



Recommendations of the Reentry Housing Collaborative

Methods to Reduce the Use of the Franklin County,
Ohio's Emergency Shelter System by Formerly
Incarcerated People

December 2010

Prepared by Sally Luken
Corporation for Supportive Housing - Ohio

About the Corporation for Supportive Housing

The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) is a national non-profit organization and community development financial institution that helps communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness. Founded in 1991, CSH advances its mission by providing advocacy, expertise, leadership, and financial resources to make it easier to create and operate supportive housing. CSH seeks to help create an expanded supply of supportive housing for people, including single adults, families with children, and young adults, who have extremely low-incomes, who have disabling conditions, and/or face other significant challenges that place them at on-going risk of homelessness. For information about CSH, please visit www.csh.org.

Permissions Requests

CSH encourages nonprofit organizations and government agencies to freely reproduce and share the information from CSH publications. The organizations must cite CSH as the source and include a statement that the full document is posted on our website, www.csh.org. Permissions requests from other types of organizations will be considered on a case-by-case basis; please forward these requests to info@csh.org.

Acknowledgements by the Author

This report was made possible due to the generous financial support of The Franklin County Office of Homeland Security and Justice Programs, the Corporation for Supportive Housing's RWJ Foundation Returning Home Initiative and the Office of Criminal Justice Services of the Ohio Department of Public Safety. Additional in-kind support was provided by the Chalmers P. Wylie Ambulatory Care Center of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and Community Research Partners of Columbus Ohio.

The Corporation for Supportive Housing, Ohio office respectfully acknowledges the commitment of the members of the Reentry Housing Collaborative for the content of this report. Without their expertise, time and work, the recommendations made in this report would not have been possible.

Ron Kadylak,
ADAMH Board of Franklin County

Denise Robinson and Debra Buccilla,
Alvis House

Tom Dobies,
Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority

Yvonne Green, Columbus Urban League

Dave Davis and Lianna Barbu,
Community Shelter Board

David DeFranco, Consumer representative

Sally Luken,
Corporation for Supportive Housing

Sue Villio, Faith Mission

Gayle Dittmer,
Franklin County Court of Common Pleas

Melissa Pierson and Kysten Palmore,
Franklin County Office of Homeland Security
and Justice Programs

Chief Mark Barrett, Franklin County Jail

Judge Tim Horton,
Franklin County Municipal Court

Judge Ted Barrows,
Franklin County Municipal Court

Yeura Venters and Kevin Mulrane,
Franklin County Public Defender's Office

Renee Johnson, Jessie's World, Inc.

Gayle Bickle, Alicia Handwerk, Kara
Peterson and Roger Wilson, Ohio
Department of Rehabilitation & Correction

Lea Blackburn and Bradie Williams,
Ohio Health

Renna Abdullah, Salvation Army

Michele Johnson, The Exit Program

Mary Gillette,
US Department of Veterans Affairs

Art Helldoerfer,
YMCA of Central Ohio

Table of Contents

About the Corporation for Supportive Housing ii

Permissions Requests ii

Acknowledgements by the Author iii

Background and Introduction 1

 Strategy Two Refined to a Targeted Population: Criminal Justice Involved Persons..... 1

The Reentry Housing Collaborative’s Purpose and Goals 2

2010 Process of the Reentry Housing Collaborative 3

Current System of Reentry for Offenders Released to Franklin County 4

 The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) 5

 Franklin County Jail 6

Lessons Learned 9

Recommendations of the Collaborative 9

 The Target Population 10

 The Three Levers 11

 Implementation through the Housing Subcommittee of the Franklin County Reentry Task Force 13

Next Steps 13

42% of people in emergency shelter (5,155) during 2007, 2008 and 2009 had incarceration histories.

