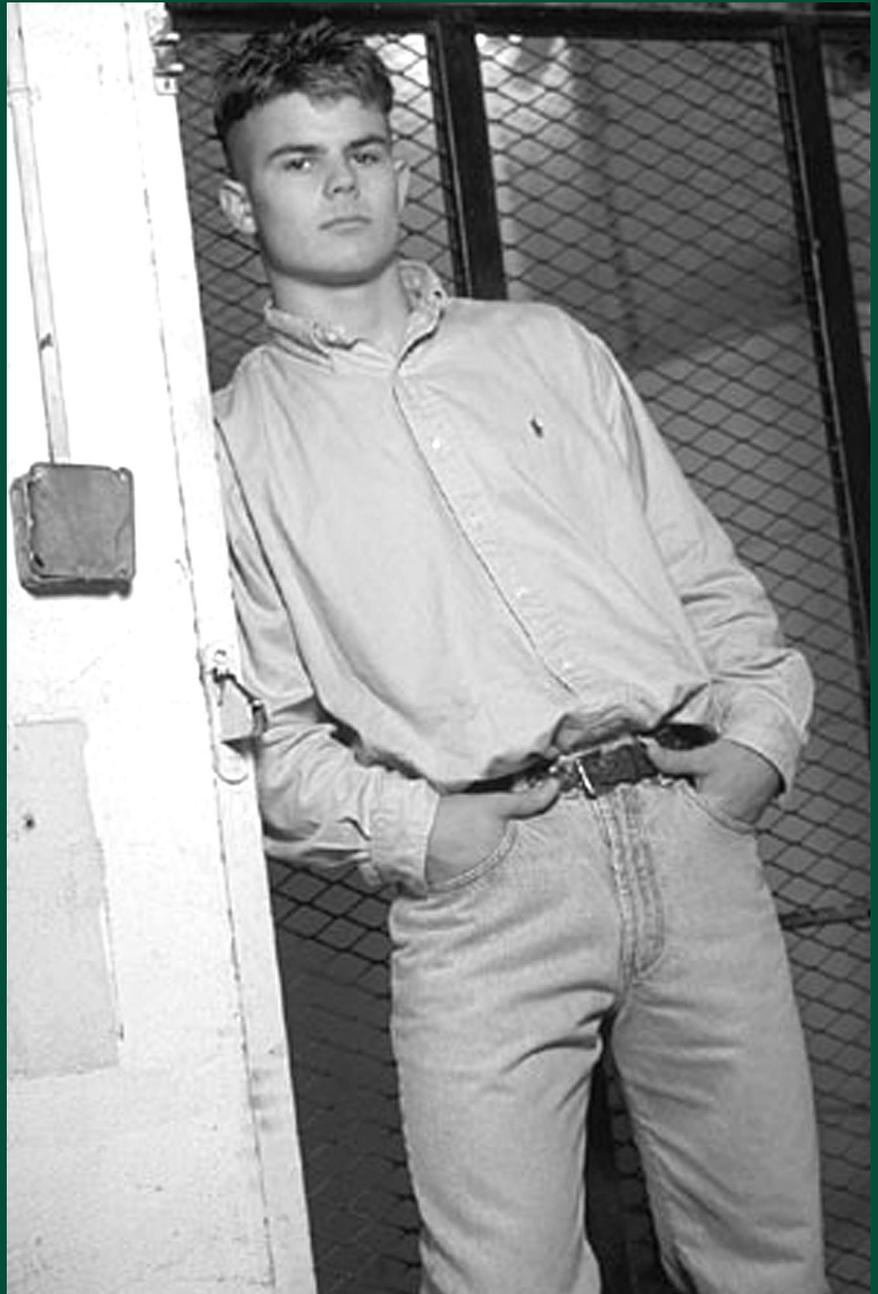




Jacksonville
Community
Council Inc.

STUDY



SERVICES FOR EX-OFFENDERS

A Report to the Citizens of Jacksonville • Spring 2001

Scope of Study

Ex-offenders are convicted perpetrators of crime. They are also individuals with human needs and, after release from incarceration, members of the community. Society pays a heavy price for crimes committed and for the incarceration of offenders. That price multiplies if offenders commit crime again. Therefore, the community has a strong interest in assisting ex-offenders to become successful members of the community, free of crime, living stable and productive lifestyles.

This study reviews the needs of ex-offenders as they seek to live successfully in the community. It then compares these needs with the services available to ex-offenders—both during jail or prison incarceration and afterwards in Duval County—and identifies gaps between the two. It also reviews promising practices that might be used locally to improve services and reduce gaps.

The study finds that the needs of ex-offenders are diverse because the ex-offender population itself is very diverse. However, certain characteristics are common to many ex-offenders: low income, low level of education, disrupted home and family life, low level of job skills and employment experience, and alcohol and/or drug addiction. As a result, the most important needs of ex-offenders relate to immediate basic needs (food, shelter, clothing), housing, education, employment, health (especially treatment for substance-abuse, mental-health, and HIV/AIDS problems), legal assistance, and ongoing personal support.

Although their characteristics and needs vary, all ex-offenders must contend with the social stigma of being a convicted criminal. This stigma reflects society's concern for public safety and social order. It also has the effect, based on a stereotype, of raising barriers for many ex-offenders, as they seek to change their lives in positive directions.

Highlights

Major Problems

- Ex-offenders share unique kinds of needs as they seek to avoid recidivism and re-enter the community successfully. Services to meet these needs are fragmented and not comprehensively available. Information is not easily available about what services are available and how to access them. Data to plan for services are insufficiently available.
- Members of the public lack an accurate understanding of the needs of and services for ex-offenders. A prevalent public attitude places a stereotypical stigma on all ex-offenders, which impedes their efforts to live stable and productive lives and may increase recidivism.
- Many services needed by ex-offenders are insufficiently available and/or funded. Examples include transitional housing, housing opportunities for sex-offenders, substance-abuse and mental-health treatment, and mentoring for ongoing personal support.
- Successful re-entry by ex-offenders often depends on active efforts by officials in the justice system to ensure that opportunities for services are made available—and are mandated if necessary as conditions of release.

Recommended Solutions

- Convene a consortium of community interests to develop a One-Stop Center with comprehensive case management, information about services available, a computerized tracking system, and data analysis/planning capacity.
- Provide public-awareness education through the One-Stop Center about the realities of ex-offender life and the social costs of recidivism.
- Advocate through the consortium for improved planning to fill service gaps, changes in public policy to improve services, and increased funding to expand service delivery.
- Actions by corrections officials, judges, probation officers, and others in the justice system to take full advantage of and enhance pre- and post-release services that can benefit offenders and ex-offenders who are under the system's supervision.

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Mission Statement

Jacksonville Community Council Inc. is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, broad-based civic organization which seeks to improve the quality of life in Northeast Florida by positive change resulting from informed participation of citizens in community life, through open dialogue, impartial research, and consensus building.



JCCI would like to thank Promo Depot, one of our corporate members, for donating the design and layout of this study. Promo Depot is a full-service specialty advertising and sales promotion company headquartered in Jacksonville, FL. In addition to traditional promotional products, Promo Depot also offers graphic design, embroidery, screen printing, fulfillment programs and complete company stores.

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Findings

Findings represent the information received by the committee. They are derived from published materials, from facts reported by resource people, and from a consensus of the committee's understanding of the opinions of resource people.

INTRODUCTION

"We have one problem that is significant and that has received too little attention for too long. We are not going to end the culture of violence until we address the problem of prisoner re-entry."

—U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, February 10, 2000

In communities across the United States, felons arrested during the anti-crime sweeps of the 1980s and 1990s have done their time and are returning home in record numbers. In 2000, a record 585,000 felons were released from state and federal prisons—roughly three times the number 20 years ago. Locally, 85 to 90 percent of the inmates incarcerated in Duval County jail eventually are released back into the Jacksonville community. Of those who serve time in Duval County, 58 percent serve between 1 and 30 days, and 85 percent serve less than three months. Most of these offenders have little opportunity, while incarcerated, for rehabilitative or educational assistance. Approximately 49,000 offenders are released to live in Duval County each year, about 1,200 from State prisons and the rest from the Duval County jail.

Considering the limited opportunities the corrections system has to change offenders' criminal attitudes and behaviors, comprehensive, effective re-entry services are considered not merely "hug-a-thug" social-service programs but necessary responses to the growing ex-offender population throughout the country. Jacksonville and other communities nationwide are looking for ways to facilitate the successful transition of thousands of ex-offenders back into society to reduce the chances they will commit additional crime. In addition to the economic benefits of reduced recidivism and a lower crime rate, successful transitional services help these men and women become productive, law-abiding citizens.

DEFINITIONS

Several terms used in this report are defined here to help clarify their meaning throughout.

Misdemeanor: A crime that is considered less serious but may still result in direct violence against other people, such as reckless driving, speeding, minor shoplifting, possession of 20 grams or less of marijuana, driving while under the influence, domestic violence, and other similar crimes. The maximum incarceration sentence for a misdemeanor is one year. Most misdemeanor sentences are served in the county jail or other local corrections facility.

Felony: A crime against property or people that is considered more serious, such as selling marijuana or cocaine, stealing an automobile, possession of a gun while committing a crime, and other crimes, up to murder. Incarceration sentences range from less than one year through life in prison and even the death penalty.

Arrest: The act by law enforcement officers to apprehend a person suspected of having committed a crime. Following arrest, a person may be detained in jail or released pending a court appearance. A person arrested and charged with a crime is considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Adjudication: The decision by a judge or a jury that determines whether a person charged with a crime is guilty or not guilty.

Conviction: Adjudication by a judge or jury that a person charged is guilty and will receive a formal criminal record.

Sentencing: The decision by a judge of what penalty will be imposed on a person convicted or otherwise adjudicated to serve a sentence—usually some combination of a fine, incarceration, and/or probation. The provisions and severity of the sentence imposed in each case are guided by the type of crime committed (misdemeanor or felony) and by the circumstances of each specific crime. Some sentences include payment of restitution to the party wronged by the crime and/or alternatives to jail or prison incarceration such as community-corrections programs or work-release programs. For those sentenced to incarceration who have been detained in jail during the court process, the time they have already served is usually counted toward completion of the sentence.

Community supervision: Time after offenders are released from jail or prison to live in the community, during which they are still under the behavioral supervision of the criminal-justice system to ensure that they live "straight" lives and do not endanger the public safety by committing new crimes. Not all offenders are released with continuing community supervision. For those who are, supervision is available under several circumstances:

- **Probation:** A part of a sentence that is served while living in the community, under supervision, after incarceration (if any) has been completed.
- **Parole:** Time of supervised living in the community, while a sentence is being completed, that is earned because of "good behavior" during incarceration. Because of a change in state law, offenders sentenced since 1983 do not have an option of being paroled, so the whole parole system is being phased out. Additional legislation was passed in 1995 requiring all offenders to serve at least 85 percent

of their incarceration sentences in jail or prison, thus limiting either parole or the conditional release that has to some extent supplanted it.

- **Conditional release:** Time of supervised living in the community, after offenders have been released from State prison, before their sentences were completed, because they earned "gain time" for work they did in prison. Like parole, gain-time release has been curtailed by enforcement of the 85 percent law.

Ex-offender: A person who has served time in prison or jail for a crime and has returned to the community, either under community supervision or after being released completely from the criminal-justice system.

Recidivism: The act, by an ex-offender, of committing crime again, which results in additional incarceration and/or probationary supervision. The Florida prison system calculates recidivism as those who return to State prison as a result of having committed another crime within two years after release. The Duval County corrections system counts those who are arrested and brought to the Duval County jail within one year after release. Technical violations of probation or other community supervision, such as missing a child support payment or not attending prescribed drug-abuse treatment, are not considered to be new crimes and are not counted as recidivism, although they may result in the reincarceration of ex-offenders.

Jail: A corrections facility, operated in Florida by each county, which houses pre-trial detainees who are awaiting court proceedings, as well as those serving sentences of one year or less. The "jail" may actually consist of several separate facilities with different mixes of inmates. The Duval County corrections system includes three facilities:

- The **Pre-Trial Detention Center** (commonly known as *the jail*) is located downtown. It houses those charged with either misdemeanor or felony crimes plus some trustee prisoners and a few others who are serving sentences. Of the 2,189 beds in this facility, 200 are allocated for those serving sentences.
- The **Community Corrections Division (CCD)** facility, located downtown near the jail, has beds for 300 sentenced offenders. Of these, 96 are secure drug-treatment beds for offenders with significant alcohol- or drug-addiction problems. Offenders with mental-health problems are not assigned here. The emphasis in this facility is on offering programs designed to prepare offenders for re-entry to the community after release. Besides substance-abuse treatment, these programs include life-skills education, education classes, vocational education, and classes on parenting and anger management. In addition to the program opportunities, most inmates spend 8 to 10 hours each day working either in the community or in the facility.
- The **Montgomery Correctional Center** (also known as the *prison farm*) is located on Jacksonville's Northside and can house up to

611 sentenced offenders, including those with mental-health problems. Most inmates spend their days in work crews, either in the facility (which includes a tree farm) or in the community. A limited number of re-entry programs are offered, including mental-health services.

Prison: A corrections facility operated by the state that houses offenders who are serving sentences of longer than one year, mostly for felony crimes. Several State prison facilities are located in Northeast Florida. Two of these are located in Duval County. Each is a transitional facility for selected inmates from prisons all over the state who are nearing the end of their sentences. The **Dinsmore Community Correctional Center** is a pre-work-release training facility with a capacity to serve 150 male inmates, while the **Shisha Center** provides full work-release services with a capacity of 28 female inmates. When inmates are released from State prisons, they are given a choice of where they will live. Although many of those released to live in the Jacksonville area come from nearby prisons, some come from other parts of the state.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENDERS AND EX-OFFENDERS

The particular set of needs that an ex-offender will encounter, as he or she seeks to re-enter society successfully after incarceration, depends on that individual's personal characteristics, assets, and deficiencies. For the community to respond effectively to the needs of ex-offenders, it must have information about the characteristics of ex-offenders. Some of the information needed in the local community is available, but much is not available.

This section identifies key information useful for assessing the needs of ex-offenders, determining the extent to which these needs are being met locally, and measuring the results in terms of reduced recidivism. Where available, summary data are presented. Where the data were not successfully obtained, this is noted.

