
SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SAFER COMMUNITIES

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**Successful Crime Reduction and Prevention Strategies
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A large proportion of urban crime is due to repeat offending by individuals who have served a term of incarceration and failed, upon their release, to integrate the community as law-abiding citizens. The vast majority of incarcerated offenders eventually return to society. Most of them will return to or relocate to urban centres. Offender reintegration has significant implications for community safety and it is, therefore, imperative to address this issue as part of a comprehensive urban crime prevention strategy for safer communities. This paper is concerned with some of the new strategies designed to facilitate the successful reintegration of offenders into the community after a term of incarceration and, in so doing, to prevent recidivism.

This paper will address the return from prison of the high risk for harm offenders to the community and will review some successful offender reintegration “strategies” that contribute to a safer community. It is already known from the limited research available that the most successful strategies are those which effect a balance between supervision and assistance through interagency collaboration. *The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures (the Tokyo Rules*, adopted in December 1990) and other internationally accepted standards also provide some relevant guidance in that regard.

We will provide examples of two types of strategies: strategies which focus on process and inter-agency collaboration to bring a proper balance between assistance and supervision¹; and, strategies which focus on providing support and assistance to the offenders. We will briefly present the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) model which has been successfully implemented in both Canada and England. We will also review the lessons learned from two promising “process reform” strategies and highlight the benefits of enhanced interagency cooperation and coordination. The first is the English Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs) model and the second is the Canadian National Joint Committee (NJC) model. We will conclude by trying to summarize the lessons learned with respect to transforming the way correctional agencies and the law enforcement and community partners are addressing the challenges of offender reintegration and contributing to effective crime prevention.

International Standards

International criminal justice standards do not have much to say about the need for aftercare services for released prisoners and the role of the community in facilitating the offenders’ reintegration, but they are not exactly silent either.

¹ With respect to strategies to support the offender’s reintegration, the Mission Statement of the Correctional Service of Canada suggests that it necessary to “assist to the extent possible and control to the extent necessary.”

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners makes it clear that the duty of society does not end with a prisoner's release: "There should, therefore, be governmental or private agencies capable of lending the released prisoner efficient aftercare directed towards lessening of prejudice against him and towards his social rehabilitation" (*Rule 64*). The *Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners* (1990) also make it clear that: "With the participation and help of the community and social institutions, and with due regard to the interest of the victims, favourable conditions shall be created for the reintegration of the ex-prisoner into society under the best possible conditions" (*Principle 10*).

The *Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice* contain similar guidance concerning non-institutional (community-based treatment) (*Rule 23*), the need to provide assistance to facilitate the rehabilitative process (*Rule 24*), and the need to call upon volunteers, voluntary organizations, local institutions and other community resources to contribute effectively to the rehabilitation of the juvenile in a community setting and, as far as possible, within the family unit".

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures were intended to promote greater community involvement in the treatment of offenders and to encourage the creation of alternatives to imprisonment. However, their emphasis on the need to achieve a proper balance in implementing non-custodial measures "between the rights of individual offenders, the rights of the victims, and the concern of society for public safety and crime prevention" (*rule 1.4*) is very relevant to the development and management of offender reintegration programs. *The Rules* encourage public participation in community-based interventions and suggest that "public participation should be regarded as an opportunity for members of the community to contribute to the protection of their society" (*Rule 17.2*). Finally, the *Rules* encourage the development of suitable mechanisms to "facilitate the establishment of linkages between services responsible for non custodial measures, other branches of the criminal justice system, social development and welfare agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, in such fields as health, housing, education and labour, and the mass media" (*Rule 22.1*)

In Europe, *Rule 46* of the *European Rules on Community Sanctions and Measures* states "community participation shall be used to assist offenders to develop meaningful ties in the community, to become aware of the community's interest in them and to broaden their possibilities for contact and support".

The *Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime*, adopted in 2002 by the Economic and Social Council in 2002, also emphasize that the active participation of communities and other segments of civil society is an essential part of effective crime prevention (*Guideline 16*) and that "cooperation/ partnerships should be an integral part of effective crime prevention, given the wide-ranging nature of the

causes of crime and the skills and responsibilities required to address them", including partnerships working across ministries and between authorities, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, the business sector and private citizens (*Guidelines 9*; see also *Guideline 19*).