Background and Introduction

In 2008, under the leadership of the Community Shelter Board (CSB), of Columbus/Franklin County, Ohio, the community published its blueprint for continued strategies and collaborations to end homelessness and to improve the system that serves persons who are homeless in central Ohio. This report, *New Strategies for a New Era, Final Report 2008*¹ elaborates upon four broad goals: Access, Crisis Response, Transition and Advocacy. Within the goal of Advocacy, the CSB and community leaders determined two primary strategies to pursue:

1. Launch a campaign for increased resources for affordable and supportive housing as well as rent subsidies for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness;
2. Advocate with other systems to improve and increase housing placements for people returning to the community from domestic violence shelter, institutional or residential settings.

CSB approached the Corporation for Supportive Housing, Ohio office (CSH-OH) and requested that CSH-OH lead the planning for the second strategy.

Strategy Two Refined to a Targeted Population: Criminal Justice Involved Persons

Due to the increased numbers of former offenders returning to Columbus and Franklin County from state prison, the high number of local citizens processed by the county jail and the growing body of research that points to the correlation of incarceration and homelessness², CSH proposed to CSB and the Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative that Strategy Two be targeted to former offenders being released into homelessness.

CSH-OH had already forged a robust partnership with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to develop an intervention for Ohio's disabled re-entry prison population that is at risk of

¹ Community Shelter Board, *Rebuilding Lives: New Strategies for a New Era, Final Report (2008)*, available at: <http://www.csb.org/?id=how.plan>

² Corporation for Supportive Housing, *Proposal to the Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative (2009)*, available at: <http://documents.csh.org/documents/oh/ProposedPlan.pdf>

Research shows treatment works better than sanctions.

(University of Cincinnati, School of Criminal Justice, Center for Criminal Justice Studies)

homelessness upon release. CSH-OH offered to leverage its relationship with ODRC in convening a work group to target Strategy Two to the offender population.

CSB assisted CSH-OH with outreach to the Franklin County Office of Homeland Security and Justice Programs to engage their support to this strategy development. In addition, CSH-OH made a formal request to CSH's national Innovations & Research unit for financial support for the emerging project. CSH-OH also submitted grant applications to Franklin County and to the Office of Criminal Justice Services of the Ohio Department of Public Safety to support this strategy development.

CSH-OH raised approximately \$63,000 to convene the work group and to conduct research to inform the stakeholders' work. There were additional in-kind resources provided by CSH and members of the work group. This body of stakeholders became the Rebuilding Lives Reentry Housing Collaborative. In addition, Franklin County, through its Reentry Task Force, requested that CSH utilize the Reentry Housing Collaborative as the Reentry Task Force's Housing Subcommittee and report back to the Franklin County Reentry Task Force regarding its progress and accomplishments.

The Reentry Housing Collaborative's Purpose and Goals

The Reentry Housing Collaborative was formed in October 2009. Its membership is noted in the acknowledgements of this report. The Collaborative's goals were outlined and agreed to by its members:

1. Increased understanding of the size and scope of formerly incarcerated people's use of CSB supported emergency shelters, Rebuilding Lives permanent supportive housing (PSH) and ODRC/CSH's *Returning Home –Ohio* project.
2. Increased understanding of the array of reentry programs operated by ODRC and their effectiveness in reducing homelessness in central Ohio.
3. Develop recommendations and an implementation plan for the Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative (RLFC)'s consideration that will reduce the utilization rates of CSB supported emergency shelters by formerly incarcerated persons.

In New York City, the FUSE project netted the city \$2,953 per person per year by placing frequent users of emergency shelter and jail in permanent supportive housing with enhanced services. (Corporation for Supportive Housing, 2009, FUSE Cost Avoidance)

In addition, CSH-OH worked to gain a data sharing agreement among ODRC, CSB's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the Franklin County jail to determine the extent to which persons leaving state prison or jail were utilizing the CSB network of emergency shelters. CSH-OH contracted with the Community Research Partners (CRP) of Columbus, Ohio to acquire the data from these three sources and conduct a data match with analysis. The Reentry Housing Collaborative determined the criteria for stratification of the data-matched populations which were made available to CRP. This data match project³ provided enlightening and helpful information to the Collaborative.