TABLE 1
Characteristics of offenders in the Duval County Corrections System
February 1, 2001

	Total	Pre-Trial Detention Ctr.	Montgomery Correctional Ctr.	Community Corrections Div.
Male	87%	91%	70%	86%
Female	13%	9%	30%	14%
Caucasian	37%	35%	35%	49%
People of color	63%	65%	65%	51%
Unsentenced	58%	74%	18%	0%
Sentenced	42%	26%	82%	100%
Average sentence length	10.8 mo.	15.5 mo.	8.6 mo.	8.3 mo.
Average incarceration (2000)	36.5 days	10.3days	33.8days	65.5days
Misdemeanor	20%	16%	41%	22%
Felony	80%	84%	59%	78%
Recidivism rate	38%	-	-	-

Source: Duval County Corrections Department

TABLE 2
Characteristics of offenders in the Florida State Prison System in 2000

Male	93%
Female	7%
Caucasian	32%
People of color	68%
Average sentence length	5.3 years*
Violent-crime convictions	35%
Recidivism rate (returnees to Duval only)	50%

*For calculation purposes, life and death sentences are considered to be 50-year sentences.

Source: Florida State Department of Corrections

While this study was underway, the Duval County corrections system began installation and implementation of a new, computerized data management system. This system apparently will provide the technology necessary to gather and analyze important information about offenders that previously has not been available.

Demographic characteristics

The characteristics of offenders in the Duval County corrections system differ somewhat, depending on which facility they occupy, as shown in Table 1 on page 5.

In the Florida State prison system, all offenders are felons serving sentences. Their demographic characteristics are shown in Table 2.

The Dinsmore Center, located in Duval County, has similar characteristics, except that its inmates are all male, and the racial mix is 35 percent Caucasian and 64 percent people of color. Because of its pre-work-release status, most of the offenders at the Dinsmore Center have earned gain time for good behavior, have less than 24 months remaining in their sentences, and are considered lower-custody/lower-risk inmates. None is serving time for a sex offense, none tried to escape from prison before being assigned to work release, and none with an addiction has refused substance-abuse treatment. As of early 2001, offenders at the State's Shisha Center for women were 43 percent Caucasian and 57 percent African American.

Several useful generalizations can be drawn from the data on offender demographics:

- Men are disproportionately represented among offenders by a wide margin in both the state and local corrections systems.

- People of color also are included at rates much higher than their proportion in the general population. In the Duval County system, this is particularly true in the Pre-Trial Detention Center (65 percent people of color), suggesting that Caucasians more frequently are able to bond out of jail while awaiting trial. The lowest proportion of people of color (51 percent) occurs in the Community Corrections Division, which offers the most options and opportunities for programs designed to help with transition back into the community after release.

- The average length of incarceration in the Duval County system is relatively short (just over a month on average), suggesting that most offenders do not spend sufficient time in jail to receive great benefits from programs designed for rehabilitation or to assist re-entry into the community after release.

- The recidivism rate is high in both state and local corrections systems, but is substantially higher in the state system (50 percent), which incarcerates offenders convicted of more serious crimes—and which has more time to provide rehabilitation and re-entry assistance.

Status of immediate basic needs

Neither the Duval County corrections system nor the State prison system was able to provide data for this study on the needs of offenders, when released, for emergency spending money, clothes, or personal identification cards, although they did report what they provide to offenders upon release, as shown in Table 3. (Note that the immediate basic need for emergency housing is addressed below.)

Housing status

Neither the Duval County nor the State system was able to provide data for this study on the housing status of offenders when they are released—the proportion who have a home to return to after release, those financially capable of paying rent or mortgage, or those ready, after they have been incarcerated for some time, to assume the responsibilities of rental or homeownership.

Literacy and educational status

Neither the Duval County nor the State system was able to provide data for this study on the percentage of offenders who had

TABLE 3
What corrections systems provide to meet immediate basic needs for newly released offenders

	Duval County Corrections System	Florida State Prison System
Spending money	\$3 to \$5	\$100
Clothing	items from "clothes closet" if needed to wear at release	clothes provided if needed to wear at release; cost deducted from \$100
Personal ID card	work-release offenders assisted to get ID	Corrections Department picture ID

earned a high-school diploma or GED before being incarcerated—or what percentage of offenders advanced their education during incarceration.

The Duval County system reported that “most” offenders in the Community Corrections Division do not have a high-school diploma. A typical offender was described as self-reporting a 10th-grade education but testing for reading on a 5th-grade level.

The State System reported that about 58% of its inmates tested for reading ability at less than a 5th-grade level. Data were also not available on the degree literacy and educational advancement made by offenders enrolled in literacy or education classes during incarceration. Nor was information available about the kinds of marketable vocational skills offenders have when they return to the community.

Employment status

Neither the Duval County nor State system was able to provide data for this study on the employment status of offenders when released. The Duval County system reported that about 25 percent of offenders in the CCD (about 63 offenders) are enrolled in work-release jobs in the community during the day. The State prison system reported that five percent of its inmates participate in work release (about 2,500 statewide, 118 men in pre-work-release at the Dinsmore Center and 28 women in work release at the Shisha Center as of early 2001). Data were not available on the percentage of offenders who have jobs to return to when they are released or the number who have physical disabilities, mental illness, or other conditions that would keep them from being expected to work competitively.

Transportation status

Neither the Duval County nor the State system was able to provide information for this study on the transportation needs of offenders when they are released. The State prison system provides a bus ticket to a destination of choice, in Florida, for each released offender. The Duval County system provides no transportation assistance at the time of release. No data were available on the percentage of offenders who have automobiles available to them when released or on the percentage without cars who require the assistance of special-needs transportation because they are physically or mentally unable to use public transportation.

Health, mental-health, and addiction status

Both the Duval County and the State system are aware of the incidence of certain health conditions among incarcerated offenders because of their prevalence among the offender population and because of the importance of treating them in order to maintain health and order in a corrections facility. Table 4 shows the available data on these conditions.

The Duval County corrections system reported that drug charges account for 25 percent of all felony arrests.

However, since only the primary charge is recorded, officials believe that close to 80 percent of all felony arrests are in some way drug related. They know that 70 percent of arrested felons who agree to be tested for drugs test positive.

Recidivism and serious medical, mental-health and/or addiction problems are closely related in the Duval County corrections population. Among repeat offenders with nine arrests or more, 78 percent suffer from some combination of these problems. According to Duval County corrections officials, 74 percent of recidivists are diagnosed with an addiction alone, 30 percent with a mental-health problem, and 35 percent with both. The Duval County system expects about half of its overall offender population to have a mental-health and/or addiction problem.

Both systems provide medical care for offenders when they are incarcerated. However, neither was able to provide data for this study on the percentage of offenders who lack health insurance to help pay for health care when they are released.

Family and personal-support status

Neither the Duval County nor the State system was able to provide data on the family and personal-support status of offenders when they are released. Data were not available on the percentage of offenders who have families to return to upon release or of the degree to which families who are available are likely to be functional and supportive of an ex-offender seeking to succeed in the community. Nor were data available on the percentage of offenders who have minor children, the percentage required to pay child support, or the percentage who have officially lost custody of children, as well as the status and location of those children.

TABLE 4
Percentage of offenders self-reporting, diagnosed with, or charged with a crime related to certain health conditions during incarceration

	Duval County <u>Corrections System</u>	Florida State <u>Prison System</u>
Drug charge	25%	24%
Receiving substance-abuse treatment	39%	14%*
Mental-health problems	30%	10%
HIV/AIDS	4.5%**	3.5%***

*Over the last decade, 39 percent of inmates released from the prison system had received at least one substance-abuse treatment during incarceration. However, early in 2001, only 14 percent of current inmates were receiving treatment.

**This figure represents the percentage of positive results for HIV in voluntary tests conducted over 10 months in 2000 on Duval County jail offenders considered at “high risk” of having HIV.

***This figure represents the percentage of state-prison inmates diagnosed HIV positive in November 2000. Of those diagnosed HIV positive, 30 percent had AIDS.

Sources: Duval County Corrections Department, Florida State Department of Corrections

EX-OFFENDERS' NEEDS FOR COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Ex-offenders have varying needs, depending on their own capabilities and resources and their access to support from family, friends, and community. Some ex-offenders require little assistance from the community, but many rely heavily on community assistance with needs for immediate help, housing, education, employment, transportation, health care, legal assistance, and ongoing personal encouragement and support. Each of these needs is important, independent of the others, yet they often compound each other because they are closely interrelated.

Every year, roughly 49,000 ex-offenders are released from jail or prison to live in Duval County. Of these, about 1,200 come from State prisons, but the vast majority are released from Duval County corrections facilities. These people may need help re-entering society successfully, and their needs differ according to the kinds of crimes committed, the length of sentences they served, the levels of education they had attained, their employment status, their physical and mental condition, their access to supportive relationships with family and friends, and other factors. Understanding the needs of ex-offenders is important in order to determine how the community can best respond to the challenge of successfully re-integrating ex-offenders into society.

Immediate basic needs

Most ex-offenders return to the community after serving relatively brief sentences, and most of these people do not return to jail again. In the Duval County corrections system, average incarceration time is about 37 days, and the recidivism rate is 38 percent. Since people in this group have been incarcerated relatively briefly, they are more likely to have families, homes, and maybe even jobs to which they can return. Nevertheless, large numbers of ex-offenders leave jail or prison with no resources, contacts, or means of support in the community. These include offenders who have lost their family and/or community ties because of long sentences and related stresses, as well as those with shorter sentences who had few resources when they committed crime and were incarcerated.

When offenders leave jail or prison, their most immediate needs are for food, shelter, clothing, and an acceptable identification card. The State prison system gives each released inmate, a bus ticket to a destination of the inmate's choosing, and a check for \$100. It can help an inmate to acquire civilian clothes but deducts their cost from the \$100. The Duval County corrections system provides clothes to wear, if necessary, and a very small amount of cash. Upon arrival at the bus station of choice or outside the front door of the jail, the ex-offender is on his or her own for survival and successful re-entry. Any continuing community supervision is not designed to meet these needs but to ensure public safety and adherence to sentence requirements.

Ex-offenders are often released or arrive at their bus destinations during the evening or in the middle of the night. If they are not met by family or friends, their most pressing needs may be for a place to sleep and food to eat. Beyond this, their most immediate

need is to obtain a recognized and accepted personal identification card, which is usually required to cash checks and is a prerequisite to arrange for housing and to seek assistance from many community services.

The likely consequence of the community's not helping ex-offenders with immediate basic needs is that they will quickly become desperate, seek assistance in familiar environments of crime and/or commit new crimes themselves.

Housing needs

As ex-offenders re-enter society, their needs for housing change over time. Immediately upon release, they may need emer-

Please Note: four stories are included in this report. Those whose stories are told are disguised by name and have given permission for their stories to be used.

Sharon's Story

Sharon's incarceration in a Florida state prison was long ago, but she recalls her first impression of the facility and her determination never to return. The minimum-security facility was considered one of the better places to be incarcerated, but Sharon knew that after she was released she did not want to return.

During her incarceration, Sharon received no vocational training or education. Upon release, the prison gave her \$250 and a bus ticket to Jacksonville, but no guidance, referrals, or aftercare. After years of incarceration, Sharon suddenly found herself at the Greyhound bus station with nowhere to turn. "They house you; they feed you; and then they let you go," she recalled.

Sharon arrived at the Jacksonville bus station with \$40 in her pocket and her personal items in a paper bag. She said she felt overwhelmed with anxiety stepping off the bus into her former environment with no skills, no family, and no place to live. She placed her belongings in a locker at the bus station and returned to the street corner she had frequented prior to incarceration. Sharon said that the first hour back in the community is the most important period in an ex-offender's transition to society, because most former offenders are dropped off at the bus station—after years of confinement—with no sense of direction or purpose. Sharon explained that ex-offenders who step off the bus carrying their clothes in paper bags are easy targets for professional hustlers frequenting the bus station.

With no plan of action, driver's license, or support system upon release, Sharon returned to her old neighborhood and criminal behaviors. For the next ten years, she cycled in and out of the correctional system as she struggled with alcohol and drug addiction, compounded by emotional problems.

gency shelter; for a period of time, they may benefit from transitional housing; and ultimately, they may need assistance obtaining decent and affordable permanent housing.

Emergency shelter: For ex-offenders who are not met at the bus station or jail door by family or friends, the need for housing (as well as food) may be immediate and critical to obtain needed rest. It may also be necessary to escape from the street environment of crime and drugs that contributed to the ex-offender's incarceration in the first place, as well as to provide the opportunity to get washed up and make the contacts necessary to obtain housing and to interview for a job.

The likely consequence of not obtaining emergency shelter is that the ex-offender may fall back into familiar but negative environments and behaviors in order to secure a place to sleep and food to eat.

Transitional housing: If an ex-offender has a supportive network of family and friends, a certain level of educational attainment, and a marketable job skill, he or she may be able to move toward permanent housing fairly easily and quickly. For many, however, transitional housing situations are necessary while the ex-offender makes progress toward establishing a stable lifestyle, perhaps overcoming problems with alcohol or drug addiction, and developing resources, including time in a productive job and the income, savings, and credit the job can produce, that are necessary to move on to permanent housing. Transitional housing offers not only temporary shelter but also time and support for the ex-offender to gain life, educational, and job skills and to establish a positive identity in the community. Since proof of residency is a prerequisite to receive some community services, transitional housing can help ex-offenders without permanent homes to become eligible for other services they need.

The consequence of not securing transitional housing may be that some ex-offenders return to the criminal environment from which they came, losing the opportunity to develop a lawful lifestyle.

Permanent housing: The ultimate housing need for an ex-offender is to obtain or return to stable, decent, and affordable permanent housing, as either a renter or a home owner. For ex-offenders lacking a home when released, obtaining permanent housing may depend primarily on their ability to obtain and keep productive employment and to establish a clean credit record. Once ex-offenders have stabilized their lives and are ready for a permanent home, they may still need the community's assistance, either to obtain information about how to function successfully in the housing market (finding, paying for, and successfully maintaining an apartment or house), or to obtain financial assistance needed to make decent housing affordable.

The consequence of failing to obtain decent, affordable permanent housing may be that some ex-offenders are deterred from being able to pursue their educational needs, to meet their employment potential, and to resolve their transportation needs.

Literacy and education needs

Literacy skills and basic educational knowledge are essential in order to secure and keep employment. The educational level of many ex-offenders was low before entry into the criminal-justice system. For most, it remains low after incarceration, even if they took advantage of literacy or educational opportunities available in jails and prisons. Our society relies heavily on institutions in the community, not primarily on the self and family, to develop literacy and provide education. To be able to benefit from literacy and educational opportunities in the community, ex-offenders must have established a certain stability in their lives and have the time and financial resources necessary to devote considerable time and energy to learning.

The likely consequence of not meeting the literacy and education needs of ex-offenders is that their opportunities for well-paying employment may be severely limited, which may, in turn, impede their efforts to meet housing, transportation, health-care, and other needs.

