

Testimony of  
**Andrea J. Cabral**

Suffolk County Sheriff

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INMATE RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS AT THE SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S  
DEPARTMENT  
SUFFOLK COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS

Written testimony of Suffolk County Sheriff Andrea J. Cabral  
The Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs  
"The First Line of Defense: Reducing Recidivism at the Local Level"  
Thursday, November 5, 2009, Room 226 of the Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Senator Benjamin Cardin (D) Maryland, Presiding.

Senator Cardin and Honorable Members of the Subcommittee:

Good afternoon and thank you for having me here today and allowing me to present testimony on this very important topic.

Re-entry is the term commonly used to describe the process by which criminal offenders are reintegrated back into their communities. Effective re-entry programs are critical to any effort aimed at increasing public safety through the reduction of recidivism and productive transition of ex-offenders back into society.

In any good correctional system that is so focused, re-entry programming begins on the offender's first day of incarceration. These programs and services are particularly effective at the county level, in correctional institutions where the average length of sentence is relatively short and the offender's ties to family and community are not as severely or irretrievably broken by lengthy periods of incarceration.

According to a 2008 report by the Pew Charitable Trusts Center on the States, 2,319,258, or one in 99.1 adults were incarcerated in prisons and jails. Of that number, the 794,417 attributed to jails is estimated as there are more than 3000 jails nationwide and the Bureau of Justice Statistics does not compile exact numbers for this population. The actual numbers for those incarcerated in facilities not classified as state prisons are likely much higher.

Our correctional institutions must learn to more competently deal with the 95% of offenders, state and federal, who are released from custody. In many cases, this involves fundamental reform of correctional policy, which, given widely divergent community and local standards and attitudes, is a considerable challenge. However, this is a growing population whose social and economic impact on society becomes more profound every year. With the exception of those in state or federal prison who are serving life sentences or death, all incarcerated people will, at

some point, be released. Housing, employment and opportunities to pursue higher education are all significantly diminished for those with a criminal history, especially if that history includes incarceration.

Without national leadership on re-entry that includes support and funding for initiatives that involve effective collaboration between law enforcement and community service providers, tax and other incentives for employers to hire ex-offenders and sweeping changes to federal and state drug laws, recidivism rates will stay at more than 50% and we will continue to spend more than \$49 billion dollars a year on incarceration. (See footnote 1, above.)

## MASSACHUSETTS

In Massachusetts, there are two types of correctional facilities for adults - prisons and Houses of Correction. Prisons are run by the state Department of Correction and hold offenders convicted and sentenced in the Commonwealth's Superior Courts for very serious felonies, e.g. rape, murder, drug trafficking, armed robbery, home invasion etc. There are 20 state prison facilities in Massachusetts and 13 county-based Houses of Correction. These facilities hold offenders who have been convicted and sentenced in the District Courts for mid-level misdemeanors and certain felonies for which the courts' jurisdiction is conferred by statute.

Unlike state prisons, which can hold offenders for any period of years, up to and including life, sentences to the House of Correction cannot exceed two and one-half years for conviction on any single count of a criminal complaint. Offenders sentenced to the House of Correction are eligible for parole upon completion of half their sentence. Eighty percent of the state's criminal business is resolved in its District Courts.

In Massachusetts, the county Sheriffs lead the way on re-entry programs. Of the 14 Sheriffs in the Commonwealth, 13 operate county jails and houses of correction. As public officials elected county-wide every six years, these sheriffs are most knowledgeable about and closely tied in to their communities. In addition to providing mutual aid to state and local law enforcement in the form of task force, gang and other intelligence officers, 911/emergency dispatch services and transportation on DUI and default warrant sweeps, the sheriffs also create the kinds of partnerships outside of law enforcement that create strong, effective reentry programs.