2010 Process of the Reentry Housing Collaborative

The Collaborative met monthly from October 2009 through November 2010, during which time they utilized the following strategies to arrive at their recommendations:

- Holding a monthly meeting which included a cross-disciplinary educational opportunity
- Review of relevant research
- Implementation of a data matching project to understand the scope of the problem and need
- Participation in a one-day facilitated planning session to develop recommendations

Cross discipline learning occurred through presentations from a variety of speakers representing the homeless system and the criminal justice system. For example, the public housing authority presented to the Collaborative regarding its regulations and limits on providing rental assistance and housing to former offenders. At another meeting, persons who were homeless and who had been formerly incarcerated shared their personal experiences with a homeless services system that was not always effective with assisting former offenders transitioning back into the community.

³ Community Research Partners (2010) The Use of Emergency Shelters in Franklin County by Persons Released from Prisons and Jails: Summary of Data Analysis for the Corporation of Supportive Housing. Available at: <http://documents.csh.org/documents/oh/Summary.pdf>

Criminal justice best practices demonstrate that housing & transportation are barriers to an offender's success on the outside but programs must also address the risk factors for future criminal behavior.

In addition, researchers from ODRC, CRP, the University of Cincinnati and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, provided the Collaborative with the results of a literature review of research on the intersection between incarceration and homelessness, and best practices emerging from both the homeless industry and the criminal justice world.

CRP presented the findings from the data matching project for the periods 2007, 2008 and 2009 among the three systems of prison, jail and emergency shelters. Following nine months of cross-system learning, and CRP's data match report, the Reentry Housing Collaborative conducted a day-long, professionally-facilitated, planning process to determine recommendations for the community regarding how to reduce the emergency shelter use for formerly incarcerated people.

At the request of the Collaborative and CSH, the three data source organizations agreed to a three year data storage system, which would allow at least for one more data match - against the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services Board of Franklin County's (ADAMH) system. ADAMH's summary of this additional match was shared with the Collaborative following their one-day planning session and was used to further define the recommendations in this report.

CSH's role during this process was one of facilitator, meeting organizer, funder, and liaison with CRP and the data sources for data collection and the refinement of the data match project. CSH also acted as the Collaborative's scribe.

Current System of Reentry for Offenders Released to Franklin County

The Collaborative created their recommendations based on the current system in Franklin County. Offenders released from incarceration generally exit one of two penal systems: those institutions and programs under the control of or financed by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and those institutions under the control of the Franklin County Sheriff.

Revolving door syndrome: About 500 persons spent 3 or more times in shelter and 3 or more times in county jail during the three year period analyzed. Among these “frequent users” more than half are flagged as ill or on medication.

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC)

ODRC operates 32 prisons scattered across the state and provides for an array of community based facilities and services. There are no state prisons located in the Franklin County area, though offenders that formerly resided in this county may return upon release. In addition, other former offenders may chose to live here.

- Annually 2,212 individuals are released from ODRC into Franklin County.
- Historically one half of releases have been under ODRC supervision.
- Two Columbus zip codes have a high concentration of returning offenders. In 43205 the concentration is 16.74 returning offenders per 1,000 residents and the area median household income (AMI) is \$20,400. In 43215 the concentration is 16.04 returning offenders per 1,000 residents and the AMI is \$28,636. The Collaborative noted that these two zip codes also represent a concentration of homeless shelters, and affordable housing options.

ODRC is required by statute to obtain a housing plan from an offender before his/her release and if one does not exist, to work with the offender to create one. The Bureau of Community Sanctions (BCS), within ODRC, provides assistance to offenders in need of housing placement. In one year, BCS received 2,400 requests from inmates statewide for assistance. Of these:

- 61% were placed in housing that ODRC approved.
- 29% of those requesting assistance finding housing were sex offenders; 30% have mental illness and 8% have mental illness and a sex offense.
- 932 people could not be placed into housing. Due to state law, ODRC had to release these individuals without a place to go.