Employment needs

Obtaining and keeping productive employment is a critical key for the successful re-entry of most ex-offenders into the community and their rejection of repeat criminal behavior. A job provides an ex-offender with money to eat, pay rent or a mortgage, have access to transportation, obtain health care, and perhaps support a family, as well as the opportunity to develop a lifestyle that does not include criminal behavior. Some ex-offenders, especially those who served short sentences, are able to return to positions they held before being incarcerated and to lives of relatively normal financial independence and work productivity. Some others have access to positive family and friend support systems for assistance in a job search. However, many ex-offenders neither have jobs to return to, support toward finding a job, nor the education and skills necessary to obtain and keep productive, well-paying employment. For them, community assistance in learning employability skills and finding job placements may be crucial. For some ex-offenders, especially those with an alcohol or drug addiction, productive employment may temporarily not be a viable option. For a small number of others, physical and/or mental disabilities may permanently preclude their successful employment in the regular labor market.

The consequence of not securing productive, well-paying work may be that some ex-offenders revert to criminal "job" skills they already know, such as theft and dealing drugs.

Transportation needs

Upon release, an ex-offender may or may not own a car. If the offense committed involved driving while under the influence or a related charge, the ex-offender may be unable to drive a car, because his or her license may have been suspended or revoked. In addition, if offenders have been incarcerated for long periods of time and lost cars they previously owned and/or if they have no access to a family car, they may need the community's help in meeting their transportation needs. For many ex-offenders, access to transportation is an important prerequi-

site to be able to obtain needed education, job training, health care, and employment, and, for some, to get to required meetings with probation officers. Successful employment, in turn, may be an important prerequisite for the financing of a private automobile. Because of these dynamics, many ex-offenders rely on means of transportation offered by the community.

The consequences of not securing needed transportation may compound the consequences of failing to meet educational, employment, health-care, and other important needs.

Health, mental-health, and addiction-related needs

A large proportion of ex-offenders suffer from alcohol and/or drug addiction, acute and/or chronic medical conditions, including HIV/AIDS infection, depression, schizophrenia, and other mental-health disorders, some of them diagnosed while in prison or jail. The incidence of HIV/AIDS, addiction, and mental-health problems is particularly high among offenders. Others are in poor health generally because of long-term neglect of their medical- and dental-health needs in their lives before arrest. Prison inmates who have served lengthy sentences may be fairly healthy when released because of regular health care received during incarceration. However, many with short sentences in the local jail who had poor health when they enter are released with the same health problems. These conditions require consistent prevention and/or treatment efforts provided or prescribed by trained professionals, not by family or friends alone. Important prevention activities may include educational efforts to help patients avoid infection, break the cycle of addiction, reduce risks to health, and manage needed prescription medications. Key prerequisites for accessing health care without community assistance include employment that provides health insurance and/or sufficient income to pay for health care and transportation, as well as knowledge of how to access health-care services successfully.

Consequences of not meeting health, mental health, and addiction needs include exacerbated health-related problems, which may negatively affect an ex-offender's ability to obtain needed education and hold a job, while also possibly endangering public health and safety, especially on the part of those with alcohol or drug addictions or with mental-health problems.

Legal-assistance needs

Incarceration can result in certain life changes that may require some ex-offenders to respond to or to seek legal action. If an ex-offender cannot afford to pay for legal counsel, he or she may need assistance from the community. Ex-offenders who need legal assistance are most often seeking help concerning a few specific issues:

- If an ex-offender's family situation has changed, he or she may have to deal with property transfer, divorce, and related issues.
- If an ex-offender father has not paid required child-support payments while incarcerated, he may have to respond to legal actions against him, or, if he is financially unable, after release, to make required payments, he may need to ask the court to alter his payment requirements.

- If an ex-offender mother has lost custody of her children, she may need to take court action to locate her children and seek to reestablish her custody.
- If a felon ex-offender desires to participate in citizenship fully, he or she may need to petition for a restoration of civil rights by the Governor and Cabinet. Unlike the previous needs, having legal representation is not essential for this process, although having legal knowledge and advice available can be helpful.

The consequence of not having legal assistance may be mounting legal and related financial problems, which could undermine attempts by the ex-offender to establish and maintain a stable and productive lifestyle.

Need for ongoing personal support

Although some inmates in the local jail or State prison are met by someone when they are released, resource people indicated that many do not have a stable, functional home to which they can return and which will provide them with ongoing support. For some, the home environment was the source of learning about and the venue for practice of criminal behavior. Even ex-offenders who can count on support from family, friends, and social or religious groups must kindle and nurture their own sense of determination to succeed without committing further crimes. Many ex-offenders need some level of assistance from the community to help them redefine their lives, their self concepts, and their self confidence in terms positive for society. These kinds of needs often are not transitory or superficial but require the ongoing availability of helpful others who can provide wise counsel and accurate information about needed services available in the community and how to gain access to them.

Tom's Story

On the streets, Tom had developed a pattern of using drugs to solve his problems when he felt overwhelmed. On four separate occasions, he had been sentenced to state prison by the same judge. For him, it was receiving a sentence from a different judge that made the difference. Judge Fair was interested in using innovative programs to divert offenders from cycling and recycling through the system. Tom believes that, had it not been for Judge Fair's willingness to sentence him to county—rather than state—time, he would still be incarcerated or on the street corner using drugs. Right now, Tom is on probation in a substance-abuse-treatment aftercare program. After spending one year incarcerated in the Pre-Trial Detention Facility, he was transferred to Community Corrections for four months, where he participated in work release and then home detention. He attends Narcotics Anonymous meetings three to four times each week, receiving emotional and spiritual support through group meetings and daily communication with his NA sponsor.

Consequences of being unable to find needed personal support on an ongoing basis may include a growing inability to maintain stability and productivity in life, difficulty in keeping a job, and an increasing potential to return to criminal behavior.

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO EX-OFFENDERS

A variety of services are available in Duval County to meet the needs of local ex-offenders. Some are provided in jail or prison, before offenders are released to the community. These can play an important role in giving offenders a head start toward successful re-entry when they are released. Others are available in the community for ex-offenders to use after release. Some community services are designed specifically to serve ex-offenders. Others serve broader populations but are accessible by ex-offenders. At least some services are available locally to deal with each of the major kinds of needs identified, but the spectrum of services available is incomplete, their capacity to serve is limited, and links between pre-release and post-release services are weak.

A wide variety of public and private nonprofit organizations provide services that help meet the needs of ex-offenders in Duval County. Some kinds of services, especially medical care, mental-health and substance-abuse treatment, and educational opportunities, are made available to some offenders while they are still incarcerated, as well as being available to them later on in the community. Others become available to ex-offenders when they return to the community.

Ideally, preparing offenders for re-entry to the community would begin during their incarceration. The first opportunities to influence such preparation for individual offenders come when an attorney in the State Attorney's Office decides what sentence to request and when a judge decides what sentence to impose. Although sentencing laws and guidelines limit the discretion of prosecutors and judges, they do have available to them a large number of options for alternative sentences into educational, employment, substance-abuse treatment, and other programs. Judges also have the opportunity to impose provisions in post-incarceration community-supervision orders that mandate specific programs or services.

Resource people reported that these options and opportunities are used in many cases but that they are not used consistently because of differences among judges in their knowledge about the options and in their predilection to choose alternatives to standard incarceration. Alternative or "diversion" programs require designated funding, and, as this study was being completed, some efforts were being made, in the state budgeting process, to reduce funds for these kinds of programs.

For those serving very short sentences in local jails, alternative programs may not be of much value. Attempts are being made to lengthen jail time so that alternative sentencing is more likely to have a positive impact on offenders. A recently adopted City of Jacksonville ordinance starts the calculation of gain time at the beginning of a sentence, rather than the beginning of incarceration. Also, judges are being encouraged to limit the practice of

applying time served before sentencing toward meeting the sentence. With this practice in use, some offenders are sentenced to "time served" and are released the same day they are sentenced.

Although many services are provided formally, by established organizations and agencies, unknown amounts of services are provided through informal social networks that include religious institutions and civic and social clubs, as well as neighbors, friends, and families. This study report documents the services provided formally by the major provider organizations in Duval County, while recognizing that the services documented do not reflect the full magnitude of services available.

Although a wide variety of services are available, resource people generally concurred that, as a whole, these services are insufficient to meet existing needs, even taking into account the availability of services through informal sources. They also agreed that the effectiveness of the formal services available is limited by the degree of fragmentation among services and by the lack of coordination among service providers.

Emergency assistance

These services, provided to meet immediate basic needs for shelter, food, clothing, and a personal identification card, are offered formally in Duval County by only a few providers, most of them faith based.

Prisoners of Christ serves male ex-offenders who apply during incarceration. It can provide food and clothing and make referrals for other services. It also operates a small transitional housing program. It serves between 125 and 150 ex-offenders each year. Program participants are recruited by sending application literature to prisons—including a few from outside of Florida. Inmates must apply in writing by three months before their release and are selected based on their suitability for the organization's services.

New Hope Ministry, a program of Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc., provides both emergency assistance and ongoing support services specifically for felony ex-offenders released in Duval County. This program is designated by the Florida Department of Corrections as its local partner to provide what it calls "community transitions" services. Thus, New Hope is provided with lists of offenders being released to Duval County and communicates with them by letter, offering its services to all when they arrive in Jacksonville. Each year, about 1,200 released inmates come to Duval County, of whom about 800 could benefit from New Hope's services. Between 300 and 400 actually show up. Many other clients, most of them released from local jails, learn of the program by word of mouth. About half of the program's annual clientele of 800 have been released from jail. The program provides immediate assistance to obtain food and clothing and makes referrals to emergency housing as needed and to other community services. It also seeks to assist just-released ex-offenders to obtain the personal identification necessary to gain access to many other services.

New Hope Ministry's parent organization, **Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc.**, is a major provider of emergency assistance to the overall population in immediate need. In addition to the kinds of services offered by New Hope Ministry, it can offer limited emergency cash assistance. The City of Jacksonville's **Mental Health and Welfare Division** also provides some cash assistance, as well as other emergency services. Neither of these organizations is able to meet the need for emergency services among the general population and often has to turn away those in need, especially those needing cash assistance.

The **I. M. Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless** provides not only emergency housing (see below) but also immediate food and clothing assistance. In addition, it provides counseling and referrals that can help homeless people, including ex-offenders, begin to gain access to other community services they need.

Housing assistance

Various programs in Duval County respond to the three kinds of housing needs experienced by ex-offenders—the need by some for immediate emergency shelter, the need by some for temporary, transitional housing as they adjust to life in the community, and the need by many for assistance toward acquiring a permanent apartment or home.

Emergency housing: Several local nonprofit organizations operate emergency shelters that provide beds, meals, and washing facilities on a short-term, emergency basis for individuals who are homeless or otherwise in immediate need of shelter. Most of these are faith-based organizations, including the **Trinity Rescue Mission**, the City Rescue Mission's **New Life Inn**, and the Salvation Army's **Red Shield Lodge**. These shelters serve mostly male individuals, but the New Life Inn and the Red Shield Lodge also have some accommodations for women and children. None of them serves specifically ex-offenders and none keeps track of the number of their residents who are ex-offenders. Together, these three have the capacity to sleep 219 people. During cold-weather snaps, these shelters often fill up and cannot meet the full need. All three are located in the downtown area of Jacksonville, within walking distance of the jail, from which most local offenders are released, and the Greyhound bus station, where those released from State prison to Jacksonville usually arrive.

The largest shelter for the homeless in Duval County is the **Sulzbacher Center**, which is nonprofit but not faith-based. Also located in the downtown area, it has the capacity to sleep about 245 adults (usually about 190 men and 55 women). In addition, it usually accommodates between 35 and 50 children, who stay with their parents in a family dorm within the facility. On average, 95 percent of the single men, 85 percent of the single women, and 60 percent of the adults in the family dorm are ex-offenders. Any homeless person is eligible to stay, except for those who have committed a sexual crime against children. About 100 men and 250 women and families are turned away each month because of limited capacity.

The Sulzbacher Center provides more services than just shelter, which allows it to learn more about the lives of its residents and to help them with additional needs. The Center provides individual counseling, makes referrals to other services, and offers some medical care at the shelter through a We Care outpatient clinic operated by the Duval County Health Department. Also, through the Health Department's Jail Linc program, three beds are set aside for homeless offenders just released who are diagnosed with HIV and who need assistance to continue their medication.

Transitional housing: Several post-release choices for transitional housing are available in Duval County, and three of these specifically serve ex-offenders:

The **Salvation Army** operates two residential programs, which provide specialized transitional housing specifically for nonviolent felony probationers who are court-ordered into the programs. The **Non-Secure Residential Drug Treatment Program** has beds for 40 men and 20 women who need intensive drug treatment in a controlled but not secured post-release residential setting. The **Probation and Restitution Center** has beds for 25 men who have high restitution penalties to pay. Only probationers with at least one year of probation to serve, unstable employment histories, low incomes, and little education are court-ordered into these programs. Residency in both is relatively short, usually between two and six months, and in no case lasts beyond the participant's time on probation. Together, the two programs serve about 200 probationers per year.

Prisoners of Christ is a Christian faith-based ministry which provides re-entry services, including housing, for male ex-offenders. It owns and operates two transition houses with a capacity, between them, of ten residents, who typically stay between four and six weeks. Residents usually apply for admission while still incarcerated. About 95 percent of the residents come from the Florida Prison System. The ministry also owns and operates an eight-plex apartment building for men who have completed residency at the transition house, if space is available. Residents also have access to Prisoners of Christ's other services (see the sections on Emergency Assistance, above and Ongoing Personal-Support Services, below).

Sisters Ministry, Inc. operates Destiny Village, the only local transitional-housing facility specifically for female ex-offenders with children who currently are under community supervision or have completed their sentences. The facility consists of four duplexes on Jacksonville's Westside and has a capacity of 16. Residents participate in the organization's LAP (Life After Prison) support-services program (see the section on Ongoing Personal-Support Services, below). The transitional housing has no waiting list, although many women, who are ineligible because they do not have children, are referred elsewhere for housing.

Two of the faith-based organizations that provide emergency housing also provide some transitional housing. Residency at the **Trinity Rescue Mission** is allowed for up to 60 days, and a

continuation program, located in Green Cove Springs, with a capacity to house 28 men offers character-changing assistance for up to six months. The **City Rescue Mission**, which operates New Life Inn, has an additional 40 transitional beds for “temporarily displaced” people, who at least minimally share the cost of bed and meals. It also operates the LifeBuilders Program, a six-month transitional program which, early in 2001, was housing 40 men, 25 women, and 15 children. Residents in this pro-

gram have access to a dental and a health clinic, as well as educational counseling and job placement assistance. Neither of these organizations serves specifically ex-offenders. While Trinity Rescue Mission does not exclude any ex-offender, the City Rescue Mission excludes former sex-offenders from its transitional housing because some residents are women and children.