The potential impact of these re-entry programs on the Commonwealth's cities and towns is clear. Collectively, the Sheriffs hold in excess of 70,000 inmates and pre-trial detainees in their facilities. Every year, more than 65,000 are released from county jails and Houses of Correction through bail, case resolution, parole or release upon completion of sentence. By contrast, the State Department of Correction releases just over 3,000 inmates from Massachusetts state prisons, annually. State prisons release offenders from facilities located in every corner of the state. Some make their way back to their communities, some do not. By contrast, the majority of offenders held at county Houses of Correction hail from neighboring cities and towns and return immediately to those communities. In Suffolk County for example, the House of Correction holds approximately 1,500 inmates, ninety-five percent of whom live within five miles of the facility. The decisions they make within the first 48 hours after release, will largely determine whether, if at all, they return to custody within 6 months to a year. The goal of re-entry programs is to provide support, skills, resources and more opportunities to make positive choices.

## COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE RE-ENTRY PROGRAM:

Many inmates, especially those who present with persistent drug and alcohol addictions and have extensive involvement with the criminal justice system, live on life's margins. They have little or no job history, no stable housing, are grossly undereducated - approximately 50% of Suffolk County House of Corrections inmates are high school drop outs - have suspended or revoked drivers licenses and/or no form of state-issued identification. This is also a persistently "sick" population, presenting with a number of chronic diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and hepatitis. There is also a high incidence of mental illness in this population. In this Commonwealth, Sheriffs estimate that approximately 42% of their populations present with some form of mental illness with approximately 26% presenting with a major mental illness.

In Massachusetts, the county Sheriffs' Departments have become de facto mental health facilities, a principal provider for drug detoxification and substance abuse treatment and often function as the primary care medical providers for those incarcerated at the county level.

At the county level, effective re-entry programs for this population have three essential components: 1) a comprehensive assessment tool; 2) evidence-based employment and life skill building programs that use community providers and resources; and 3) case management and discharge planning. A detailed description of our re-entry programs is below.

The process of re-entry must begin at intake and an assessment should be done of every inmate every time he or she is incarcerated. All Massachusetts Sheriffs classify inmates to particular units and programs based upon some form of risk vs. needs assessment.

Moreover, many offenders have been victims at some point in their lives and while being victimized is never an excuse for victimizing another, we cannot, as a matter of good public policy, ignore the role that trauma and trauma-based emotions like anger, grief and depression play, along with inadequate parenting, lack of education and lack of physical and mental health care in recurrent criminal behavior.

In Suffolk County, we use three assessment tools. Two of them, The Level Service Inventory Revised (LSIR) and The Adult Substance Use Survey (ASUS) are based on national standards and the third was created internally for the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. These instruments measure education levels, substance abuse history and prior treatment, criminal history (including juvenile history and past institutional discipline) family and marital status, employment history and mental health history. Service provision and eligibility for certain programs is prioritized according to need, program duration and the length of the inmate's sentence.

SCSD utilizes a number of internal and external case managers. Most are full time-employees who also provide case management for those inmates who enroll in educational, vocational and substance abuse treatment programs not connected to specific re-entry programs. We also have several external case managers who work for specific programs pursuant to state and federal grants. Discharge plans, which vary in content and level of resources depending on the programs in which the inmate participates, are provided to every inmate upon release.

## Gender-focused Re-entry Programs for Women

Though incarceration rates for women are rising, their sentences, at least at the county level are shorter than their male counterparts. In Suffolk County, the average length of sentence for males is 13 months; for females it is 9 months. Effective re-entry programs for women, especially those that also focus on attitudinal change, require sufficient time in pre-release so that the full benefits of the program can be realized.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 70% of women incarcerated in the United States have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault before the age of 17. The impact of trauma on criminal behavior in this population should not be ignored.

In Suffolk County, re-entry programs for women are gender-centric. Prior to creating and implementing our programs, we reviewed the research and literature and surveyed our female inmates and pre-trial detainees to find out what types of programming they thought would better equip them to transition back to their families and communities. What they told us was supported in the literature and national research. Program components that deal with self-esteem, anger and addiction relapse management, trauma associated with sexual and physical violence were especially important. Unlike their male counterparts, only a very small percentage (15%) of female inmates and pre-trial detainees, enroll in programs to earn credit for time off their sentences. Women participate in programs to discuss the negative experiences in their lives and better understand what drives their behavior. Not surprisingly, their success in these programs is closely tied to the relationships they develop with and the support they derive from program facilitators and each other.

