for a successful reentry program for individuals who have prior convictions?

10. How would you define homelessness in terms of who it impacts most?

Probing Question: Do you feel that it is too narrow of a term within policy, or that it is too broad?

Here are some final closing questions to ensure we have captured your thoughts related to our project to understand and make recommendations regarding reentry programs:

1. What aspects of a reentry program do you find most effective in DC society?
2. Do you have any recommendations on how DC could improve its stance on policies for reentry programs and/or homelessness among vulnerable populations?
3. What is the biggest threat to DC having a successful reentry system? **indicate that this is independent from COVID-19
4. Could you reference any examples of reentry programs that you find successful—that could be role models for other geographic areas?
5. How do you see the re-entry system changing over time to adapt to societal issues such as COVID-19 Pandemic?

Thank you very much for your time. Would you like us to contact you for your approval of use of any quotes attributed to you from this interview?

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