The *Guidelines for Cooperation and Technical Assistance in the Field of Urban Crime Prevention*, adopted in 1995 by the Economic and Social Council, refer specifically to the measures that States should promote to prevent recidivism, including by: (1) facilitating the adaptation of methods of police intervention; (2) adapting methods of intervention, including socio-educational support within the framework of the sentence, in prison and as preparation for release from prison; and, (3) giving an active role to the community in the rehabilitation of offenders after the sentence has been served (aid and socio-educational support, family support etc.).

In recent years, much of the discussion concerning offender reintegration has been around the development of better means to manage the offenders' reentry into the community by providing an effective and balanced mix of supervision and assistance and finding ways to do so through effective collaboration between corrections, law enforcement and community-based agencies. The Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) operating in cooperation with supervision agencies offer an interesting example of a promising practice that has evolved out of that kind of thinking.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)²

The CoSA initiative was originally conceived in Canada as a means to fill a gap in services left by government policy that is, regarding those individuals that had served their entire court sentence in prison and were released at the expiration of their warrant. These individuals were being released without a formal process of aftercare and without any assistance or supervision. CoSA was initiated out of necessity to work with released offenders who were most likely to fail to successfully reintegrate society, presumably because of a lack of community support or other resources. Many of these individuals were untreated sex offenders and their return to the community was very likely to attract significant media attention.

The following chronicles the beginnings of CoSA.

In the summer of 1994, Charlie Taylor was released from federal custody at the end of his sentence to veritable media frenzy. As a repeat child molester, Charlie was well known to police and was the immediate topic of discussion in most households in the city to which he was released. The police answered the calls for action of the community with 'around the clock' surveillance, at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars in overtime.

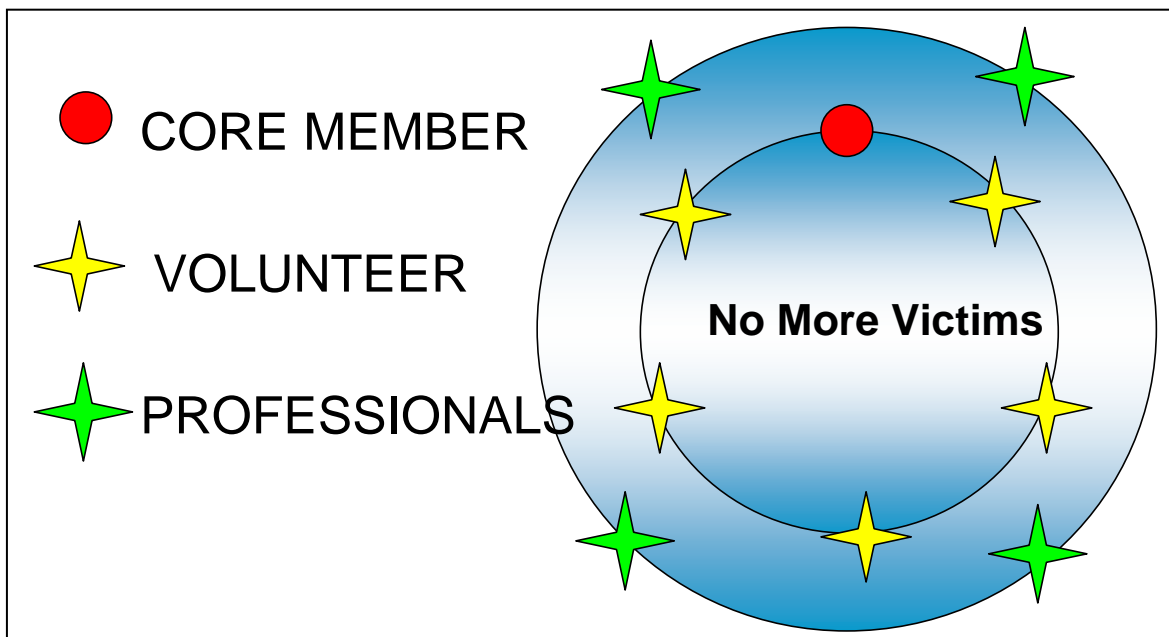
² For the purposes of this paper "CoSA" or "Circles" are both short forms for Circles of Support and Accountability.