## Follow-up and Aftercare

Because supervision and support are so crucial to successful transition, follow-up and aftercare are extremely important components of effective re-entry programs. Ex-offenders have limited options regarding the environments to which they return, post-release. These environments hold all of the negative influences and temptations that contributed to the criminal behavior in the first place. Unfortunately, the cost of incarceration is so high; few institutional programs have the resources to fund these tools. In Suffolk County, our most successful programs all have a follow-up and aftercare component. We rely heavily on our community partners to provide resources, e.g. mentors, faith-based groups and relapse prevention programs that support ex-offenders and encourage them to continue making productive and positive life choices.

## THE SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS

The Common Ground Institute (CGI)

Program Partners:

STRIVE, (Boston Employment Services) a rigorous job preparation and training program that

combines hard skills with intensive attitudinal training.

Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles

Gould Construction Institute, a consortium of instructors who provide occupational safety training.

The Common Ground Institute is the Sheriff's Department's newest re-entry program. It is a skills-based, vocational certificate program for inmates classified as low-risk offenders. The program works in conjunction with the Department's Community Works Program (CWP).

CGI began in May of 2005 and completed its 29th cycle in October 2009. It requires 150 hours of instruction in four vocations: landscaping/ground maintenance, carpentry and building maintenance and 15 hours of instruction in occupational safety (OSHA) training. Each cycle is ten weeks long. The first five weeks consist of morning classes facilitated by the STRIVE job preparedness and training program. Running concurrently, in the afternoons and evenings, are competency-based academic training classes in the four vocations. The second five-weeks provide performance-based training and practical field experience in public buildings and on public land, which also constitutes community restitution. SCSD partners with the cities of Boston and Revere to provide materials and work sites for CWP crews.

The CGI program also works with the state Department of Revenue to resolve outstanding child support issues before inmates are released so that they are not re-arrested on outstanding warrants. Because a valid license to drive is also essential for both a job search and many types of employment, we also work with the state Registry of Motor Vehicles to resolve outstanding traffic and parking violations so that inmates' licenses can be restored.

The Department is working to add entrepreneurial and financial literacy courses to the program, as well as expanding it to include female inmates. The Department has also recently built a successful relationship with various trades unions, placing two former offenders in union jobs just this year.

Inmate work performance and attendance are regularly evaluated in each cycle and every CGI student must pass a final examination in each academic discipline. Those who fail to attend or perform to standards are removed from the program. Upon completion, inmates are awarded graduation certificates and OSHA-certified safety cards. OSHA certification cards enable otherwise qualified ex-offenders to secure employment at any federal worksite.

To mitigate the negative impact of their criminal histories on prospective employment, the Sheriff's Department's Division of External Affairs has an on-staff Job Placement Specialist, who recruits employers willing to hire CGI graduates. To date, over a dozen individual employers and companies have expressed interest in providing or actually provided jobs to these ex-offenders.

Since its inception, 412 men have been accepted into the program, 314 (76%) have successfully completed the program and 202 (63%) have been successfully employed because of CGI. As of September, 2009, 76 graduates (37%) were still employed with their original employers. Because we have limited resources for aftercare and follow-up for this program, we do not know how many graduates are also employed, but with other employers.

In 2006, CGI became the first correctional facility program in the Commonwealth to be certified by the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development as a sponsor of apprenticeship training. CGI graduates now receive apprenticeship credits that can be accepted by employers statewide.

#### CREW (Community Re-Entry for Women)

##### Program Partners:

Project Place, an established multi-service center that provides re-entry services, job readiness and life skills instruction;

The South End Community Health Center, a respected provider of comprehensive health care that provides trauma education and health and nutrition life skills; and

The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which provides parenting skills.