Prior, emergency-shelter use increased the risk of recidivism to incarceration by 23%

(Metraux & Culhane, 2004, "Homeless Shelter Use and Reincarceration Following Prison Release")

Due to Ohio Senate Bill 2 (1992), ODRC is required to release an inmate at their designated release date, even if the offender has no place to go. In addition, ODRC as a system is challenged in providing extensive reentry assistance to all prisoners due to the fact that approximately half of ODRC inmates are doing less than one year of time.

ODRC has put in place a number of reentry services to assist offenders. Through ODRC's BCS, housing assistance is offered in three ways:

- 1) Independent housing (transitional housing with limited services for releasees with no other housing options)
- 2) Half way houses (a required placement for offenders at high risk of re-offending that are in need of programming and supervision – this is an actual placement in lieu of completion of one's sentence)
- 3) Permanent supportive housing (for offenders with disabilities and who are at risk of homelessness upon release).

ODRC also has an [Offender Reentry Plan](#) and chairs the Ohio Offender Reentry Coalition. Referral information about local services, agencies and programs to assist in reentry is available on the Coalition's [website](#). The state agency continues to work collaboratively with local communities' Reentry Task Forces and community based correctional facilities to find solutions to the housing and service needs of returning offenders. However, the ODRC housing options and programs that are available post release do not meet the demand for short term or long term housing for offenders. As a result, in 2007, 12% (N=285) of persons from Franklin County released from state prison spent time in CSB emergency shelters. ⁴

Franklin County Jail

Franklin County operates two jails: 370 South Front Street (643 bed maximum) and 2460 Jackson Pike (1,688 bed maximum). The jail system processes over 37,000 people a year with an average length of stay

⁴ Community Research Partners, The Use of Emergency Shelters in Franklin County by Persons Released from Prisons and Jails: Summary of Data Analysis for the Corporation for Supportive Housing (2010), page 3.

On one day in 2009, 20% of former offenders found in emergency shelters were Veterans.

of 23 days. In 2007, the Jackson Pike facility was consistently over maximum capacity and the Front Street jail was at or near capacity.

Jail inmates that need medication, medical treatment or social services receive them. Twenty-four percent of inmates are on psychotropic drugs. Daily, one hundred people list the streets as their home address, with roughly one-fourth of these persons matched to the ADAMH system. The jail provides AA/NA meetings, anger management classes, and an assortment of other support services while a person is incarcerated.⁵

The Franklin County Reentry Task Force, staffed by the County Commissioner's Office of Homeland Security and Justice Program, published two reports in 2009: *Prisoner Reentry Services Research* and a *Directory of Franklin County Adult Reentry Services*⁶. Findings in these reports demonstrate that the community lacks a centralized, coordinated system for reentry. Several barriers exist that make it difficult for former offenders to know what is available to assist them upon release and how to access needed services. The number of agencies providing support is large, with twenty three local organizations providing educational services, employment assistance, housing assistance and legal support to former offenders. Yet all providers agree that their services are not unified. Each program has its strengths, but a system does not exist to encourage or require that the twenty-three agencies deliver services in a coordinated fashion. As a result, too many exoffenders are ending up in the shelter system. In 2007, 1,842 (6%) people of the over 28,000 released from Franklin County jails ended up in the local emergency shelter system, during the two years following their release.

The Franklin County Reentry Task Force's January 2010 Five Year Strategic Plan⁷ calls for increasing coordination of county-wide reentry efforts. Among a number of goals, the Task Force intends to:

⁵ Franklin County Sheriff's Office 2007 Annual Report, available on Internet: http://www.sheriff.franklin.oh.us/annual_report_final_web.pdf; with updates provided by Kysten Palmore, Office of Homeland Security and Justice Programs, Franklin County Commissioner's Office (2010).