Meanwhile, the local television station ran stories at every possible opportunity, complete with 'mug shot' photographs. Charlie was an instant pariah. However, he was also considerably institutionalised, having been in hospitals or other secure settings for the vast majority of his life, and he was developmentally delayed. But, lest the reader believe it is our intention to curry sympathy for him, be assured that Charlie had committed crimes that caused considerable and lasting harm for his victims. The key issue in the summer of 1994 was how to keep the community safe while ensuring that Charlie had a place in it.

The Reverend Harry Nigh was the pastor of a small, urban Mennonite congregation in the city to which Charlie was released. Prior to that release, institutional staff had tried to establish professional links in the community, to no avail. As a last ditch effort, the institutional psychologist contacted Reverend Nigh, whom Charlie had noted was formerly his religious leader. Initially, Reverend Nigh did not remember Charlie, and when he did remember him, his memory was that he didn't much care for him. However, in spite of his initial reluctance to have anything to do with this man, Reverend Nigh agreed to meet with Charlie and see what could be arranged. Together with several of his congregants, Reverend Nigh formed a group of supportive volunteers in a model that is now widely known as Circles of Support and Accountability.³

The following graph illustrates the different categories of individuals involved in a CoSA. The "core member" is the offender recently released to the community after serving the entire prison sentence. At the centre of the model, is the fundamental objective of the program and the primary goal of the community voluntary participation: "no more victims".

Figure 1 - The CoSA Model



³ See Wilson, McWhinnie, Picheca, Prinzo, and Cortoni 2007

The CoSA Model is a fine example of the type of community participation and the partnerships between the community and the justice system that are promoted by the international standards mentioned above. The volunteers are carefully selected from the community, professionally trained, and aptly supported. As reflected in *Figure 1* above, they constitute the inner circle. A covenant or agreement is established between the core member and up to seven circle volunteers. Participation is voluntary on both sides. However, once the covenant is agreed to, it becomes the road map for both the support and the accountability that can be expected by all participants. The outer “professional” circle refers to the support, guidance and interventions that are provided by professionally trained participants and representatives of official law enforcement or correctional agencies.

The volunteer selection and training process includes:

- Initial interview with volunteers;
- Checking the volunteers’ references;
- Checking the volunteers’ criminal record;
- Initial training of volunteers - over 26 hours – professionally supported;
- Ongoing and experientially oriented training;
- Use of network of CoSAs across Canada as a resource; and,
- Regional co-ordination of activities to ensure quality and consistency.

In Canada, the Circles are funded by the Chaplaincy Service of the Correctional Service of Canada. The Service acknowledges that the involvement of CoSA volunteers “enhances public safety through providing a healthy environment for the Core member. The volunteers can do so by:

- journeying through difficulties and emergencies;
- confronting inappropriate attitudes or behaviours;
- advocating with treatment providers, community groups, police services and other professionals in the community;
- mediating community concerns;
- celebrating the core member's' successes and anniversaries.”⁴

The relevant crime prevention question here is of course that of knowing whether the assistance thus provided to released offenders helps prevent recidivism. Are the Circles actually enhancing public safety? At present, the evaluations are still preliminary but their findings are very encouraging. A 2005 evaluation of a CoSA pilot project in Southern Ontario is presented for consideration (Wilson, Pichea, and Prinzo, 2005).

⁴ Chaplaincy Circles of Support and Accountability, Correctional Service of Canada, Ottawa Retrieved from http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/prgrm/chap/cosa_pamphlet_e.shtml. See also: see Wilson, Huculak and McWhinnie 2002.

The evaluation conducted by Wilson, Picheca and Prinzo (2005) compared CoSA supported offenders to 60 offenders from a matched comparison group. *Table 1*, below, highlights that the 60 high-risk sex offenders with no CoSA re-offended at rates predicted by actuarial measures (i.e. Static 99). The 60 high-risk sex offenders who received CoSA support, on the other hand, re-offended at a rate 50-60% below expected recidivism rates. Furthermore, the offences committed by the Circle supported offenders were less brutal, less invasive, and less injurious than the index offence – a harm reduction effect. This is evident on comparing the sexual offending recidivism rate of the two groups to the expected results as predicted by the risk assessment tools.

