

Reentry Advocate

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CAP Reentry Clinic: MetroHealth's Commitment to the Formerly Incarcerated



The Community Advocacy Program (CAP), run by Dr. E. Harry Walker at the MetroHealth Broadway Health Center, 6835 Broadway, provides high quality health care for members of the reentry community via its Reentry Clinic. The Clinic is a gateway to MetroHealth's full scope of services and supports the patients' ongoing health care needs at a convenient location.

The Clinic's hours are from 8am *MetroHealth continued on pg. 4*

Looking for a "Greener" Future

Shawn Fears came home last year after serving 17 years in federal prison for conspiracy. At age 38, he was determined to turn his life around, received help from a friend he'd known since childhood. Deon Levy, who works for Ameribuild, a company now doing business in multiple states, gave Fears a job within days of his returning to Cleveland.

"Everyone is not as fortunate as I

was to have a friend like Tony Perry," said Fears, "but I'm here to tell you it makes all of the difference in the world when someone reaches out to you as soon as you come home. Especially after being gone as long as I had been."

Like many others before him, Fears discovered that his past misdeeds didn't mean as much as his willingness

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*We want to hear
from you...*

Voices From Behind Bars

Please submit your stories to:
P.O. Box 6031053
Cleveland, OH 44103

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Smart On Crime: Recommendations For The Next Administration and Congress

Excerpted from a report by the Sentencing Project: The 2009 Criminal Justice Transition Coalition, Issued November 5, 2008.



The day after the presidential election the Sentencing Project was among the first organizations to make suggestions on how to reform America's criminal justice system. The entire 267-page report can be viewed at: http://sentencingproject.org/Admin/Documents/publications/inc_transition2009.pdf

Part six of a continuing series which will encapsulate the part of the report dealing with prisoner reentry

Summary of the Problem:

More and more, employers are conducting criminal background checks on job applicants, which can make it much more difficult for the millions of Americans with criminal records to find employment and become productive, law-abiding members of society. Most states allow employers to refuse to hire people with criminal records; not only individuals who have been convicted – even if they have paid their debt to society and demonstrated their ability to work without risk to the public – but also those who were arrested and never convicted. Although no one questions the legitimate concerns of employers who do not want to hire someone with a conviction record who clearly demonstrates a threat to public safety or who otherwise has a conviction history directly related to a specific job, policies that encourage employers to adopt broad sweeping exclusions (i.e. not hiring or considering anyone with any type of criminal history) simply lock out and eliminate many qualified, rehabilitated individuals from the job market.

Criminal record policies that bar applicants with criminal histories from employment should be amended to not only include a requirement for individualized determinations but may include a graduated period of consideration of the criminal record based upon the severity of the individual's criminal record history. Consideration of a criminal record should not be permitted beyond 7 years. In the study, *Scarlet Letter and Recidivism: Does an Old Criminal Record Predict Future Offending* (2007), researchers note that their findings “suggest that after a given period of remaining crime free it may be prudent to wash away the brand of ‘offender’ and open up more legitimate opportunities to this population.”

Potential Allies:

Change regulations and guidance from the Departments of Education and Labor to ensure that state and federal in-prison educational and training programs are tied to high growth labor markets and industries. Job training programs should be developed and

matched to promote skills for jobs that are available in the regional labor market and those that are in high growth sectors. Conducting labor market analysis that includes a review of statutory barriers is cost-effective and is an efficient use of job training resources. For example, a correctional facility may train people in horticulture despite the fact that the majority of the individuals may return to urban metropolitan areas where there are a limited number of jobs available in floral design and landscaping. A facility may also train incarcerated individuals in barbering or cosmetology and the state's licensing law may prohibit someone with a felony from being licensed. Additionally, in some states, people in prison may be trained for work in industries that may be nonexistent in their region. Labor forecasting and legal barrier analysis is a cost effective and sensible practice to ensure incarcerated individuals are prepared to compete in the labor market, are employable, and are less likely to recidivate.

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REENTRY NEWS

from around the nation

Democratic Senator James Webb, backed by Republican Senator Arlen Specter, introduced legislation to create a blue-ribbon panel that would conduct an 18-month assessment and offer concrete recommendations for reform.

“America’s criminal justice system has deteriorated to the point that it’s a national disgrace”, Webb declared, noting that the United States has five percent of the world’s population but 25 percent of the world’s prisoners.

The Virginia lawmaker noted the soaring numbers of drug offenders in prison, and charged that four times more mentally ill people are incarcerated than housed in mental health hospitals.

“We’re doing something drastically wrong”, said Webb, whose plan also aims to improve the US response to armed

gangs, especially drug-related groups, as it seeks to bring the prison population down from about 2.4 million people.

The commission would seek to improve American responses to gang violence, overhaul drug criminalization, improve mental illness treatment, improve prison administration and establish a system to reintegrate prisoners into society, his office said.

About five million people are on probation or parole.

The 11-member panel would comprise experts drawn from criminal justice, law enforcement, public health, national security, prison management, social services, prisoner reentry into society and victims’ rights.