⁶ Available at: Franklin County's Office of Homeland Security and Justice Programs, 373 S. High St, 25th floor, Columbus, OH. 43215

⁷IBID.

Franklin County frequent users who also received services in the ADAMH system have a variety of behavioral health issues – 45% have co-occurring disorder (substance abuse and mental health disorder); 12% have spent time in the state psychiatric hospital.

- Improve system information sharing between providers and across systems, and
- Adopt a standardized assessment tool that can be used during all phases of the reentry process. In particular, the Task Force intends to adopt the Ohio Risk Assessment System tool (ORAS).

In addition to these goals, the Task Force's plan calls for

- Reducing the number of formerly incarcerated people's incidence of homelessness or use of emergency shelters upon release, and
- Increasing the number of offenders who are accepted into supportive housing prior to or upon release from jail or prison.

In mid-2010, the Franklin County Reentry Task Force was successful in receiving a grant from the Office of Criminal Justice Service, Ohio Department of Public Safety, to begin implementation of programs to meet the Task Force's plan. A comprehensive pre- and post-release reentry program was begun later in the year. The program is operated within the Franklin County jail and includes intensive case management services, risk and need assessments, cognitive-behavioral group therapy, work-readiness classes and post-release transitional employment. Program outcomes were not available at the time of this report.

27% of the ADAMH/shelter-jail frequent users consume 75% of the ADAMH resources for this population.

Lessons Learned

A number of lessons were learned during the Collaborative's process.⁸ The primary lessons included:

- A large enough population is cycling between homelessness and incarceration to warrant an intervention to enhance public safety, improve offenders' reintegration into society and reduce the use of emergency shelter and jails or prison.
- No one system, whether the prisons, the jails, or emergency shelters, can alone reduce the number of former offenders using emergency shelters. Similarly, no single system is responsible for "dumping persons into the homeless system" or for "enabling former offenders to continue a criminal path back to incarceration".
- Each system has its own legal and resource limits. However, together, and with community support, reductions in the flow of formerly incarcerated people into homelessness can be made.
- There are also existing best practices in criminal justice and homeless/housing that can be incorporated into any systematic response.

Recommendations of the Collaborative

The Reentry Housing Collaborative determined the community should take a multi-stepped approach to reduce the likelihood of released offenders entering the local homeless shelters.

1. Initially target the population that is most frequently cycling among county jail, state prisons and the homeless emergency shelters. CRP's report demonstrated that this population was relatively small during the three year period. However, this group appears to have the highest need for service supports.
2. Press on "three levers" (described below) through targeted programs to have the greatest impact on reducing this population's cycling through multiple systems.

⁸ Corporation for Supportive Housing, Summary of Lessons Learned – Presentation to the Franklin County Reentry Task Force (2010) available at: <http://documents.csh.org/documents/oh/ReentryUpdate2010.pdf>

17% of the ADAMH/shelter-jail frequent users self-reported Veteran's status.

3. Move from planning into implementation of the recommendations of this report and do so under the auspices of the Housing Subcommittee of the Franklin County Reentry Task Force.

The Target Population

The data match process revealed that the population that is most frequently cycling is moving between the emergency shelters and the county jail, and consists of approximately 500 individuals. It is the Collaborative's recommendation that an intervention to address these frequent users be a priority.

Based upon the CRP data match project, demographics of the users of shelter with incarceration histories were more likely to be:

- African American Males
- 35-54 years old
- Self identified as having a need for medication, or self-identified as ill.

Though a smaller subset of frequent users, those persons who used emergency shelter and were former state prisoners were:

- More likely to have 2 or more prior offenses
- Classified as moderate to high risk to re-offend upon release
- More likely to not to have visitors while incarcerated
- Represented a higher percentage of low-level felons than those exoffenders that were never homeless

A specific analysis of the frequent users was not conducted, but among all homeless, ex-offenders who spent time in the county jail, a disproportionate number (347 of 1,842) show up in shelter within the first 30 days after release. The influx of later entries into shelter led the Collaborative to believe that some offenders are released with a housing plan, only later to have lost their housing.