The **Liberty Center** is a single-resident-occupancy living facility with a capacity of 243 men and 100 women. It offers no accommodations for families with children. Residents must be otherwise homeless and must stay for a minimum of one year while transitional assistance is provided. Since the Center’s funding relies heavily on federal low-income rental assistance dollars, through a contract with the Jacksonville Housing Authority (JHA), residents must meet federal low-income requirements. Federal law also excludes registered sex-offenders, those convicted of producing methamphetamines, and those who have committed a felony within the last year. Recent felons only may appeal for an exception. The JHA has no figures on the number of appeals made or exceptions granted. Still, Center officials reported that their background checks on all residents reveal that about 95 percent have some sort of criminal record, mostly for lesser crimes related to homelessness. The Liberty Center stays fairly full and maintains a waiting list with usually about six to eight men but no women.

Community Connections, Inc. operates two transitional housing facilities. The Davis Center, located downtown (the old YWCA), functions as an extended-stay homeless shelter. It serves women (capacity 79) singly or with their children (capacity 150). The Nia Terrace apartments, on Jacksonville’s Westside, serve as a longer-term transitional facility for homeless individuals and families, with the capacity for 100 adults and children. Head-of-household males may join their spouses as residents at Nia Terrace, whether or not they have children. Credit and background checks are done on applicants for Nia Terrace, and convicted felons are excluded, although some with misdemeanor records may be residents. Neither check is done for Davis Center residents, and no otherwise qualified homeless person is excluded. Nia Terrace maintains a waiting list of about 10 to 12. The Davis Center has no waiting list except occasionally.

Some recovering alcohol or drug addicts can obtain the equivalent of transitional housing as part of a structured treatment process. **Gateway Community Services, Inc.** provides accommodations at two locations for up to 55 residential clients (21 for men and 34 for women) and will soon open another facility with 30 beds for women and their children. **River Region Human Services, Inc.** can accommodate 14 female clients needing transitional housing. Any resident who actually uses alcohol or drugs is excluded from these facilities.

River Region also operates **St. Johns Horizon House**. It provides transitional housing and treatment for those diagnosed with HIV. Its capacity is 50 people.

Rick’s Story

Rick has been arrested in Duval County nearly 200 times since 1994. His record reveals that about every two weeks he is arrested, booked, and held for a few days. Earlier in his life he was also incarcerated in Tampa, Ocala, Orlando, and in the states of Ohio, South Carolina, and Texas. His crimes are connected to his alcoholism. Approximately 75 percent of his arrests are for having an open container, drinking on a corner, driving under the influence, breach of peace, petty theft, or disorderly intoxication. Most often he is charged with a misdemeanor, and the longest time he remembers staying in jail was thirty days.

He grew up in Ohio, in a family of nine children, and learned to drink at a very young age. He served as a master sergeant in the Marine Corps but retired from the military in 1974. Since then he has worked many jobs, such as welding for the Ford Motor Company, shrimp fishing, and carpentry. He has lived at the Salvation Army and in tents in the woods and has spent some nights in downtown shelters.

Now 66 years old, he lives in a trailer. Each month, he receives a military pension check and a social security check by direct deposit. In fact, while incarcerated, his money accumulates and he has ready access to it when he’s released. It is not difficult for him to go in and out of jail frequently, all the while making payments on his trailer, keeping a truck, and drinking.

He can’t use the truck anymore because he lost his driver’s license ten years ago. He relies on buses and friends who drive him around. His most recent arrest was in the local bus station at midnight. Rick fell asleep after drinking and was picked up for trespassing and defying an order to leave the premises. But this time a judge ordered him into a substance-abuse-treatment program, which has meant a much longer jail stay—90 rather than 30 days.

When asked whether he is learning and changing, he replied that the substance-abuse treatment is not helping him much. He’d like to attend church more often when he’s released, and he will seek out an AA meeting, but he doesn’t see much point to the program that he’s in right now. All he’s thinking about is getting out.

The **Help Center, Inc.** provides transitional housing, in-house treatment, and nonresidential aftercare for low-income substance abusers, including those recently released from incarceration. The facility has beds for 36 men and 24 women. The intensive in-house treatment service may last from two weeks to about six months, and 90 days of aftercare are available. The program helps clients with life-management skills, employment, and housing needs. Program staff estimate that about 90 percent of their clients are ex-offenders. In 2000, the Help Center served a total of 259 clients, 64 percent of them male. The facility stays full, and applicants may wait between two weeks and a month for a bed. As of early 2001, 15 people were on the waiting list.

Several additional “recovery/halfway houses” operate in Duval County. Most serve particular populations, such as recovering alcoholics or mental-health patients. A survey conducted in December 2000 by the City of Jacksonville’s Community Services Department identified fifteen such facilities (including those operated by River Region, Prisoners of Christ, and the Help Center) with a combined capacity of 345 beds, 257 for men and 88 for women, and a waiting list of 62. Except for Prisoners for Christ, none of these facilities serves specifically ex-offenders.

Permanent housing: A number of options are available locally to obtain decent, affordable housing. The JHA operates about 2,600 units of federally owned **Public Housing** available to individuals and families with very low incomes. It also manages the federal **Section 8** housing-assistance program, which subsidizes the rent of about 12,300 low-income individuals and families in certain private apartments in many locations around Duval County. Federal law requires that Public Housing and Section 8 funds not be used to house registered sex offenders, convicted methamphetamine producers, and those who have committed a felony within one year (with the possibility of appeal for an exception). Other offenders are eligible, depending on their income status. The JHA has no figures on the proportion of residents in Public Housing and Section 8 subsidized apartments who are ex-offenders, on the number of applicants who sought an exception to the felony exclusion, or of the number of exceptions granted.

Many private apartments, located throughout the county, receive other kinds of state or federal subsidies to make rents more affordable. JCCI’s 2000 study on *Affordable Housing* documented about 12,500 units of such apartments in Duval County. No ex-offenders are excluded by law from these apartments.

The **Consumer Credit Counseling Service** (CCCS) offered by Family Counseling Services and the **Jacksonville Housing Partnership** (JHP) both provide assistance related to housing financing, especially for potential first-time home buyers.

The services of CCCS address all kinds of credit, debt, and financial-management needs and are offered through both group classes and individual counseling. Individualized debt-management assistance is also offered for those with specific, immediate debt problems. In 2000, CCCS served almost 4,700 people,

with no waiting list and none turned away. Some of these services are specifically oriented toward housing issues.

JHP’s Homeownership Program provides intensive classes and counseling for prospective homebuyers and, for some, closing-cost and down-payment assistance. Participants in the program must have limited incomes but must have good enough credit to be able to qualify to buy a home. They must have been employed for at least a year, have no liens or judgments against them, and not have filed for bankruptcy within two years. They are subjected to a background check, and, although ex-offenders are not excluded, those who are ex-offenders may apply only after two years of employment. The program serves about 100 people per year.

Neither of these organizations specifically serves ex-offenders, and neither keeps track of the proportion of those they serve who are ex-offenders.

Educational opportunities

Educational opportunities are widely available in Duval County for literacy tutoring or classes and for classes in basic education, General Education Diploma (GED) examination preparation, and vocational-skill training, as well as higher education. Some of these educational opportunities are made available to incarcerated offenders in jail or prison.

Literacy-training programs

As documented in JCCI’s 1999 study on *Improving Adult Literacy*, several local organizations offer literacy training in the community. The two largest programs are operated by **Learn To Read** and the Jacksonville Public Library’s **Center for Adult Learning**. Learn To Read relies on volunteers, working primarily as one-on-one tutors but also with small groups, while the Library’s program is class-based, with computer-assisted learning. These are not designed specifically to serve ex-offenders, and they do not keep track of what proportion of their clients are ex-offenders. Combined, they serve about 700 people each year.

Few opportunities for literacy training are available to adult offenders while they are unsentenced. However, the Duval County corrections system allows Learn To Read volunteers to tutor sentenced adults with less than 5th-grade reading skills who are interested and willing. Early in 2001, tutoring was being coordinated at the Montgomery Correctional Center through **Florida Community College at Jacksonville** (FCCJ). A single person trained in Learn To Read’s tutoring method trains and supervises offender tutors, who then tutor other offenders who have basic literacy deficiencies. The tutoring process is intensive (12 hours per week) and is allowed as an alternative to work-crew activities for both the tutors and those tutored. Some students make substantial reading-ability gains, as much as three grade levels within two or three months. At any one time, about six tutors are working with six students, and in a year’s time, about 30 tutors have worked with as many as 70 students. No literacy-training opportunities are currently available at the Pre-Trial Detention Center because no tutors are available.

In the State prison system, no literacy training is offered at the Dinsmore Center or the Shisha Center because of their work-release orientation. In most of the prisons, inmates less than 25 years old may be mandated to receive literacy training, if their test scores are extremely low. Literacy training is available voluntarily to older inmates in most prisons.

Educational programs

Some educational opportunities are available to inmates in jails and prisons. In the Duval County corrections system, offenders with sentences of more than 30 days can be tested and enrolled in adult-basic-education classes or classes designed to prepare students to take the GED examination. For youthful offenders, education classes are mandatory. For others, they are voluntary. In early 2001, 66 Duval County young offenders were mandatorily enrolled. Offenders not yet sentenced may voluntarily attend classes but are not tested. Classes are taught by adult-education instructors from FCCJ. In 2000, classes were offered in the Duval County corrections facilities as shown in Table 5.

Generally, offenders are enrolled in these classes on the first day they attend, so that enrollment and attendance are the same thing. FCCJ staff reported that enrollment in their classes is very fluid. During most weeks, they have new enrollees, and during most weeks, some of those recently enrolled are gone. Although most classes retain between 20 and 35 students at a time, many students attend for little more than one week. Nevertheless, some students do make academic progress and attain educational goals. Of 198 offenders who completed preparation for the GED exam and took it, 84 passed.

Two special programs are available on a voluntary basis to certain youthful male offenders. One is **YouthBuild**, started in 1999 to provide educational opportunities for selected male youthful offenders who clearly can benefit from educational advancement or vocational training and who have not committed violent crimes or been involved in domestic violence. Some participants are assigned by judges or referred by the Public Defender. The program also recruits in the Montgomery Correctional Center and gets some participants from the streets, thus combining pre-release offenders and ex-offenders. Recruiting successful participants is difficult. Although the program serves only 16 young men between 16 and 24 years old at a time, it reached 101 participants in 2000, some only briefly. Participants in the program go to classes in preparation to take the GED examination and work in the community. They also receive life-skills training. In 2000, 14 of 16 participants who took the GED passed it. Most of these went on, after release, to further education at FCCJ, a meaningful job, or an apprenticeship program. When participants are released, the program offers emergency services, ongoing support services, and referrals as needed for up to one year. In practice, many participants discontinue their education and/or quit their jobs after release, and the program loses track of them. To date, the

program has had 25 “completers” of the pre-release portion of the program who did not follow up after release and 16 “graduates” who stayed on their jobs after release.

The second special program for youthful male offenders (18 through 23) operates out of the Pre-Trial Detention Center. It is called the **Developing Adults With Necessary Skills Program (DAWN)**. The program seeks to reach selected young offenders who have not committed violent crimes, who have four to eight months of sentence to serve, and who have the potential to complete their GED and become productively employed after release. Besides a 16-week program of GED classes, participants receive vocational instruction in welding, construction, and electrician work, as well as life-skills training and job-placement assistance. An important component of the DAWN program is post-release follow-up support by a transitional counselor. This follow-up service is available as long as the ex-offender does not break the law again. Those who do best in the program have successful follow-up for between six months and two years. Between February 1998 and June 2000, 63 percent of the program’s first 92 “graduates” had not been re-arrested and stayed employed. The program can enroll 15 offenders at a time and is serving between 60 and 75 per year. Early in 2001, seven youthful offenders were on the program’s waiting list.

In the State prison system, neither the Dinsmore Center nor the Shisha Center offers ABE or GED classes because of their focus on work release and release preparation. Across the state, the prison system offers a variety of educational opportunities to inmates, including adult basic education, GED preparation, vocational education, and wellness education. Some ABE or GED classes may be mandated for certain inmates under 25 or those scoring below the 9th grade level in testing. Otherwise, educational opportunities are voluntary, and only certain options are available at any one prison facility. Educational resources available at all or some prisons include computer labs, a library, and a law library. Prison officials reported that inmates who complete classes are more likely to become employed after release. Some prison inmates qualify for the state’s Study Release program, which allows certain low-security-risk inmates to attend classes on college campuses during the day. Most of these classes are at the literacy or pre-college level but are offered on community college campuses.

Table 5
Enrollment in and classes taught by FCCJ instructors in Duval County Corrections facilities in 2000

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Pre-Trial Detention Ctr.</u>	<u>Montgomery Correctional Ctr.</u>	<u>Community Corrections Div.</u>
Classes	30	12	12	6
Enrollment	1,246	327	455	464

Note: Numbers may not represent an unduplicated number of offenders because some might have enrolled during the year in more than one class and/or more than one facility.

Source: Florida Community College at Jacksonville

A wide variety of adult educational opportunities are available to all residents in the community, including ex-offenders. FCCJ offers extensive courses in basic education and GED preparation, as well as classes toward an associate degree and certificated training programs in many employment skills. FCCJ's many noncredit offerings include some that could be useful for ex-offenders seeking to establish themselves as successful family members, productive employees, and good citizens. Other institutions of higher education in the area offer opportunities for undergraduate and graduate education, as well as a wide range of noncredit programs.

None of these opportunities is specifically geared toward the needs of ex-offenders. Ex-offenders wishing to improve their educational status must learn about them, be able to afford the time and money required to be a student, and be willing to persevere toward their educational goals. One way to help ex-offenders in this regard would be to have a structured mechanism to link those taking classes in jail or prison with the equivalent classes available in the community after release. FCCJ has no such mechanism for those taking FCCJ classes in the local jail. However, the Probationers Educational Growth program works with offenders on work release in the Duval County CCD to provide counseling about post-release educational opportunities and makes presentations in all jail GED classes about the availability of educational opportunities after release.

Employment assistance

Beyond for-profit employment agencies, few services are available in Duval County to assist ex-offenders to improve their employability skills and to obtain and keep productive jobs. These kinds of services are made available to only a small proportion of state and local offenders while they are incarcerated.

In the Duval County corrections system, unsentenced offenders and those with short sentences may receive little or no employment-related assistance. Sentenced offenders assigned to the Community Corrections Division are likely to have opportunities to work in the community, either on a work crew or, more beneficially for their future employment opportunities, in a work-release job. About half of these are jobs that offenders held before incarceration and are expected to return to after release. The other half are jobs that corrections officials have helped offenders to obtain. Although the expectation is that the offenders will retain these jobs after release, many do not. Offenders assigned to work release have access to employability-skills training on how to be successful in finding, applying for, interviewing for, and keeping a job.