Table 1 Outcome Recidivism Data

	Circles (60)	Control (60)
M (SD) age	47.47 (12.27)	43.62 (10.84)
M (SD) STATIC-99	5.60 (2.219)	5.00 (1.957)
M (SD) RRASOR	3.18 (1.652)	2.12 (1.310)
M (range–mos) follow-up	54.67 (3-123)	52.47 (3-124)
M (mos) until 1st failure	22.10	18.54
Recidivism		
Sexual	8.33% (5)	16.67% (10)
Expected sexual	28.50% (17)**	26.45% (16)
Violent*	21.67% (13)	35.00% (21)
General ‡	31.67% (19)	43.44% (26)
Dispositions	38	49

*** $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ ‡ $p < .10$**

The evaluation was replicated on a national scale in Canada. Some of the findings of the evaluation were presented at the 2006 Association of Treatment of Sexual Abusers Conference and are summarized in *Table 2*.

Table 2 Outcome – Recidivism Data National Replication Sample

	Circles (47)	Control (47)
M (SD) age	43.18 (9.55)	43.52 (8.66)
M (SD) STATIC-99**	5.00 (2.14)	6.11 (1.52)
M (SD) RRASOR	2.72 (1.50)	2.74 (1.36)
M (range–mos) follow-up	32.53 (6-84)	35.74 (6-95)
M (mos/#) until 1st failure*	23.92 (5)	50.73 (18)
Recidivism (convictions + charges)		
Sexual[‡]	2.13% (1)	12.77% (6)
Violent**	8.51% (4)	31.91% (15)
General**	10.64% (5)	38.30% (18)
# of charges**	17	76

*** $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ ‡ $p < .10$**

In comparison to matched control subjects, CoSA participants from the national sample had:

- more than 80% fewer instances of sexual reoffending;
- nearly 75% fewer violent reoffending;
- more than 70% fewer new offences of any kind; and,
- more than 75% fewer charges laid against them after their release (Wilson, Cortoni, Meunier and Vermani, 2006).

In Canada Circles developed as a community response to a perceived fear held, as noted above, by a particular community and has been supported by the Correctional Service Canada. In the UK Circles was replicated as a series of pilot projects funded by the Home Office. The UK adapted Circles to support the statutory agencies in the successful management of high-risk sex offenders living in the community. Chris Wilson, Project Manager, Thames Valley Circles of Support and Accountability indicated that the model for Canadian Circles was organic and the UK Circles model was systemic (as cited in Quaker Peace & Social Witness, 2005, p 21).

The following is a portion of an evaluation that was completed in 2005 in relation to a Circles project that has been operating in Thames Valley, England since 2002. The Quakers adapted the Canadian Circles model to the Thames Valley reality.

During the review period eight of the twenty core members exhibited problem or “recidivist” behaviours. Upon further review the following was determined.

- No core member had been reconvicted of any new sexual offence.
- One core member had been reconvicted for breach of a Sex Offence Prevention Order.
- Three core members had been recalled to prison on breach of parole licence.
- In four other cases recidivist behaviour in the core member was identified, reported to the responsible authorities and the core member was held to account within the circle.
- In seven of the eight cases it was the activities of the Circle that identified the recidivist behaviour. (Bates, 2005)

The above identifies the significant role that CoSA played in relation to eight recidivist leaning core members. More specifically it illustrates the importance of the interagency relationship between CoSA and the responsible authority. In the Thames Valley the “responsible authority” was the inter-agency collaborative body referred to as MAPPA or the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement. This legislatively mandated body will be addressed further below.

As noted above the key roles that CoSA plays in their respective communities shows that a community need not abdicate its responsibility to play its own important role in the social reintegration of the offender. This is one of the very important ways in which the community can work to improve its own safety. The relative success of the Circles of Support and Accountability Model is due in part to its close collaboration and partnership with various institutions, including correctional services and law enforcement agencies. Needless to say, however such collaboration is difficult to develop and to maintain. It requires processes and sometimes even legislation and formal protocols that can mandate and support it. It also presupposes a sustained investment of the parts of all those concerned. This leads us to look at two examples of strategies that were precisely meant to support that kind of interagency cooperation and, as a result, a more effective balance between assistance and supervision in dealing with released prisoners.

Strategies to Promote Interagency Collaboration and an Effective Balance between Supervision and Support to Prevent Recidivism

The first example is provided by an initiative of the Pacific Region of the National Joint Committee (NJC) of Senior Criminal Justice Officials on Canada’s west coast. This Committee, which is made up of senior police officers, correctional officials, parole board officials, and senior crown counsels, was formed, consistent with the national model, to promote effective partnerships to improve the administration of criminal justice. The Committee was able to provide effective leadership and contribute to reforming the way the various agencies

were collectively dealing with dangerous offenders released at the end of their prison term and to engage the support of various community agencies.

