The John Howard Society of Toronto’s Reintegration Centre:
Providing Reintegration Support and Services for Toronto South Detention Centre Releasees in South Etobicoke

ICCA Pre-Conference
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Outline

• Issues facing releasees
• The Toronto South Detention Centre
• The JHS-Toronto Re-integration Centre
• Evaluation of the Centre

Issues Facing Releasees

• Mental health
• Addictions
• Poverty
• Social isolation
• Barriers to employment
• Stigma
• HOMELESSNESS—evidence of cycle of homelessness/incarceration
The Toronto South Detention Centre

- $600 million to build
- Holds about 1,600 inmates
- Second largest jail in Canada
- Provincial institution (2 years less a day and remand)
- Not up to full capacity due to staffing issues
- Opened in January 2014
- On site of old Mimico Correctional Centre
- Located in industrial area of the city
- But it is on a bus route!
• most on remand (no release date, no discharge planning other than severe mental health)
• 180-200 released each week
• 33.44% will be homeless - no men's shelter in vicinity, and lack of affordable housing (JVS-T, 2010)
• High percentages of those have addictions and mental health issues
• Large numbers will also be functionally illiterate in English
• Most will be unemployed

Housing Options

• Post-release housing options are also severely limited for those exiting prison, especially remand custody
• Family, friends and relatives are often options
• The Canadian Mortgage HC (2007) notes that halfway houses, subsidized housing, supportive housing, and private-sector housing are the main housing options for releasees

Housing Options

• But halfway houses are restricted to those on conditional release
• The fact is that there is limited access to subsidized housing and supportive housing, most releasees must rely on private-sector housing
• In 1996 in Ontario Electronic Monitoring "in" and Provincial Half-way houses "out"
Options in Ontario: JHS-Ottawa: Housing Link

- In Ottawa, JHS-O with the City of Ottawa, provides individualized, targeted housing supports to chronically and episodically homeless men exiting correctional and other facilities.
- The goal of the program is to divert homeless men away from long-term shelter stays by linking them to stable housing and supports of their choice in the community.
- Based on a Housing First Model.

The Reintegration Centre: Etobicoke (1 of “the 6”)

- Provide a HUB-like venue (United Way, 2005) for men leaving the Toronto South Detention Centre to access support and referral services.
- Providing Harm Reduction education and Overdose prevention to curb accidental deaths.
- Provides immediate needs like clothing and food.
- Assessment and referrals from a team for:
  - Housing help
  - Addiction detox and treatment
  - Legal assistance
  - Mental health assessment and referrals city wide
  - Helping to move former inmates back to their home communities (predominantly “priority neighbourhoods”).
Peer Support Program

- The value of including people who have backgrounds similar to the men who use the Centre
- Traditionally used in a recovery model context (mental health, 12 step)
- Accompaniment and support
- Harm reduction education and overdose prevention

Video Clip

http://johnhoward.on.ca/toronto/services/reintegration-centre/
The Evaluation: Context

- Martinson “Nothing Works” (1974)
- Criminologists have recently been calling for more quasi-experimental research (Nagin & Weisburd, 2013)
- Why?
- Criminologists are good at critique (zero tolerance policies in schools, mandatory minimum sentences, drug prohibition, broken window policing, etc.)
- Not so good at showing what works or has potential

Criminologists could be more proactive in identifying opportunities for research and in encouraging policy makers to implement programs and policies

An opportunity for a quasi-experimental study in a natural setting

Working with a interdisciplinary research team from JHS-T; U of Guelph; York U; CAMH; Ryerson U; St. Michael's Hospital

An Evaluation of the JHS-T Re-integration Centre

- Even though crime rates are generally falling in Canada, levels of incarceration are not, and remand custody is up
- Approximately 40% of Ontario inmates (2 years less a day) re-offended within 1 year after release
- This unique opportunity to evaluate a theoretically informed, evidence based, cost effective program that has the potential of being adopted across North America
A quasi-experimental design

Our research shares similarities with the traditional experimental design or randomized controlled trial, but we specifically lack the element of random assignment to treatment or control.

Data are being collected from information taken from intake forms held at the Centre.

Men will be followed up over a 1 year period for re-offending after they used services at the Centre using data from Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

A unique collaboration between government, NGOs, and academic community.

But it took some time to get the project up and running.

Experimental Group: All Men who used the Centre who provided written consent to be involved in this research.

Control Group: MCSCS recidivism data of a random sample of 600 men released from the Toronto South Detention Centre over the same period of time who did not use the Centre.
**Dependent Variable:** Re-offending (taking into account the seriousness of post release conviction, using Crime Severity Index from Statistics Canada Centre for Justice Statistics)

**Independent Variable:** Obtained Service at Centre (Yes or No). Will also be looking at what type of service.

**Controlling for:**
- a) Age
- b) # of Prior convictions
- c) Ethno-racial Identity

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Aware that differences in levels of re-conviction between the two groups could be due to factors besides the intervention or our control variables:

- Men who do not us the Re-integration Centre may not need help with housing, drug use, mental health, etc.

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- Data from MCSCS is based on re-admission to an Ontario facility only—no court or police data on sample—nor admissions to correctional facilities in other provinces or Federal Institutions
- “Priority neighbourhoods” are often subject to police raids more so than non priority neighbourhoods. We do not know where men are living if they get charged, convicted and incarcerated upon release.
• Data collection at the Centre began last March and will conclude this coming March
• In February 2018 will obtain data from MCSCS on re-offending for control and experimental groups
• Statistical analysis will then follow
• Stay tuned.....

THANK YOU