For some youthful offenders, the **YouthBuild** and **DAWN** programs offer employability-skills training, job-placement assistance, and even work experience to supplement their emphasis on GED and vocational education. YouthBuild participants work in community projects such as Habijax housing construction. DAWN participants receive vocational training for work as welders, in construction, or as electricians and are assisted with job placement when they are released.

In the State prison system, work release is much less available. The Dinsmore Center is one of only three facilities in the system that offers pre-work release or work release for men. Offenders from prisons all over the state come to Dinsmore for pre-work-release training and experience. The waiting list of inmates statewide who want to be assigned to work furlough is thousands long. However, only about five percent of all inmates are given the opportunity. Those who get selected receive 100 hours of instruction over three weeks to prepare them for work release. The instruction covers topics such as personal goal setting and achievement, handling social situations, emotional control, parenting, money management, and keeping a job. In the course of a year, the 150-bed facility houses 1,500 inmates who receive the pre-work-release instruction. In 2001, the Dinsmore Center also offered a three-week course in construction skills taught under auspices of the Northeast Florida Builders Association. Because the Dinsmore Center is a pre-work-release facility, its inmates go on to a work-release facility elsewhere in the state before being released, so no information is available about the proportion of these inmates who settle in Jacksonville after release.

The Shisha Center is a full work-release facility for women who hold regular jobs in the community during the week but are otherwise incarcerated. For these offenders, Shisha provides the last phase of their incarceration. About 70 percent of those released choose to stay in Jacksonville.

After release, ex-offenders have a number of sources available to them to receive employability-skills training and assistance in job placement.

For one specifically defined group of ex-offenders, the Salvation Army operates the **Probation and Restitution Center**. It offers both residential and nonresidential services for certain nonviolent felony, male probationers with a year or more remaining on their probation who are court-ordered into the program. Participants all have high restitution penalties to pay and, because of a combination of unstable employment histories, low incomes, and little education, have difficulty meeting their restitution obligations while seeking to re-enter society successfully. Besides transitional housing, the program offers education, individual counseling, life-skills training, and employability-skills training. In addition, it maintains a job bank with certain employers and assists with job placement. The program's residential capacity is 25, but it serves about 100 men in a year.

As part of their ongoing support services, specifically to ex-offenders, New Hope Ministry, Prisoners of Christ, and Sisters Ministries, Inc. all offer employability-skills and job-placement assistance for some or all of their clientele. The Sulzbacher Center and Salvation Army offer similar services for homeless people. Some probation officers refer ex-offenders to sources of employment assistance. **Goodwill Industries** offers a more structured employment-assistance program called **Job Junction**. It offers a 12-hour employability-skills workshop as well as job-placement assistance for about 3,500 individuals each year. The program serves anyone needing the service, and program staff believe that about half of their clientele are ex-offenders. Florida's **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** services are available to

those, including ex-offenders, who have employment-impairing physical or mental disabilities. Its services include rehabilitation activities, employability-skills training, and job-placement assistance. VR officials do not know how many, if any, of their clients are ex-offenders.

First Coast Workforce Development, Inc. (*WorkSource*) is the primary public/private source of employability and job-placement assistance in the local community. It operates in six Northeast Florida counties, including Duval. Its basic labor exchange function, which includes a job-placement service, employability-skills workshops, and educational testing, serves any adult seeking employment. It also offers more intensive programs that serve certain target groups, such as veterans and welfare recipients. All of these services are available to ex-offenders who otherwise qualify, although relatively few of those actually served are ex-offenders. In early 2001, 121 ex-offenders living in Duval County were enrolled for WorkSource services.

Transportation assistance

For ex-offenders without access to automobile transportation and without substantial income, two options are available for formal transportation services—a public bus system and a special-needs transportation service designed for those unable to use the bus system. The usefulness of these options for an ex-offender depends on how conveniently the transportation can be accessed, the ex-offender's destination, and when he or she needs to get there and back.

The **Jacksonville Transportation Authority's** public bus service is the main source of public transportation in the Jacksonville area. For those lacking mobility by car, the buses provide an easy, inexpensive way to travel around town—if a bus route comes close to where you need to catch it, if the route goes close to your destination, and if the bus runs when you need it. For many potential riders, the JTA bus system meets these needs. However, for many others, the system is less useful because bus routes do not reach many residential areas and centers of employment, and they run infrequently and for limited hours of operation on many routes.

Organizations like New Hope Ministry seek to help ex-offenders by providing bus tickets. These tickets are made available to human-services agencies by the JTA at reduced cost. Agencies pay for them and then give (or resell) them to clients to meet temporary but urgent transportation needs. While this may be very helpful to certain people who temporarily cannot afford even a bus ride, it does not resolve the transportation problem of the ex-offender who has the opportunity for a job, has no car, and can't get between home and the job by bus.

For those with identifiable mental or physical disabilities that keep them from being able to use the bus system, a countywide **special-needs transportation system** is available. It provides door-to-door transportation in cars and vans for rides scheduled by appointment in advance for those who qualify for the special service. Because of limited capacity, first-priority rides are provided for medical and other important appointments. The service is not available for ongoing commuting. Some ex-offenders

could qualify for this service, but no information is available on how many use it.

Apart from some informal volunteer driving services available through certain churches and other private groups, the only other "public" transportation service available in the Jacksonville area is private taxi service, and it is not an affordable option for most ex-offenders, even occasionally.

Health-care services

Health care is offered to offenders incarcerated in both local and state corrections facilities, including mental-health care and substance-abuse treatment. These services are also widely available in the community but are not so easily accessed by everyone, especially those with low incomes and/or lacking employer-provided health insurance.

Substance-abuse treatment

Because committing crime and being addicted to alcohol and/or illegal drugs are so closely interrelated among so many offenders, substance-abuse treatment is an extremely important component of any attempt to reduce recidivism and to help these ex-offenders to maintain stable and productive lifestyles.

Pre-release substance-abuse treatment is available in both jails and prisons. For those incarcerated for only short times in the Duval County corrections system, especially those not sentenced and those whose addictions are not self-reported or clearly evident, pre-release treatment may be minimal. However, even these offenders have access to educational classes about addiction and its prevention and treatment. These classes are offered in all three jail facilities by **River Region Human Services, Inc.**

In the CCD, 96 beds are designated for offenders needing intensive substance-abuse treatment, most of whom are assigned to treatment as a part of their sentence. These offenders participate in a 120-day intensive treatment program within the facility that is followed up after an offender's release with one year of case-managed after care. This program is also provided by River Region.

Gateway Community Services Inc. provides substance-abuse treatment services in Duval County corrections facilities as well. However, they are directed toward juvenile offenders, about 40 of whom are served at a time.

Because they bond out of jail while awaiting trial or spend most of their jail time before being sentenced, many offenders in the Duval County corrections system with drug addictions enter and leave the system before addiction can be properly diagnosed and treated. The system currently is unable to respond quickly enough to begin meeting these offenders' need for treatment before they are back out of jail.

The City of Jacksonville has been the recipient of a research grant to test out practices of pre-trial, early intervention. The resulting program, called **Breaking the Cycle**, is reaching about

2,000 adult offenders per year who are Duval County residents and convicted of a felony. Early in 2001, 567 offenders were enrolled in the program, 267 in pre-trial status and 300 on post-release probation. For offenders, the program offers a trade—a reduced sentence for agreement to participate in drug monitoring, pretrial supervision, and perhaps substance-abuse treatment (which are provided under contract by River Region and Gateway).

The program's experience quickly revealed that success depends primarily on the intensity of the supervision, both before and after release. In practice, the normal community supervision process has not always provided the level of supervision needed for this offender and ex-offender population to succeed. Although some other local corrections systems have a designated unit of officers assigned to provide post-release supervision for those in special pre-trial detention programs, including those that are addiction-treatment oriented, the Duval County system lacks such a unit. The expectation was that the research project would lead to creation of such a unit locally. However, the project grant, which relied on the State Department of Corrections for drug testing, was scheduled to end in 2001. As this study was being completed, the City of Jacksonville was still making plans for how it might fund a continuation of the Breaking the Cycle program.

State prison inmates receive an extensive health screening upon entry, and treatment for any addiction diagnosed is available during incarceration.

The same two organizations that provide substance-abuse treatment services in the Duval County corrections system are the major providers of these services in the local community. Both River Region and Gateway reported that, because so many addicts become involved in criminal behavior, large proportions of their clientele are ex-offenders, although neither limits its services to or focuses them on ex-offenders. River Region serves about 2,000 substance-abuse clients annually, of whom its staff believe at least 50 percent are ex-offenders. Gateway staff believe that 70 percent of their 2,000 to 3,000 clients each year are ex-offenders.

Between them, River Region and Gateway offer a wide range of prevention and treatment services, including prescription medication, counseling, case management, and group therapy, plus help with referrals to other needed services. Both outpatient and residential services are offered. For most services, the cost to clients is determined by their income.

The ex-offenders who were enrolled in the CCD intensive substance-abuse treatment program receive one year of intensive case-management services from River Region after they return to the community. This case management, tailored to each client's needs, provides assistance toward meeting educational, vocational, social, financial, housing, job-placement, and other personal needs and helps with referrals to services offered by other providers.

The Salvation Army provides intensive substance-abuse treatment and related services to a distinct group of ex-offenders

through its **Non-Secure Residential Drug Treatment Program**. The program serves nonviolent felony probationers who are court-ordered into it. These probationers have at least one year of probation to serve, unstable employment histories, low incomes, little education, and a drug-addiction problem. Intensive residential treatment lasts about two months and is followed up with opportunities for counseling, education, and life-skills and employability-skills training. The program has a capacity of 40 beds for men and 20 for women, and about 125 participants are served in a year.

HIV/AIDS services

Because of the close relationship between the incidence of HIV/AIDS and intravenous drug use, HIV is of particular concern among the offender population. Offenders diagnosed as HIV positive and/or with AIDS receive medical care while incarcerated in either the local or state corrections system. The Duval County Health Department operates the **Jail Linc** Program, which offers HIV tests for offenders requesting it, provides treatment during incarceration for those who test positive, and offers after care, including maintaining three beds at the Sulzbacher Center for offenders receiving HIV-related treatment who are homeless at the time of release. For people who are HIV positive and need transitional housing, River Region offers a residential treatment program at **St. Johns Horizon House**, whose capacity is 50 people. Between one-half and two-thirds of the 150 residents served each year are ex-offenders, although sex offenders are excluded. Early in 2001, the facility had a waiting list of 16.

Mental-health treatment

In the Duval County corrections system, offenders previously diagnosed or who self-identify as having a mental-health problem receive appropriate mental-health treatment during incarceration, usually medication management, with follow-up case management. Correctional Medical Services, which has a contract to provide all medical services within the jails, provides the mental-health treatment as well. Under the umbrella of the Renaissance Center, Inc., the **Mental Health Resource Center (MHRC)** and the **Mental Health Center of Jacksonville (MHCJ)** provide transitional case-management services as offenders under treatment are released. About 11 percent of offenders are initially referred for mental-health services when they enter the Pre-Trial Detention Center, and 5.2 percent (about 130 offenders at a time) are actively treated. The MHRC and MHCJ continue to serve these offenders after release from jail, as long as they are under supervision of the corrections system.

They also serve the mental-health needs of the general population, including ex-offenders, with outpatient services, case management, crisis stabilization, inpatient services, and a day-treatment program for the chronically mentally ill. About 3,900 people are served each year, including those who involuntarily receive services under Florida's Baker Act. Access to these services is limited. Most MHRC clients must have health insurance to afford the services, and its capacity is so limited that, as of early 2000, it was not accepting new clients. MHCJ serves lower-income people who, without Medicaid, for which all cannot qualify, are not able to afford services.

Two other providers of mental-health services available in the community are **Northwest Behavioral Health Services, Inc.** and the **Community Rehabilitation Center, Inc.**, both of which serve primarily an African American clientele. Northwest provides outpatient mental-health services, especially medication and case management, to between 400 and 450 clients per month. The staff estimate that as many as 20 percent of their clients are ex-offenders. CRC provides day treatment and/or vocational rehabilitation services for about 200 people each year who have mental-health diagnosis. CRC staff estimate that a quarter of their clients are ex-offenders.

Lutheran Social Services, Inc. is not primarily a mental-health provider, but it provides transitional case-management services for people with mental-health problems who are in local hospitals or jails, who have not yet been formally diagnosed, and are not yet receiving mental-health treatment. It serves about 145 people at a time and over 1,500 in a year, about 40 percent of whom, its staff estimates, are ex-offenders.

A recently established **ACT Project** provides services for a targeted group of people diagnosed with combined drug-addiction and mental-health problems. The Assertive Community Treatment model offers intensive case-management services through an interdisciplinary team of providers and is considered a model for potential use in case management with additional kinds of clients, including ex-offenders.

Offenders in State prisons also have access to mental-health services while incarcerated, if the health assessment done when they enter indicates a mental-health problem or if such a problem becomes evident during their incarceration. When these offenders decide to come to Jacksonville after release, they receive no special assistance from the prison system to help them continue their mental-health treatment locally.

Medical care

As with substance-abuse treatment and mental-health treatment, general medical care is available as needed to all jail and prison inmates, although it may be less effectively accessed by those in the Duval County corrections system who are incarcerated only briefly.

High-quality medical care is available to anyone in the local community, but only if they know how to and can afford to access the services available. Certain programs seek to help specific groups to make the transition from pre- to post-release medical care. These include the Jail Link Program for HIV-positive ex-offenders, the substance-abuse and/or HIV/AIDS programs offered by River Region and Gateway, and the mental-health services offered by the Mental Health Center of Jacksonville and the Mental Health Resource Center.

Beyond these targeted efforts, ex-offenders must seek access to health care as others in the community do. If they lack employment and health insurance, they may have to gain access through **Shands Jacksonville's** indigent health-care system. If they lack the personal identification card necessary to sign up for Shands care, they will need assistance with that, perhaps immediately (see Emergency Services, page 11).

Legal assistance

Offenders and ex-offenders with legal problems related to child support, divorce, child custody, regaining civil rights, and similar civil matters have limited resources available to them in Duval County for legal assistance.

Both the local and state corrections systems offer limited access by offenders to law books. In the state system, that access varies considerably among prisons. Access to the courts is guaranteed constitutionally for both local and state offenders. Neither system provides one-on-one assistance to help offenders identify and deal with specific civil matters that, if unresolved during incarceration, may deter their efforts, after release, toward successful re-entry into the community.