At one point, the existing process for the return of high risk for harm offenders became a critical issue for the Committee and the latter accepted that all those involved in that process needed to better understand their respective roles. The committee engaged in an exercise to identify and eliminate any identifiable “gaps” in the process, whether from the point of view of the supervision of the offenders or that of providing them with the necessary support and assistance. The re-thinking and reform of the existing collective response to these difficult and dangerous cases was facilitated by a number of events:

- a national conference in Vancouver in 2005;
- a Meeting of Experts in June 2006 also held in Vancouver; and,
- an international conference entitled “What Works in the Community Reintegration of High-Risk Offenders”, in Ottawa in November 2006.

At the initial meeting in Vancouver in 2005, more than one quarter of the delegates were community representatives, many of them from CoSA, and all of the relevant justice, correctional and law enforcement agencies were represented. Issues were identified which were later considered during the Vancouver Experts Meeting. An agenda for change and a number of recommendations were developed for the respective agencies and departments to consider.⁵

Several gaps were identified through the preparatory work and during the events highlighted above. The following is but one example. Of critical importance to the Circles was routine access to offender specific information held by the correctional service. This access was required both for the protection of the Circle volunteers and to assist with the development, in concert with the Core member, of an appropriate covenant or “road map” to their relationship. The NJC contributed significantly to the brokering of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Correctional Service of Canada and Circles that identified the various roles and responsibilities in support of accessing the required information. At the basis of the agreement was a requirement for offender consent for Circles to access the information. This informed consent contributes significantly to establishing a relationship between the offender and the Circle volunteers.

⁵ The recommendations contributed to the Agenda for the national “What Works Conference”, in Ottawa in November 2006. The recommendations and the results of the November Conference remain under active consideration by the respective levels of government.

The Example of MAPPA (UK)

A different approach to prompting interagency cooperation was taken in England and Wales, where a “duty to cooperate” was legislated and imposed on all relevant agencies. The *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)* established the MAPPA and placed them on a statutory basis. *The Criminal Justice Act (2003)* re-enacted and strengthened those provisions. The legislation requires the Police, Prison and Probation Services (acting jointly as the 'Responsible Authority') in each of the 42 areas of England and Wales: (Home Office, 2006)⁶

- to establish arrangements for assessing and managing the risks posed by sexual and violent offenders;
- to review and monitor the arrangements; and,
- as part of the reviewing and monitoring arrangements, to prepare and publish an annual report on their operation.

A range of other agencies have also been placed under a duty to co-operate with the Responsible Authority. These include:

- Local Authority Social Services;
- Primary Care Trusts, other NHS Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities Jobcentres Plus;
- Youth Offending Teams;
- Registered Social Landlords which accommodate MAPPA offenders;
- Local Housing Authorities;
- Local Education Authorities; and,
- Electronic Monitoring providers.

There is also a requirement to appoint two lay advisors to each of the strategic management boards that review the MAPPA.

MAPPA is the term to describe the arrangements set up locally to assess and manage offenders who pose a risk of serious harm. National MAPPA guidance indicates the use of three levels of management:

Level 1: involves ordinary agency management.

Level 2: referred to as local inter-agency management, where the active involvement of more than one agency is required to manage the offender. Most offenders assessed as high or very high risk of serious harm can be managed at Level 2 where the management plans do not require the attendance and commitment of resources at a senior level.

Level 3: Level 3 activity meetings are known in all Areas as Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels (or MAPPPs). The few cases referred to MAPPPs are those of offenders whose management is so problematic that multi-agency co-operation

⁶ <http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/output/Page335.asp>

and oversight at a senior level is required, together with the authority to commit exceptional resources to strengthen the risk management plan.

There are three categories of offenders managed through MAPPA.

Category 1: Registered Sex Offenders - offenders required to comply with the notification requirements (often referred to as registration) set out in the *Sexual Offences Act 2003*.

Category 2: Violent or other sex offenders - violent offenders sentenced to imprisonment for 12 months or more, sex offenders not required to register, and offenders detained under hospital orders.

Category 3: Other Offenders - offenders who do not fall into categories 1 or 2, but because of the offences committed by them (wherever they have been committed) are considered to pose a risk of serious harm to the public.