Cognitive behavior health programming which addresses these four domains reduces recidivism: Attitudes, Values, Beliefs; Peer Association; Personality; and Criminal history.

The Reentry Housing Collaborative strongly advises that the frequent users who are at the highest risk of re-offending be targeted for intervention. Due to the high correlation between frequent users of jail and shelters with the ADAMH system, Medicaid eligible or persons with suspended Medicaid should be targeted for intervention. The research also indicates a higher concentration of former Veterans among the frequent user population than in the overall homeless population; therefore Veterans fitting the above criteria should also be prioritized.

The Three Levers

The Collaborative determined that three primary levers, if pushed, would provide the community with the greatest opportunity to reduce the utilization rates of emergency shelters by formerly incarcerated persons.

1. Assessment

- Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) is implementing the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS), a web-based risk-assessment tool for recently incarcerated persons. ORAS will be used from intake through release and reentry. ORAS is designed for assessing offenders from pre-trial, to community control, jail, prison and reentry. The Collaborative encourages its use in the county system at all levels even if it is not required for jail inmates.
- Within ORAS, a case plan will exist for individuals. This case plan should be made available to non-traditional ODRC providers so they can conduct effective assessments and follow-up for a jailed offender.
- Information must be shared across all publicly funded systems that touch this population, including jails, ODRC, shelters, ADAMH, courts and probation.
- Before release, offenders should be assessed for public benefits eligibility and application for reinstatement of benefits should be made. A system needs to be in place to assure benefits are reinstated for eligible former offenders.

In New York City FUSE project, the group that received housing with services had a 92% reduction in days spent in shelter and 53% reduction in the number of days spent in jail.

(John Jay College for Research and Evaluation, 2008)

2. In-Reach

- A policy is needed across systems that states discharge planning starts at admission and includes follow up for short-term offenders in jail. It is advised that outside organizations play a role in this early discharge planning with specific connections made for offenders before release.
- A policy is needed to have funded in-reach by outside organizations in order to validate the viability of discharge plans prior to the offender being released. It is also advised that the risk assessments be done by outside agencies.
- Assure there is mental health treatment access, needed medication and a stronger connection between community-based services providers and the offender before release.

3. Housing/Supportive Services

- There must be advocacy for less restrictive guidelines for subsidy and rental vouchers for those persons coming out of jail. Housing options must be expanded.
- The SSI benefit reinstatement project being conducted by the state of Ohio, the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) and CSB should be linked to the reentry population.

In New York, felony recidivism was reduced for ex-offenders with mental health diagnosis when provided intensive case management and a housing subsidy. (Metraux & Culhane 2004)

Implementation through the Housing Subcommittee of the Franklin County Reentry Task Force

The majority of the members of the Reentry Housing Collaborative have committed to continue to support this research and planning process into implementation. The Franklin County Reentry Task Force has requested that the Collaborative remain active as its Housing Subcommittee. The recommendations of this report are being presented to the Rebuilding Lives Funder Collaborative, CSB, the Franklin County Reentry Task Force and the Franklin County Criminal Justice Planning Board. If implementation under the Housing Committee is acceptable, CSH-OH will volunteer to continue to chair the group into 2011.

Next Steps

The Corporation for Supportive Housing Ohio office, with the assistance of the Housing Subcommittee, is preparing a proposed budget for 2011-2012 activities, and a summary of possible revenue sources for the implementation of these recommendations. The Franklin County Office of Homeland Security and Criminal Justice Programs has offered an initial \$25,000 grant to CSH for implementation. CSH's national Research and Innovations unit is considering a \$10,000-\$15,000 grant to support implementation of a Franklin County Frequent Users of Services Enhancement (FUSE) project. Additional assistance will be sought by CSH and the Housing Subcommittee to make the implementation plan feasible.