More than one percent of adults in the United States sit

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Agencies Collaborate on Child Support Issues

Part three of a three-part series

One of the more pressing questions the collaborators faced was dealing with the status of a child support order when the obligator (the individual who owes the money) is incarcerated. Currently, if the order is not modified, an arrearage accumulates, and when the individual exits prison they can owe a staggering amount of money. Faced with such a debt, many obligators go into the “underground economy” to prevent their wages from being attached. Some simply don’t seek employment, which leads to recidivism.

The workgroup made a number of recommendations, among them was

one to draft and promote legislation to include incarceration as a reason to request an administrative review of a child support order for eligible obligators, and for them to pay \$50 a month towards their obligation.

These recommendations were necessary because current administrative and court practices are based on Ohio case law, which tends to consider incarceration as voluntary unemployment and therefore ineligible as a reason to review a child support order.

An Indiana case, *Lambert vs. Lambert*, was cited by the workgroup as a less punitive model



that could work in Ohio. In that case, the court found that the obligator’s pre-incarceration income should not have been used to determine the child support obligation due while the obligator was incarcerated.

The court issued its decision based on multiple factors, including finding that the child support system is an economic one, not a punitive one and it serves to measure each parent’s relative contribution to

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to work and work hard. When he found out about a program at Tri-C, Pathways to Green Jobs, Perry encouraged him to apply so that he could expand his knowledge of the industry. Fears, along with 39 others, were accepted into the program. Eventually, a total of 150 people will be trained.

The Tri-C program is modeled after one started in Oakland, CA by Van Jones, who was recently tapped by President Obama to become his point person on green jobs. His 2008 book,

“The Green Collar Economy” lays out a plan to use the emerging green technology to help people rise out of poverty, and to have formerly incarcerated individuals, like Fears, a second chance.

The Pathways program will teach green construction, deconstruction, energy efficiency auditing, weatherization retrofitting of homes and commercial structures, and wind component manufacturing. The training is free, and the students will learn basic and technical construction skills, gain

valuable on-the-job experience, and get the opportunity to join a growing movement that will provide a sustainable future for America, and prosperity for those engaged in the work.

Fears is planning on focusing on the weatherization aspect of the program, and his friend Tony Perry has offered to help him get his own business off the ground once he completes the training. “There are real opportunities out here for people coming home,” said Fears, “you just have to be ready to take advantage of them.”

MetroHealth continued from cover

until 12:30, five days a week for those individuals with chronic health conditions. To schedule an appointment, call 216.861.5292. The list of chronic conditions served by the facility include: Diabetes; high blood pressure; heart and vascular disease; asthma and lung diseases; cancer; STD/HIV/AIDS; mental health disorders; and any other chronic health conditions.

Dr. Walker said, “Our goal is to mainstream people returning from incarceration back into the healthcare system. We don’t want them to feel stigmatized because they’ve been incarcerated. They’re going to need to be healthy to try to go out and get a job and turn their lives around, and we try to provide that first step, good healthcare.”

John F. (he prefers that his last name not be used) currently resides in the homeless shelter at 2100 Lakeside,

and went to the Clinic immediately upon his release. “This is the first time I’ve been able to access health care after leaving prison. When I got out the last time, over 10 years ago, it was almost impossible to get treatment for my high blood pressure and diabetes, but now I’m stable enough to try to get some job training. This Clinic has made a world of difference in my life.”

No one is turned away. The Clinic is committed to providing this disadvantaged population with first-rate health care services, in spite of their ability to pay. The able staff of the Reentry Clinic will, on the patient’s first visit, assure that they see a doctor, get prescriptions (if needed); choose a MetroHealth clinic near their residence, and pick their own primary care doctor for ongoing medical care.

The CAP legal team will also assist patients with preparing applications for Medicaid, Social Security benefits, appeal of benefit denial, and a

referral to a Legal Aid Society lawyer if necessary.

Financial counselors are on staff to work with patients to see if they qualify for free or reduced cost health care and prescriptions. No one is turned away for inability to pay. In order for the staff to help the patient needs to bring a photo ID; their release letter from prison; if residing in a shelter, a letter from the staff there stating that you reside there; and if not in a shelter, a notarized letter from the person you are staying with, stating that they provide you with shelter and the “necessities of life.”

Health care is one of the real necessities of life, and John F. feels blessed to be receiving the treatment he needs. “As long as I can manage my health, I know that I can eventually get some training, and then get a job. I want to become a contributing member of society again, and the CAP program is giving me the opportunity.”

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Legislative Changes:

Amend the Higher Education Act (most recently reauthorized in August 2008, now PL 110-315) to allow incarcerated persons to apply for Pell Grants. In 1994, Congress eliminated Pell Grant eligibility for people who are incarcerated. Most post-secondary higher education programs in prisons closed as a result. Education is one of the best deterrents to re-offending. In a study conducted for the U.S. Department of Education, researchers found that participation in state correctional education programs lowers the likelihood of re-incarceration by 29 percent. In addition, this study concluded that for every dollar spent on education, more than two dollars in reduced prison costs would be returned to taxpayers.