Programs such as New Hope Ministry that specifically serve ex-offenders help some to identify legal issues needing attention, but they do not provide direct legal assistance for those unable to afford a private attorney. That service is provided locally, for civil matters, by **Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc.** Legal Aid uses public and private funding to hire attorneys who provide free legal counsel and, if needed, representation to those with low incomes. Ex-offenders with low incomes can qualify for this service, although Legal Aid is prohibited from working with incarcerated individuals. It can assist with the kinds of civil issues that ex-offenders typically face. Legal Aid's Duval County office is in downtown Jacksonville. It also serves Baker, Clay and Nassau Counties. It maintains no formal waiting list and serves all eligible people seeking assistance. Often, however, requests for assistance do not result in formal cases. Many legal issues are resolved through counseling and referrals to other appropriate sources of assistance. Some potential cases are not taken because of the limited capacity of the staff attorneys. These are cases with lower priorities, such as divorces with no children involved. Legal Aid seeks to expand its capacity by encouraging the provision of pro-bono services by local civil-law attorneys.

Legal Aid has not been asked to help with the restoration of felon civil rights and does not believe it can be of major assistance in this area. The Florida prison system provides all offenders being released with the paperwork necessary to request clemency from the Governor and Cabinet. In 1998-99, 23,025 offenders were released, all of them ex-felons. Of these, eligibility for clemency was determined for 17,839 (felons with more than one conviction are not eligible). Of these, 2,592 received certificates restoring their civil rights, about 14.5 percent of those eligible and 11.3 percent of those released. The primary issue appears to be not so much the availability of legal advice as State policies that lead to low rates of clemency approval.

Ongoing personal-support services

Few local organizations provide ongoing personal-support services specifically for ex-offenders, and they serve a small proportion of the offenders released locally each year. For those aware of it, **First Call**, the community's telephone information and referral service, is available to anyone needing assistance in finding out about and accessing many kinds of community services.

However, First Call is a supplement to, not a substitute for, the ongoing personal support services many ex-offenders need.

New Hope Ministry provides ongoing support services for the ex-offenders for whom it first sought to meet emergency needs immediately after release, as well as for others who subsequently seek its services. The program remains an ongoing source of counseling and assistance with referrals to other services. These services are available to all felony ex-offenders in the Jacksonville area. Including emergency-assistance clients, the program serves about 800 ex-offenders each year.

Prisoners of Christ serves in a year between 125 and 150 male ex-offenders. In addition to offering emergency assistance and a small transitional housing program, the organization offers ongoing support through referrals for other services, especially those related to substance-abuse problems and job placement.

The Life After Prison program operated by **Sisters Ministry, Inc.** provides a structured support program for 200 female ex-offenders under supervision of the corrections system. The program recruits its clients from among eligible offenders in the Duval County and State corrections systems, and it provides both pre- and post-release services. The program includes employability-skills training, educational assistance, assistance with spiritual issues, life and parenting skills training, and assistance in reuniting women and their children. A few participants live in the organization's transitional housing called Destiny Village (which has 16 beds for both women and children). One year of follow up is offered, which includes quarterly criminal-record checks, periodic contacts with probation officers, and random drug tests.

Alcoholics Anonymous and **Narcotics Anonymous** provide voluntary, peer support-group experiences for many ex-offenders, and others, who are in recovery from alcohol and drug addictions. These support groups are available both in jails and prisons and in the local community. Since their services are not formally operated and funded by specific provider organizations, little specific information is available about the numbers served and how many of them are ex-offenders.

GAPS IN SERVICES AND LEGAL LIMITATIONS

For ex-offenders seeking to re-enter the community as residents in Duval County, some significant gaps exist between their needs and the services available locally. To some extent, these gaps reflect deficiencies in the spectrum of services available, the resources necessary to meet the full need, or the network of information sharing that helps ex-offenders to become aware of services and to take advantage of them successfully. In addition, certain legal restrictions are imposed that, while considered justified by society, have the effect of impeding efforts by ex-offenders to obtain needed services and to build stable and productive lifestyles.

Where gaps exist in locally available services that meet needs of ex-offenders, these needs may not be fully met, which may have

negative consequences for the lives of the individuals involved—and for the community if the ex-offenders engage in further crime. Resource people identified a number of gaps between needs and available services, as follows:

Gaps in emergency assistance

For many ex-offenders, the most significant gap is the knowledge gap, knowledge of where to go and how to gain quick access to emergency services. Offenders receive only limited information before they are released about how to obtain emergency services—either generally or specifically pertaining to Jacksonville—immediately following their release. Once released, ex-offenders have available in the local community no single, easily accessible, authoritative source of information to guide them quickly toward emergency services. An informal word-of-mouth information-sharing network exists, but many needy people are not connected to this network.

Beyond the information gap is the resources gap. Programs that do provide emergency services locally have limited budgets and often cannot serve all who seek their assistance.

A specific, frustrating gap exists in the availability of help for ex-offenders to obtain an acceptable personal ID card on short notice, despite the fact that such identification is often a prerequisite for access to additional services, including emergency services, and for obtaining employment, housing, and much more. During incarceration, offenders may have lost or had revoked whatever acceptable identification they had. They may lack a valid driver's license, may not know their Social Security Card number, if they had one, and may not have easy or quick access to basic identification such as a birth certificate. In Florida, offenders released from State prison must present a Department of Corrections picture ID card and, in some cases, a birth certificate to obtain a new driver's license, if their crime does not continue to make them ineligible to drive.

Gaps in housing assistance

Gaps affecting some ex-offenders exist in relation to all three levels of need for housing assistance:

Emergency shelter: Shelters serve mostly single adults and offer fewer beds for women than for men. These policies may limit needed availability of emergency shelter for women, especially those with children. Although the shelters do not report waiting lists specifically of women or children, they are forced to turn many away. Most emergency-shelter beds in Jacksonville are located in the downtown area, generally convenient to the usual release points for ex-offenders. However, the total number of beds available is not sufficient to meet the emergency-shelter needs of ex-offenders released locally.

Transitional housing: In contrast to the situation with emergency housing, the greatest gap in transitional housing occurs in meeting the needs of single males. Only the Liberty Center offers transitional housing for this population, and it does not provide the support services usually associated with transitional

housing. In addition, because it is funded primarily with federal rental-assistance dollars, certain ex-offenders are explicitly excluded, including sex offenders, methamphetamine producers, and others who committed a felony within the last year. Only the latter group may appeal for an exception, and no information is available on how many appealed and how many appeals were granted. Single females may also not be fully served by existing transitional-housing facilities since most of them seek first to serve women with children.

Permanent Housing: As documented in JCCI's 2000 study on *Affordable Housing* and confirmed by resource people for this study, an overall shortage exists of affordable housing—permanent housing that is decent and financially accessible to residents with limited incomes. Since large numbers of ex-offenders hold jobs that pay poorly, if they have jobs at all, they are heavily impacted by the shortage of affordable housing.

Certain ex-offenders face specific limitations in the housing market. The Public Housing and Section 8 rental-assistance programs operated by the Jacksonville Housing Authority for people with low incomes are prohibited by federal law from accepting those convicted of sex offenses, producing methamphetamines, or of other felonies within the past year. Those in the other felon category may appeal for an exception, but no information is available on how many appeal and how many appeals are granted. A legal limitation is also placed on the private-housing choices of sex offenders and sexual predators. They are not allowed to buy or rent within 1,000 feet of a school or child-care facility, and the local sheriff notifies all residents within a mile radius of where they do decide to live of their choice of location.

The group among ex-offenders most affected by legal restrictions on housing is sex-offenders, who represent a small minority among all ex-offenders. In early 2001, 1,116 registered sex offenders were living in Duval County. During 2000, 90 sex offenders were released from the State prison system to Duval County.

Gaps in educational assistance

Both literacy training and certain classes at the basic education and GED levels are available in local corrections facilities. However, those not yet sentenced or with an unserved sentence of less than 30 days may not choose to participate formally, although they may sit in on classes. Since the sentences of offenders in the local corrections system are a year or less—in many cases much less—opportunities for sustained learning while incarcerated are quite limited. In addition, many offenders spend most of their incarceration time in pre-trial status and may never have the opportunity to attend education classes. The effectiveness of in-jail education is further diminished by the lack of positive incentives for academic achievement. In addition to these limitations, State funding for community colleges was recently cut substantially, leading to a reduction in the number of instructors and of classes offered, including those in the jails.

Once an offender has been released to the community, these

gaps in the availability of educational opportunities disappear. Extensive opportunities are available in the community for all citizens, including ex-offenders, for literacy training and for classes at all levels of education and many kinds of vocational skills. However, these opportunities are of little help to ex-offenders if they do not know about them or choose not to participate. No system exists in the community to track ex-offenders educationally once they are released, so no information is available on the extent to which they do take advantage of the opportunities available. Specifically, FCCJ does not track students enrolled in classes in the jails classes to ensure that they know how and are encouraged to continue their educational progress on the outside.

Gaps in employment assistance

The most significant gaps in relation to employment assistance may be those in literacy, education, and vocational-training opportunities identified above. Beyond this, gaps exist in the local availability of employability-skills training and job-placement services. Before release, these kinds of services are available to some offenders more than others. In the Duval County corrections system, those selected for work furlough receive both kinds of assistance but others receive neither. In the State prisons, all inmates receive some employability-skills training, but only those who request it or who are assigned to work furlough receive any job-placement assistance. In the community, both of these kinds of services are available, but mostly informally as a part of ongoing support services and only to a small number of ex-offenders.

Many ex-offenders who do become employed experience another kind of gap—the gap between the wage they can obtain, given their job skills and labor-market conditions, and their financial needs. For instance, the average hourly wage of 157 inmates placed through the Duval County Community Corrections Division in 2000 was \$7.58 (\$15,766 on a full-time, annual basis). This gap is surmountable only by individual effort to improve educational level and job skills or by changes in the local economy that raise wages or make better-paying jobs available to ex-offenders who have limited educational and job-skill preparation.

Ex-offenders with certain kinds of convictions face specific limitations in the job market. Those convicted of a sex crime may be excluded, by law or by practice, from employment in businesses and agencies serving the public—especially women and children—directly. Those convicted of theft or other financial crimes may be excluded from jobs in banks and other financial institutions, or from jobs in other settings in which trust with money is important.

Both the federal and state governments have enacted policies that offer tax incentives to employers who hire employees in certain categories. Some ex-offenders have been included. Before 1995, the federal **Targeted Job Tax Credit** offered employers a \$200 per month corporate income-tax credit for up to one year for each individual from a targeted group hired and employed, including certain ex-offenders. This program was

considered part of the “old” welfare system and was discontinued as a part of welfare reform.

In 1997, it was replaced by the **Work Opportunity Tax Credit**, which provides incentives valued at 40 percent of the first \$6,000 of first-year wages for individuals from targeted groups hired and employed for 400 hours or more. Eligible ex-felons include only those hired no more than one year after their release, who have low incomes, who are between 18 and 24 years old, and who live in a federally designated Enterprise Zone. An enterprise zone is a geographic area defined by federal or state action for special revitalization assistance. The State of Florida also offers a corporate tax incentive for employment of particular groups, including certain ex-offenders, within state enterprise zones. As of early 2001, Northeast Florida contained no federal enterprise zones but did have a large state enterprise zone in Jacksonville.

Gaps in transportation assistance

For ex-offenders who do not own a car and do not have access to one through family or friends, relying on publicly available transportation in Duval County has substantial limitations. The JTA public bus system is inexpensive but lacks the convenience and flexibility of door-to-door, go-and-come-on-demand automobile travel. In addition, depending on where an ex-offender lives and where his or her place of work or other destination is located, bus routes may or may not accommodate his or her needs. Some locations of well-paying employment opportunity—Atlantic Marine on Heckscher Drive is one example—are not served by a public bus route. These are not limitations specific to ex-offenders, but many ex-offenders lack access to car transportation, so they are significantly affected by the limitations of the bus system.

Ex-offenders may also have difficulty using the other major source of “public” transportation in Duval County, the coordinated special-needs transportation system. The door-to-door special-needs system is designed to assist those with physical or mental difficulties that preclude their successfully using the bus system. Most ex-offenders are capable of using the bus system, but it may not meet their transportation needs. In addition, the special-needs system operates by appointment only and gives high priority, with its limited capacity, to trips for medical care and other important needs. It is not designed to provide a regular “commuter” service except for those with severe physical disabilities.

Although the experience of organizations working with ex-offenders verifies that these gaps in transportation access negatively affect many ex-offenders, no figures are available on the proportion of ex-offenders who lack access to an automobile and/or are unable to use the public bus system to meet their transportation needs.

Gaps in health-care services

Several specific gaps exist in the health-related assistance available to ex-offenders.

Although offenders in the local corrections system who are discovered to have mental-health problems receive treatment while incarcerated, an unknown additional number have mental-health problems that are not discovered or are interpreted as disciplinary problems. These offenders carry their undiagnosed mental-health problems back to the community when they are released, complicating their chances for successful re-entry and possibly causing negative impacts on the community. Although local jail offenders receive a health assessment on entry, the medical and mental-health evaluation received by State prison inmates when they enter is much more comprehensive. Therefore, their mental-health problems, whether previously diagnosed or not, are likely to be discovered and treated during their incarceration.

Although prison inmates receive an extensive medical assessment upon entry, the health-care needs of local jail inmates are treated only if self-reported or clearly evident. In addition, neither local nor state corrections systems offers much preventive health care, except for those diagnosed with infectious/contagious diseases, especially HIV. Thus, an opportunity is lost to concentrate on preventing health problems, which could help to ensure better health for offenders well after their release.

Gaps in legal assistance

Certain of the legal issues that face some ex-offenders originate during their incarceration and may become more severe if not attended to until after release. In particular, nonpayment of child support during incarceration may constitute another offense for which the offender will have to answer. Having legal advice and assistance readily available during incarceration could help offenders to anticipate and deal with such legal issues earlier rather than later. However, no formal system exists in the local corrections system or in the State prison system to provide such advice and assistance, although chaplains in the State prisons do offer lay advice on such matters when requested.

Gaps in ongoing personal-support services

The local and state corrections systems provide minimal assistance to inmates, as they approach their release time, in explaining what kinds of services are available to them in the community and how they can gain access to these services. Locally, jail officials do make an effort to provide some information about certain immediately needed services. The state system cannot do even that with any precision, because state inmates return to so many communities with so many differing mixes of services.

