

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO SECURING EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING

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ABSTRACT

▶ Individuals released from confinement face a number of reintegration challenges that, when overcome, increase community safety significantly. Research literature shows that stable employment, for many reasons, has a wide range of crime prevention indicators. Finding suitable employment and affordable housing, away from high crime neighborhoods, is key for successful community transition. In our work at the Crossroads Day Reporting Centre, we support clients in overcoming these barriers. We work with clients to simultaneously secure those primary needs while also addressing relapse prevention needs, mental health concerns, academic upgrading and general counselling.



OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Objective 1: Understand the significance of finding relevant employment and housing during community reintegration
- ▶ Objective 2: Identify several challenges faced by newly released adults in securing employment and housing
- ▶ Objective 3: Examine the lessons learned of one Canadian agency striving to address these fundamental needs



CROSSROADS DAY REPORTING CENTRE

- ▶ Operated by a charitable organization in partnership with the local parole offices
- ▶ In 2016-2017 worked with 154 offenders (36 women)
- ▶ Located in an urban area in a storefront
- ▶ Program grounded in the RNR model
- ▶ Gender responsive programming for women
- ▶ Provides counselling and brokerage services
- ▶ Staff: 2.5 FTE



CDRC STRATEGY

- ▶ Based on the RNR model for assessing risk/needs
- ▶ Incorporate Motivational Interviewing Style in every interaction
- ▶ Develop a case management plan
- ▶ Assist the offender to identify what impacts their adaptive coping behaviors
- ▶ Make appropriate referrals to counselling, housing and employment
- ▶ Remain desistance focused



PAINS OF RE-ENTRY

- ▶ Dealing with the prospect of homelessness
- ▶ Finding appropriate, affordable, safe housing
- ▶ Securing employment
- ▶ Managing criminal record problems
- ▶ Acquiring ID documents
- ▶ Access to health care, mental health services
- ▶ Access to treatment for substance abuse
- ▶ Family reunification or reconciliation
- ▶ Managing schedule around P.O.



OUR INTIAL EMPHASIS: COMMUNITY STABILIZATION

- ▶ Task of supervision is complex and the needs of the client are also complex.
- ▶ HOUSING
- ▶ EMPLOYMENT
- ▶ THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE (Importance of the staff-client relationship)
- ▶ Look for reasons to positively reinforce desired behavior in each interaction (reward if \$ allows)

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IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP

"I'VE COME TO THE FRIGHTENING CONCLUSION THAT I AM THE DECISIVE ELEMENT IN THE CONSUMER'S LIFE. IT'S MY PERSONAL APPROACH THAT CREATES THE CLIMATE; IT'S MY DAILY MOOD THAT MAKES THE WEATHER. I POSSESS A TREMENDOUS POWER TO MAKE A CONSUMER'S LIFE MISERABLE OR JOYOUS. I CAN BE A TOOL OF TORTURE OR AN INSTRUMENT OF INSPIRATION; I CAN HUMILIATE OR HOMO, HURT OR HEAL IN ALL SITUATIONS; IT IS MY RESPONSE THAT DECIDES WHETHER A CRISIS WILL BE ESCALATED OR DEESCALATED AND A CONSUMER HUMANIZED OR DEHUMANIZED."

GINOTT. 1993

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KEY ELEMENTS IN A RELATIONSHIP

- ▶ RESPECT
- ▶ TRUST
- ▶ DIALOGIC CONVERSATION
- ▶ EMPATHY COMBINED WITH EMPOWERMENT

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GENDER RESPONSIVE PROGRAM

- ▶ Increasingly growing collaborative case management with women
- ▶ Began to change & develop in 2015/2016
- ▶ 17 women in first year, 36 in 2nd, and 29 women in first half of current fiscal year
- ▶ Only female centered program in JHST
- ▶ Unique needs, challenges and barriers
- ▶ Requires relationship centered and trauma informed case management approach

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IMPORTANCE OF STABLE EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING

- ▶ In considerations concerning crime and the economy employment is the most likely to come to mind.
- ▶ However researchers are also noticing a link between crime and housing as well
- ▶ What do you think stable employment and housing entails?

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BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

- ▶ Released with no I.D. / SSN (months to obtain)
- ▶ Unmet mental health needs
- ▶ Resume gap
- ▶ Lack of interview skills/clothing
- ▶ Parole Board Conditions
- ▶ No financial support for safety boots etc.
- ▶ Unfiled taxes
- ▶ No computer training/upgrading
- ▶ In many cases...starting from scratch!
- ▶ What have been your experiences?

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CASE ILLUSTRATIONS

- ▶ Housing
 - ▶ "Dave" lifer, injured, forced out of housing, rejected for resources, felt judged, 1 yr 9 mos to stabilize
- ▶ Employment
 - ▶ "Marie" 4 year LTSO, high profile, heinous. Changed name, Obtained employment, success threatened by internet

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FUTURE PLANS

- ▶ Increased distance-focus: Move away from compliance focused which gets them to WED
- ▶ Funding for Post WED support
- ▶ Develop additional programs for women offenders
- ▶ Find diverse sources of funding that would enable the CDRC to increase staff to more adequately serve the current caseload and provide incentive for expansion.

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POLICY OPTIONS IN NEED OF ADVOCACY

- ▶ EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES
 - ▶ Moving beyond current employment efforts and focusing on training and development opportunities
 - ▶ Develop robust social enterprises
 - ▶ Develop capacity to encourage self-employment as a choice for clients
- ▶ CRIMINAL RECORDS
 - ▶ Instead of an outright ban consideration to be given to:
 - ▶ Directly related convictions
 - ▶ Time since conviction
 - ▶ Evidence of rehabilitation.

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HOW CAN THESE IDEAS BE REALIZED?

▶ CAPACITY EXPANSION

- ▶ Cooperation
- ▶ Coordination
- ▶ Collaboration

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IN CONCLUSION...

▶ We all have central needs that need to be met:

- ▶ To be loved
- ▶ To be important
- ▶ To be allowed to say "No!"
- ▶ To feel safe, in our cities, on the streets and in our homes

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QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!
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