Codify Current EEOC Guidance on Hiring People with Criminal Records. Create a federal standard based on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) policy guidance on the use of criminal background checks for employment purposes when screening for arrest and conviction. This guidance currently asks employers to consider the relationship between the

offense and the job position, how long ago the offense occurred, the severity of the offense, and any evidence of rehabilitation.

Criminal record policies that bar applicants with criminal record histories from employment should be amended to not only include a requirement for individualized determinations but may include a graduated period of consideration of the criminal record based upon the severity of the individual's criminal history. Consideration of a criminal record should not be permitted beyond seven years.

Strengthen the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. Amend the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), authorized by the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-188). Currently, under the WOTC program, employers who hire low-income individuals with criminal records can reduce their federal income tax liability by up to \$2,400 per qualified new worker. Congress should increase the WOTC tax credit for individuals with criminal records to match the tax credit available for individuals who qualify as Long-term Family Assistance recipients. There is a \$6600 difference between the two credits.

Reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act:

Any reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (Public Law 105-220) should include provisions for hard to serve populations, including those individuals with criminal histories, through the WIA one-stop system.

Pass the "Fairness & Accuracy in Employment Background Checks Act" and approve the "Fairness & Accuracy in Employment Background Checks Act" bi-partisan legislation introduced in the House at the end of the 110th Congress (H.R. 7033); this legislation seeks to provide critical safeguards when the FBI conducts criminal background checks for employment purposes.

Legislative Appropriations (Solutions with Funding Requests): Increase funding for WIA programming aimed at serving harder-to-serve individuals, including those with criminal records.

Next Month: Expand access to drug treatment

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fairly share the costs of child rearing. Additionally, sociological evidence indicates that imposing impossibly high support payments on incarcerated parents acts as a punitive measure and does an injustice to the best interests of the child by ignoring factors that can, and frequently do, severely damage the

parent-child relationship.

Finally, the workgroup considered the recommendation of the 2005 Ohio Child Support Guidelines Council to amend the Ohio Revised Code. The council recommended permitting either waiving the monthly child support obligation or authorizing a minimum monthly child support obligation amount

when the obligator is incarcerated for an extended period of time and has a resulting income that is at or less than the federal poverty level. It concluded that in some circumstances the best interest of the child is served when incarceration is considered a reason for modification, and drafted legislation based on this conclusion.



REENTRY NEWS

from around the nation

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behind bars, with a startling one in nine young black men incarcerated, according to a February 2008 study by the non-partisan Pew Center on the States.

By comparison, China, with a population of one billion people, was second in the world with 1.5 million inmates, followed by Russia with 890,000 people in jail, the study said.

America's incarceration rate exceeds that of countries like South Africa and Iran. By comparison, 93 people in

Germany are in prison for every 100,000 people, including minors, the Washington-based independent research group said. The rate is about eight times higher in the United States: 750 per 100,000.

The statistics are particularly high among minorities. While one in 106 adult white men are incarcerated, one in 36 Hispanics and one in 15 African-Americans are behind bars, according to Pew's examination of Justice Department data from 2006. Younger black men fare even worse, with one in nine African-Americans ages 20 to 34 held in cells.



The Citizen Circles Concept

Citizen participation and guidance is essential for correctional practices inside and outside institutions. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has embraced the needs related to offenders returning home from

correctional settings and as such one strategy is the implementation of Citizen Circles. The focus is on eight dynamic domain areas: employment, education, associates/social interactions, family/marital, substance abuse and community functioning, personal/emotional orientation and attitude.

They create partnerships that promote positive interaction and accountability for offenders upon release. Circle members address risks that contribute to criminal activity by taking ownership of the solution. It is an opportunity for citizens to communicate expectations for successful reentry and help offenders recognize the harm their behavior has caused others. Offenders are able to make amends and demonstrate their value and potential to the community.

Citizen Circles Locations

(Call for meeting dates and times)

The Euclid Avenue Citizen Circle Congregational Church

9606 Euclid Avenue

2nd Monday of every month at 7 pm

216.787.4900

Community Assessment & Treatment Services

8415 Broadway Ave.

216.283.5000

Murtis Taylor Center

13411 Kinsman

216.491.9809

CEOGC

2475 E. 22nd St.

(Lower level)

216.681.7882

East Cleveland

1850 Belmore Ave.

216.249.0330

Zion Chapel

4234 Lee Rd.

216.752.2743

Central Safe Haven

7504 Cedar Ave.

216.432.1818

GREATER CLEVELAND STRATEGY
Reentry Advocate



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To receive a copy of
Going Home to Stay

call First Call for Help
at 216.436.2000 or
go online and download
a copy at www.211cleveland.org/pdfs/communityreentry.pdf

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The editors are always interested in additional success stories.
Please send us an email at MansfieldF@gmail.com