Even if the corrections systems were to place more emphasis on helping to prepare inmates to obtain needed community services after release, they currently lack mechanisms to collect and use the individual information necessary to reveal the full range of community-service needs of inmates. The State prison system collects and retains only limited information useful for identifying post-release needs beyond the name of a family member to be contacted at the time of release. The local corrections system can answer only some of the relevant questions about the status of offenders. While information is obtained on their

demographic, educational, employment, and basic physical and mental-health status, no information is gathered on their family, housing, or transportation status or on possible civil legal issues they may have. Even though certain information is obtained for use with individuals, most of it is not aggregated to help corrections officials understand the kinds of post-release needs their pre-release programs should target.

Beyond what they can muster for themselves and through friends, peers, and social/religious groups, many ex-offenders need ongoing personal support from community sources after their release in the form of wise counsel and information about access to needed services. The local programs that offer support services specifically for ex-offenders are fragmented, not coordinated among one another, and collectively have the capacity to serve only a fraction of the need.

One potential source of ongoing support services is not fulfilling that potential. Many ex-offenders remain under the supervision of the corrections system through probation officers. Although these officers could provide many ongoing support services, and some apparently do individually, the probation system defines its role as one of supervision to ensure public safety, not assistance to improve the post-release life of ex-offenders. The large size of probation caseloads also limits the ability of probation officers to offer much individualized support, even if it were encouraged. As of early 2001, regular probation caseloads reached about 140 because of staffing shortages. Normally, caseloads are about 90. Specialized caseloads are smaller, normally 50 for sex-offenders and 25 for those under house arrest.

THE STIGMA BARRIER

A social stigma against ex-offenders continues to influence how society thinks about and treats ex-offenders and to raise barriers that impede the efforts of ex-offenders to re-enter the community successfully as stable, productive, and fully accepted citizens.

In addition to seeking ways to overcome the gaps in service and legal limitations described above, ex-offenders must also deal with the pervasive stigma society places on the status of ex-offender. This is a broad-brush social stereotype that sets ex-offenders apart, even after they have “paid their debt to society.” People’s lingering fear is that ex-offenders may never totally become “ex” and may still harbor the capacity and perhaps even the desire to commit criminal acts. For some individuals, the stigma may be conscious and intentionally applied. For others, it may be more indirect and perhaps even unconscious, the product of values internalized from one’s upbringing and living environment. The stigma is regularly and widely reinforced in the media and popular entertainment.

To some extent, the legal limitations discussed above represent examples of the selective application of the stigma in ways that society has defined as justifiable. In some cases, application of the stigma beyond what is legislated may conform to strongly held social mores that provide justification. In other cases, the stigma may be applied informally and discriminatorily, by indi-

viduals in a position to influence the lives of ex-offenders, in ways that society as a whole would not hold to be justifiable.

Ex-offenders may be confronted with this stigma in various ways as they seek to meet their goals of becoming stable and productive citizens. Not all of the major areas of need are equally susceptible to the negative effects of stigma.

Immediate basic needs: Local providers of emergency services that are not specifically designed to help ex-offenders do not erect barriers, based on stigma, that impede the availability of emergency services to ex-offenders more than to other needy people.

Housing: Many applications for apartment rental request information about prior convictions. Although ex-offenders who committed certain kinds of crimes are legally excluded from some housing, in other cases, rental agents informally discriminate against ex-offenders, without knowledge of their current values and lifestyles, thus unjustifiably limiting housing choices for ex-offenders. Some ex-offenders seeking to establish credit for mortgage approval or apartment rental face similar informal discrimination from lenders. A condition of supervision after the release of sex offenders requires the sheriff to notify residents within a one-mile radius of the location of a home or apartment that a sex offender wishes to occupy. While only the notification is required by law, the reactions of neighbors may, in some cases, be unjustifiably influenced by the pervasiveness of the stigma, regardless of the individual ex-offender’s values and lifestyle after release.

In their apprehension about being denied because of such informal discrimination, some ex-offenders are tempted to falsify applications. This, of course, violates the lifestyle values required for successful re-entry to the community, and, if caught

Nancy’s Story

During her incarceration, Nancy worked in the prison library. She says this opportunity—using her mind for problem solving and learning administrative skills—gave her a sense of pride and self-worth. Nancy laments the high number of inmates who work in prison laundries and license plate production, as these tasks do not prepare ex-offenders for employment in the community. Her library training and a supportive supervisor gave Nancy hope she could find meaningful employment in the community.

Nancy is now working and studying at the local community college. But a struggle remains as she rebuilds her life. Nancy is cautious about disclosing her ex-offender status in personal and professional relationships. When filling out job applications, she routinely faces the question: Have you ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony? Nancy initially discloses only her misdemeanor convictions, hoping to establish open communication with the interviewer before revealing her felony conviction.

through background checks, these ex-offenders will pay a new personal penalty.

Education: Social stigma does not appear to be a deterrent to the opportunities available to ex-offenders for literacy tutoring, education classes, or vocational training.

Employment: As with housing, many employment applications require disclosure of a past criminal record. Although some kinds of ex-offenders are legally excluded from certain kinds of employment, some informal discrimination is also practiced against ex-offenders as a class, regardless of the job or of the ex-offender's qualifications for it.

As with applications for housing, some ex-offenders are tempted to falsify employment applications because of the dynamics of the social stigma, with the same negative consequences for themselves and society.

Transportation: No social stigma issues arise in relation to meeting transportation needs, except that ex-offenders seeking to purchase a car may experience stigma-based discrimination, as with home purchase or rental, when seeking to establish acceptable credit.

Health, mental-health, and substance-abuse care: These services appear to be available to individuals without regard for the social stigma of offender status. However, residents in neighborhoods may vociferously resist nearby location of facilities that serve populations they perceive to be "undesirable" or "dangerous," such as substance abusers or mental-health patients, among which many ex-offenders are found.

Legal assistance: Community-supported legal aid appears to be available without regard for the social stigma of offender status.

Personal support services: Although few systems are available specifically to provide personal support services for ex-offenders, discrimination based on the social stigma of ex-offender status does not seem to deter access to other community-based support services that are not geared toward serving specific populations. However, the pervasive acceptance of the stigma by society, along with the ever-present possibility of being confronted by the stigma in specific social or business relationships, can deter or dismantle efforts by ex-offenders to establish strongly positive self-images and lifestyles free of crime. While the negative effects of the stigma can undermine the effectiveness of personal support services, having access to strong support services is the best defense toward overcoming these negative effects.

Although legal limitations are "justified" by being agreed on through public decision making, sometimes unintended results in practice lead people to question whether some legal restrictions are actually justifiable limitations or unjustified barriers. Resource people identified two such issues relating to Florida state law:

Privacy: The Florida Department of Law Enforcement main-

tains a website list, with pictures and personal information, of all convicted sex offenders, whether current or ex-offenders. Printouts of portions of the list applying to specific geographic areas are available from FDLE on request. Although justified to protect public safety from potential repeat sex offenses, some have questioned whether it crosses the line to become an unjustified intrusion into private lives based on society's social-stigma fear of ex-offenders, especially sex offenders. Whether justified or not, this practice significantly impedes efforts by former sex offenders to establish themselves as stable and productive citizens.

Civil Rights: Florida is one of thirteen states that permanently disenfranchises ex-felons, unless they specifically are granted clemency, for which those with only one felony conviction are eligible. This life-long punishment is imposed ostensibly because society believes that ex-felons can never fully repay society for their criminal behavior and become fully functioning and accepted citizens. This attitude reinforces—and is reinforced by—the social stigma society holds against ex-offenders. The roots of this policy are also tangled with Florida's history of official racial discrimination. Some interpret this law to be a remaining vestige of "Jim Crow" laws of the past. In practice, because African Americans commit disproportionate numbers of felonies for the size of that segment of the population, they remain disproportionately disenfranchised.

The only way that an ex-felon's civil rights can be restored is through clemency action by the Florida Governor and Cabinet. The success rate is low. In 1998-99, only 14.5 percent of those released from Florida state prisons who were eligible for clemency were granted it. Applicants often are denied if they still owe on sentence-imposed fines or have other outstanding debts that can be used to question their "readiness" for full citizenship. Some have interpreted this result as, in effect, an unconstitutional practice of poll taxing. Whether or not constitutional or justified, this restriction on the lives of ex-felons diminishes their ability to rebuild their lifestyles as stable, productive citizens in the fullest sense.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Other communities are also dealing with issues of ex-offender services, and some have developed approaches and practices that appear promising in relation to the gaps in local services. The most promising practices from elsewhere focus on improving cooperation and coordination among the courts, the corrections system, and social-service agencies. This cooperation can smooth the offender's transition to ex-offender status so that services before and after reinforce and build on each other in an effective continuum of assistance.

Successful ex-offender programs are recognized because their clients recidivate at a lower rate than other ex-offenders. Although ex-offender practices must be designed to function successfully within the context of each community's specific needs, Duval County can learn important lessons from differing practices in other communities that have yielded positive results by improving re-entry services for ex-offenders. This section

identifies a few practices used elsewhere that appear promising to help fill gaps identified in the array of services available locally for ex-offenders. They would be more convincingly promising if these projects had been able decisively to document reduced recidivism rates for their clientele. Although they shared compelling anecdotal evidence with the study committee, they have not been in operation long enough to have accomplished thorough evaluations.

Safer Foundation

The Safer Foundation, a private nonprofit organization, began its work in Chicago in 1970 with a publicly funded job-placement project for newly released offenders. Initial participants were trained while incarcerated in cement finishing and were subsequently helped to find jobs using this skill. Safer's efforts have expanded greatly since. In 1983, it began working with the Illinois Department of Corrections, renovating and operating for it a work-release center. A second work-release center was opened in 2000. By early 2001, the organization had a budget of \$13 million and operated at nine sites in several cities.

A resource person from the Chicago program explained the unique relationship between the Safer Foundation and the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). The funding for ex-offender services comes, in large part, from IDOC, but inmates and ex-offenders do not see it as an IDOC program. The majority of IDOC offenders become aware of Safer while incarcerated, and some enter a pre-application process immediately. Safer offers both post-trial services in the correctional facilities and post-prison services in the community. Inmates who are placed on work release or other restricted community supervision may receive services at a secure residential site operated by Safer. Substance-abuse treatment programs, mental-health counseling, and sex-offender counseling are offered to offenders not yet ready for employment. Ex-offenders may receive services from other sources as well, but, in all cases, Safer keeps track of each client's service needs. Safer staff work closely with instructors, employment specialists, case managers, and intake specialists from other agencies that provide services at Safer's facilities, thus concentrating as many services as possible in one place.

Services available to ex-offenders at Safer include:

- referrals to agencies that provide emergency services, including food, clothing, shelter, and medical assistance;
- STD and HIV testing and counseling;
- substance-abuse evaluation and treatment;
- literacy training;
- educational achievement testing;
- GED classes and test administration;
- lunch and transportation funds for ex-offenders transitioning to community college;
- work-release opportunities for those preparing for release;
- job coaching in groups and individually;
- job placement; and
- a "lifeguard," or special mentor/case manager, who provides personal support for the ex-offender for as long as necessary during the re-entry process.

From the Duval County perspective, two promising aspects of the Safer Foundation's work are particularly evident. First, the Safer approach combines multiple services, both pre- and post-release, in a seamless continuum available to offenders and ex-offenders, based on their individual needs. Second, this continuum of services is coordinated by staff trained in social work rather than corrections. This distinction appears to be important in light of this study's finding that the mission of probation officers is primarily to protect society and enforce court orders. While they may be able to provide some valuable referrals, they are not responsible for providing the kind of "lifeguard" mentoring/case management offered by Safer.

A thorough evaluation of Safer's work was underway as this study was completed, but results were not yet available.

Project Return

Project Return offers assistance to selected felony ex-offenders in New Orleans, some of whom are on parole. Although this program offers no residential services, it is otherwise similar to Safer's efforts in that it offers a comprehensive, "one-stop-shop" network of integrated services, including employability-skills training, literacy, GED, and vocational training, conflict-resolution/communications/relationships skills training, substance-abuse treatment, career counseling, group counseling, and job placement. The program's education services are enhanced by the use of computerized instruction, and its employment-assistance services are supported by a network of businesses that provide jobs and internships for "graduates" of the program.

In addition to offering a comprehensive array of services, Project Return places unique emphasis on an intensive, facilitated group process devoted to issues of conflict resolution, communication/relationship skills, problem solving, and socializing skills. This "community building" component, as it is called, is mandatory and takes up a major portion of the first two or three days of each participant's involvement in the program. Participants continue to meet weekly as a group throughout the program period.

The program runs in cycles of 90 days, although some participants leave earlier, depending on their needs. Because only 50 participants are enrolled for each cycle, and the program selects those with the highest risk of committing more crimes and returning to prison, between 200 and 300 offenders are turned away from each cycle and placed on a waiting list.

Project Return emerged in 1994 from the joint efforts of a local college professor and an ex-offender to develop an effective rehabilitation program. It now operates out of Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. The program appears especially useful as a model for consideration in Duval County because it focuses on ex-offenders most in need of re-entry assistance, it offers an impressive array of services, and it combines those with intensive group counseling. The program appears to have achieved some level of short-term success, although that success does not seem to be enduring. The program's reported recidivism rate for graduates is 10.7 percent after one year, 24.4 percent after two years, and 30.6 percent after three years.

Conclusions

Conclusions express the value judgements of the committee based on the findings.