In 2006 a report entitled “MAPPA - the First Five Years” was prepared by the Responsible Authority National Steering Group. The representative members of the Steering Group involved in the preparation of the report came from the National Offender Management Service, a Police agency and Her Majesty’s Prison Service.

Based on the 2006 report the number of offenders who were being managed at levels 2 or 3 and who were charged with a serious sexual or violent offence dropped over a two year period. Compared with 2004/05, 2005/06 saw a reduction in the number of serious further offences in this population from 79 to 61 cases as highlighted in *Table 3* below. As noted in the evaluation the figures are encouraging but they should be treated with caution for two reasons: data has been collected for only 2 years; and, with such small numbers any change can trigger a wholly disproportionate, misleading percentage variation. (Home Office, 2006)⁷

Table 3 Outcome Measures: Level 2 & Level 3 activity for 05/06 (% Change)

Category of MAPPA Offender	Level 2		Level 3		Levels 2 & 3	
	2004/2005	2005/2006	2004/2005	2005/2006	2004/2005	2005/2006
1) Breach of License	1084	1321 21.86%	222	219 - 1.35%	1306	1540 17.92%
2) Breach of Orders	55	82 89.09%	18	22 +22.22%	73	104 42.47%
3) Charged with a Serious Further Offence	47	50 6.03%	32	11 - 65.63%	79	61 - 22.78%

⁷ <http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/files/pdf/MAPPATheFirstFiveYears.pdf>

Need for Research on Successful Practices

On both sides of the Atlantic, practitioners have arrived at the same conclusion: far more research and evaluation is required to support the development of effective offender reintegration and recidivism prevention strategies (Dandurand, 2006).

There is no consensus as to whether prisoner re-entry support programs work and, to date, there have been few evaluations of existing programs (Visher, 2006).⁸ Many of the current initiatives were developed on the basis of often-conflicting research findings in related correctional areas (e.g., impact of drug treatment, employment training, counselling, and community supervision). We know what should work, at least in theory, but the findings of program evaluations are sometimes disconcerting (Griffiths, Dandurand, and Murdoch, 2007). The basis upon which new programs are developed is often tenuous (Borzycki, and Makkai, 2007). It is often as though research and practice were moving on separate tracks, failing to inform each other (Pertisilla, 2004: 8) The majority of reintegration programs have not been subjected to controlled evaluations and successful approaches remain to be identified and articulated; there is still a lot of work to be done in identifying and articulating successful approaches.

There are many opportunities for intervention by various agencies and community organizations that are involved in improving the likelihood that an offender will successfully reintegrate the community and refrain from committing additional crimes.

In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on designing comprehensive interventions, based on a continuity of care providing consistent assistance to offenders within and beyond prison. There is a recognition that preparation for reintegration should commence before the offender's release. After release, interventions should support the immediate transition of offenders from the prison to the community and reinforce the gains achieved through in-prison treatment and continue until a successful reintegration is completed (Fox, 2002). This approach is often referred to as "throughcare", a system-wide mode of intervention (Borzycki, 2005: 11).

Research suggests that offering a range of interventions and support both within prison and after release is likely to be the most effective approach for helping offenders meet the challenges that confront them and reduce the likelihood that they will re-offend. These interventions must help the offenders normalize their lifestyle and equip them with the necessary skills to function successfully in society.

⁸ The National Institute of Justice in Washington (D.C.) has funded five major outcome evaluations of reentry programs, but none of these evaluations have yet been completed. Some of these studies, however, have produced some in-process information.

Conclusion

The challenges of successful and safe offender reintegration are immense. The challenges are magnified when dealing with the high risk for harm offender.

This paper strongly encourages agencies that are involved in criminal justice and offender reintegration to resolutely engage their respective communities with the intent of developing and implementing programs similar to the promising practice profiled above: Circles of Support and Accountability. Criminal justice practitioners should also devote considerable energy to developing a process that enhances their “linkage” with other criminal justice agencies. Both the NJC and the MAPPA models have shown encouraging results in support of safe offender reintegration. Consistent with this, and as noted above a significant lesson learned is the need for more focused research and evaluation.

In summation, it is hoped that this paper will be of assistance with the challenge of successful and safe offender reintegration and possibly make a contribution to our collective goal of “no more victims”.

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