1. Addressing the issue of services for ex-offenders is particularly important for the local community because of how uniquely and heavily they impact the wellbeing of the entire community, as well as the lives of ex-offenders themselves:
 - The issue is unique because ex-offenders are both individuals in need of human-services assistance and criminals who have perpetrated harm to property and people. Society pays a huge cost for crimes committed, as well as for the conviction and incarceration of offenders. It pays a higher cost for those who commit multiple crimes. Therefore, the community can benefit greatly by investing in services for ex-offenders that demonstrably reduce recidivism.
 - The issue is also unique because of the dynamic of social stigma that society tends to attach to ex-offenders. The stigma is based on a stereotype not accurately reflected by reality, which is much more complex. Until the community better understands and accepts the complex reality of the situation in which ex-offenders find themselves, it will not be able to respond effectively, in its own interest, to improve the chances ex-offenders have to avoid further crime and to re-enter the community successfully.
2. Because the community at large is in many ways insufficiently aware and inaccurately informed about the status and needs of ex-offenders, services for ex-offenders do not receive the level of public support and resources that they need in relation to the community's interest in having a stable, productive citizenry.
3. Ideally, preparation of an offender for successful re-entry into the community begins during incarceration and continues after release. The State Attorney's Office and Courts are limited by law in the sentences they can recommend and impose, respectively. However, they also do not take full and consistent advantage of the multiple options that are available for diversion into and assignment to programs designed to rehabilitate and prepare offenders for more stable and productive life after release. The options include possibilities for pre-sentencing diversion, alternative sentencing, and setting special conditions of release.
4. The Duval County corrections system provides a wide variety of education, employment-related, and life-skill training opportunities designed to help prepare offenders for a stable, productive lifestyle after release. The Florida State system provides some similar opportunities, depending on the facility. However, many offenders do not benefit from these opportunities, either because their incarceration (in county jail) is not long enough for the programs to have much effect, or because such programs usually are voluntary and many offenders choose not to participate. As a result, opportunities are lost that could begin to help offenders, while they are still incarcerated, toward achieving stable and productive lifestyles after release.
5. A major issue facing many ex-offenders is their lack of knowledge of what services are available in the community and how they can successfully be accessed. Without assistance in understanding, contacting, and obtaining services, many needs of ex-offenders remain unattended, even though appropriate services may be available in the community.
6. Many kinds of education, health, and employment-related services are available to offenders in state and local corrections systems, and many such services are available in the community to ex-offenders after they are released. However, for most services, formal linkages between courts/corrections and community services are lacking to ensure that offenders receiving services while incarcerated continue to receive them after they are released. To be effective, these linkages need to provide specific referrals for continuing services as well as personal transition guidance for individual offenders. The consistent use, through the sentencing process, of specific conditions of release to enforce continuation of services would help to implement the linkages, and establishment of a system to track and follow up on services would ensure that individual offenders do not fall through the cracks during the transition from incarceration to community. Exceptions to the current lack of linkages exist for offenders enrolled in formal substance-abuse or mental-health treatment programs and those being treated for HIV/AIDS.
7. Duval County lacks a single, comprehensive, widely known, user-friendly clearinghouse or "one-stop-center" specifically devoted to receiving ex-offenders when they are released and to assist them. Such a center would help ex-offenders to understand their own needs and what local services are available, as well as providing them with coordinated, ongoing personal support designed to ensure that all their needs are addressed. The existing fragmentation of services makes them less effective for the benefit of ex-offenders and less efficient in the use of scarce resources.
8. Probation officers are unable to provide the intensive, individualized assistance needed by many of their ex-offender charges for successful re-entry into community life because their responsibilities are focused on ensuring public safety, and their caseloads are often large.
9. Insufficient data are available to the local community and to service providers about key characteristics of, needs of, and services for ex-offenders in the local community. Although some basic information is available from the local and state corrections systems, even they do not collect and report aggregate data about important ex-offender needs such as housing, family, and transportation status. Nor is an ade-

- quate system in place to track the ongoing needs of and services to individual offenders and ex-offenders.
10. Models are available, both locally and in other cities, of specific kinds of programs that may work effectively to benefit ex-offenders. Although these models are not panaceas, they provide guidance toward developing new and improved services in the future. In particular, the most promising models contain two features—creation and maintenance of a coordinated continuum of service delivery that overcomes fragmentation, and a heavy reliance on mentoring and case-management services that provide strong, ongoing, personal support for ex-offenders.
 11. Because most ex-offenders have little or no financial resources of their own, many are unable to meet their most basic needs. Neither the local nor the state corrections system provides sufficient money on release to allow otherwise destitute ex-offenders to survive without immediate assistance. This places a heavy burden on emergency-services providers in the community that already have tight budgets.
 12. Insufficient transitional housing is available in Duval County to meet the needs of ex-offenders. Even those enrolled in residential substance-abuse programs face waiting lists. Access to transitional housing can significantly increase chances for successful re-entry to the community, providing temporary shelter and support until ex-offenders can stabilize their lives sufficiently to succeed on their own.
 13. When seeking to rent an apartment or purchase a home, many ex-offenders experience the negative consequences of having to disclose their conviction. Informal discrimination based on social stigma is a major impediment for many ex-offenders as they seek to settle into the community.
 14. Sex offenders are singled out by both law and policy for restrictions on their housing choices in emergency and transitional housing, as well as federally subsidized housing and the private housing market. Restrictions also apply to some kinds of employment opportunities. Although these restrictions are meant to protect society, they compound the difficulties these ex-offenders face in successfully settling into a stable, productive lifestyle in the community.
 15. Low levels of literacy, educational attainment, and/or vocational skills limit the post-release life choices of many ex-offenders, especially their opportunities for gainful employment. Although literacy and education activities are made available to many offenders in the state and county corrections systems, current means to encourage participation are ineffective.
 16. Having opportunities to engage in productive employment while still incarcerated can provide an important boost toward helping ex-offenders to become productively employed early after release. Work-release programs currently offered in local and state corrections systems significantly help a relatively few offenders but are too small and too selective to serve many additional inmates who would benefit from participation.
 17. Gainful employment is one of the most important requirements for success in a stable, productive lifestyle. A large proportion of ex-offenders have difficulty obtaining and keeping gainful employment because of often interrelated problems: lack of educational attainment and/or vocational skills needed to qualify for well-paying jobs; lack of employability skills (job-seeking and interview skills, proper workplace attitude and behavior) necessary for success because of a lack of productive experience in the labor market; lack of transportation needed to commute to work; affliction with an addiction or mental-health problem that precludes productive employment until treatment and recovery are accomplished; and experience with the social stigma commonly held against ex-offenders. Giving employment-related services top-priority community support will pay off by helping ex-offenders to become stable and productive citizens.
 18. Some ex-offenders have immediate needs for transportation assistance because they have no access to an automobile and cannot afford the cost of the bus. Although the public bus system provides reduced-cost tickets through a variety of human-services programs, ex-offenders not enrolled in any of these programs lack access to bus-ticket assistance.
 19. Public transportation available in Duval County does not adequately meet the needs of many ex-offenders who must rely on it for access to employment, health care, and other community services. In particular, the public bus system does not reach sites of employment in some parts of the county, and its bus schedules are not conducive to those working other than regular weekday hours.
 20. Many ex-offenders are financially unable, because they lack regular employment, to access the regular health-care system to receive needed medical, substance-abuse, mental-health, and other services. They must therefore rely on special programs with limited capacity and on public financial support for medical care, which is fraught with red tape, to gain needed access. Large numbers of people, including ex-offenders, who do not get adequate health care, suffer from health difficulties such as addiction, mental-health problems, and infectious diseases, that are detrimental to their own lives and perhaps to the lives of others in the community.
 21. Since a large proportion of ex-offenders have significant substance-abuse and/or mental-health problems that may have contributed to their criminal behavior and that make establishing a stable, productive lifestyle in the community more difficult, placing a high priority on providing appropriate treatment and support services for these ex-offenders is important.
 22. The existing services available in Duval County that provide substance-abuse and/or mental-health services for ex-offenders and others are inadequately funded to meet the full need. In particular, residential programs are full to capacity and have lengthy waiting lists.
 23. Neither the local nor state corrections systems has a formal process to make available individualized legal advice and assistance to offenders concerning matters of civil law such as child-support payments. If not attended to in the short term,

these can become major legal problems that can later deter ex-offenders from reestablishing their lives successfully in the community.

24. Many offenders leave incarceration with significant un-attended legal issues relating to family, child support, child custody, and other civil-law matters. Since most ex-offenders lack the means to afford a private attorney, the limited nature of the resources of Legal Aid and pro-bono attorney services creates difficulties for some ex-offenders to get these legal matters resolved. If unresolved, such problems may escalate into violations of probation, which can lead to re-arrest and incarceration.
25. The current Florida law that permanently denies civil rights to ex-felons unless approved for executive clemency rein-

forces the stigma that prevents many ex-offenders from establishing a successful life in the community after release from incarceration.

26. Too often, financial obligations imposed as conditions of release cause a Catch-22 situation that severely impedes the best efforts of ex-offenders to reestablish a stable, productive lifestyle after release. These obligations may include payments for some combination of child support, restitution, probation fees, and/or other fines and debts. While holding an ex-offender responsible for such obligations is justified, the imposition of an immediate, rapid payment schedule, without regard for the ex-offender's means of earning an income, may cause negative results. The payments may not be made, and the ex-offender may be incarcerated again for violation of probation.

Recommendations

Recommendations are the committee's specific suggestions for change, based on the findings and conclusions.

1. The Community Services Department of the City of Jacksonville should collaboratively take the lead to convene a broadly based consortium. The purposes of the consortium should be to develop and institutionalize a system of linkages that ties together services available in Duval County for ex-offenders, reducing fragmentation and ensuring an effective continuum of services, and to advocate for effective service delivery and sufficient funding for these services.

Active participants in the consortium should include the Corrections Department of the Duval County Sheriff's Office, Florida Department of Corrections, State Attorney's Office, County and Circuit Court system, Jacksonville Community Services Department, Human Services Council (major human-services funders), Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition, specific public and nonprofit providers of services for ex-offenders (including emergency assistance, housing, education, employment, transportation, health and mental-health, substance-abuse, legal, and other services), the faith community (Interfaith Council and/or other appropriate groups), First Coast Workforce Development (*WorkSource*), and other interested business and community groups.

As its primary functions, the consortium should directly conduct or indirectly arrange for development and operation of the following:

- a **one-stop case-management center** for ex-offenders. The "center" should be a conveniently located physical facility as well as a communications network accessible by telephone and on a user-friendly website. The Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model of team-oriented case management already being used in Duval County should be considered as a useful model for the ex-offender case-management system. The case-management system should assist with access to all needed services, for ex-offenders and their families, through referrals and with follow-up to ensure that needs are met. When the center is

up and running, the consortium should visibly promote it so that ex-offenders and services providers alike will be aware of and use it.

- a **tracking system** to ensure continuity of services from the time individuals become incarcerated offenders through their release and resettlement in the community. The tracking system should be comprehensive and computerized and should ensure access and use by all providers of pre-release and post-release services.
- a process to **collect and analyze aggregate data** on services for offenders and ex-offenders. This process should be capable of providing sufficient information to guide planning and evaluation of services needed to make them more efficient and effective.
- a major **public-information** effort to enhance public understanding about the costs of recidivism and the benefits of services to meet the needs of ex-offenders. The consortium should seek the active participation of all major broadcast and print media, as well as public and private agencies working with offenders and ex-offenders, in the planning and implementation of the campaign. The campaign should specifically tackle the issue of social stigma as a detrimental and self-defeating aspect of the community's response to ex-offenders.
- an **advocacy process** for ex-offender services. This process should be pursued with sufficient vigor to produce significant improvements in services available and funding to support them. Advocacy should be focused, as needed, on specific services that are underutilized or not sufficiently available. Current examples deserving immediate attention include financial counseling for ex-offenders with substantial financial obligations, transitional housing, housing opportunities for sex-offenders, and mentoring services that provide ongoing personal support.

- The consortium should ensure that sufficient funding and adequate staffing are provided to ensure that the functions of the consortium are effectively performed.
2. The Duval County Corrections Department should take the lead, working with the courts and State Attorney's Office, to create a Pretrial Services Unit designed to expand use of and coordination of services available to local offenders prior to sentencing, including the full array of diversionary programs and alternative sentencing options available. Among its functions, the Unit should develop and use flexible payment schedules for offenders with substantial financial obligations (e.g. child support payments, restitution, fees for probation, and/or other fines and debts), based on each individual's income, earning capacity, and ability to pay.
 3. The Duval County Corrections Department should conduct an assessment of each offender based on his or her sentence and individual needs. All offenders should receive a short screening. For recidivists and others clearly needing services, the Pretrial Services Unit should perform an in-depth needs assessment. Information obtained in these assessments should become the basis for individualized decision making about pre-release services and for planning to meet post-release needs. It should be entered into the consortium's tracking system and should be aggregated for analysis and planning to guide diversionary programs and other services, both pre- and post-release.
 4. Judges in the courts in Duval County should take advantage of the case management offered by the one-stop center, when it becomes operational, by assigning ex-offenders to its services, when appropriate, as a condition of community supervision.
 5. The Florida Department of Corrections should instruct its probation officers in Duval County to partner with case managers at the one-stop center, when it becomes operational, offering assistance to ex-offenders toward meeting personal needs that ease their re-entry into the community, thus helping to prevent recidivism. To make this partnership effective, the Department of Corrections should seek increased funding to reduce case loads accordingly. When they become available, probation officers should make full use of the consortium's tracking system and the resources available through the one-stop center.
 6. Both the Florida Department of Corrections and the Duval County Corrections Department should compile and provide to each offender released to the Jacksonville area comprehensive information about emergency services available and how to access them. The information should cover the availability, on an immediate and emergency basis, of housing, financial assistance, clothing, transportation, medical care, legal assistance, a personal identification card, and personal counseling. To reduce emergency situations, state and local corrections systems should release offenders so that they arrive in Duval County during hours when emergency needs can most readily be addressed.
 7. Case managers at the one-stop center, once it is operational, should encourage recent ex-felons who apply for Public Housing or Section 8 rental assistance to seek an exception to the federal provision that otherwise excludes them receiving assistance through these low-income housing programs.
 8. The Florida Legislature should amend state law to provide additional incentives to offenders in state and local corrections facilities for educational attainment achieved while incarcerated, such as receiving gain time for earning a GED in jail or prison.
 9. The Florida Legislature should adopt a policy and provide sufficient funding to implement a major expansion of work-release opportunities for state offenders, since these opportunities provide a particularly effective vehicle for transition to successful life after release in the community.
 10. The Florida Legislature and the Jacksonville City Council should follow the example of the federal government by offering tax incentives to employers who train, bond, and hire ex-offenders.
 11. The First Coast Workforce Development Board (WorkSource) and the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce should sponsor targeted opportunities, as a part of their career fairs, to meet the employment needs of ex-offenders. They should encourage local businesses to participate by identifying and offering job openings that will help ex-offenders advance in the workplace, replacing involvement in the illegal economy with productive employment.
 12. The Duval County Corrections Department should make substance-abuse treatment and/or mental-health treatment available, through local service providers, to all offenders found through the screening and assessment processes to need them. The Department should increase the number of beds dedicated for in-jail substance-abuse treatment sufficiently to meet the full need.
 13. The City of Jacksonville should renegotiate its contract with Shands Jacksonville to provide for a more streamlined application process for access to indigent medical care. The process should allow use, to establish residency for eligibility, of a jail address in Duval County or a prison address in Florida with evidence of release to Duval County.
 14. The Florida Legislature should amend current law so that ex-felons who have served their sentences and have met all sentencing and community-supervision provisions, including financial obligations, then have the opportunity for restoration of their civil rights, through a process that is timely and objective.

Resource People

The JCCI study process relies on information supplied by knowledgeable resource people, in addition to published reference materials. We wish to thank the following for their contributions to this study.

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The following written materials offered useful information related to the study issue.

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Committee members met together on 21 Thursday mornings from October through April. In addition, the management team met several times to provide guidance and direction for this study. The committee received information from 28 knowledgeable resource people and additional written materials researched by JCCI staff.

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