Staff training and preparation for this program began in the spring of 2004. Though currently fully funded by the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, the program was initially funded through a grant from the United States Department of Education. In this community partnership, the SCSD provides a Mental Health Clinician, a Recovery/Substance Abuse Clinician and six trained correctional officers to provide care, custody and control of the female inmates in the unit.

CREW provides job readiness, life skills training, case management, health management, housing and job search assistance to incarcerated women who then transition to the community with the support and supervision of the partners for up to two years. This level of aftercare and follow-up is essential to the success of this program. Employment and housing are program priorities.

Since enrolling its first class in October 2004, 260 female inmates have enrolled in the CREW Program and 216 have graduated. The housing statistics are for fiscal year 2009:

##### Employment and Housing Placement and Recidivism Rates:

##### Employment:

? Percentage placed in jobs within three months of release: 41%

##### ? Job Retention rates:

o Three months: 56%

o Six months: 44%

o Twelve months: 39%

o Twenty-four months: 23%

##### Housing:

? Percentage placed in housing within three months of release: 66%

? Percentage placed in housing within six months of release: 100% (This is because we work with our partners to place all graduates in six-month residential treatment programs. After six months, the placement number drops to 50% because the residential programs end. Graduates who have no place to live return to the shelter pools and are classified as homeless. We are then able to place them in real housing. )

? Percentage placed in housing at 12 months: 66%.

In 2005, only 11% of CREW graduates were placed in jobs. The placement rate has increased by 30% in 4 years. We constantly tailor the program curriculum, modify our job readiness workshops and expand our transitional job opportunities to better meet the needs of the participants.

The national recidivism rate for female offenders is 30%. For CREW graduates, it's 20%. From mid-2006 to early 2008, Project Place supplied \$10,000 of additional program funds to provide wrap-around case management services and small monetary stipends to supplement the wages of graduates who found employment. Ninety women benefitted from these grant monies. Seventy-six (85%) of these women did not re-offend within 1 year.

The Boston Re-entry Initiative (BRI)

Program Partners:

Boston Police Department

United State Attorney's Office

Massachusetts Department of Probation

Massachusetts Department of Parole

Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Suffolk County District Attorney's Office

Youth Opportunity Boston

Whittier Street Health Center (Mass. Dept. Public Health)

Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation

10 Point Coalition (Consortium of African-American clergy)

The Nation of Islam

BRI candidates are inmates whose crimes involve the use of firearms, violence, gang activity and/or drug dealing. They are considered "high impact players." Because of their criminal histories, the recidivism rate within this population is believed to be 100 percent. Upon release, these inmates are almost certain to have a negative impact on any community to which they return.

Eligible inmates are identified within the first 45 days of their sentence. Each month, panels of twelve are oriented to the BRI, the significant consequences of any post-release criminal conduct and then offered rehabilitative programs and services. Post-release, they are provided with follow-up programs, services, mentors and support.

BRI statistics are compiled by calendar year. Statistics for 2009 have not yet been compiled. In calendar year 2008, 238 male inmates, each of whom was considered 100% likely to re-offend, participated in the BRI Program.

? Of the 238 who participated, 140 (59%) have remained arrest-free or have been rearrested on minor (non-serious) charges.

? 97 (41%) have been arrest free for a year or more.

? 7 (3%) were rearrested on more serious or violent charges.

? 12 (5%) were rearrested on similar charges.

? 2 (1%) are deceased.

Offender Re-entry Program (ORP) Adult Male offender Program and Women's Resource Center  
Program Partners:

Bunker Hill Community College

Youth Opportunity Boston

These programs provide life skills, GED, literacy classes, computer and job placement counseling for male and female inmates. Inmates who participate in this program are 13% less likely to be arrested after incarceration than those who do not participate. The re-arrest rate for ORP participants is 28% compared to 41% for non-ORP participants who are not enrolled in other SCSD re-entry programs.

Brooke House, McGrath House and the Community Supervision Unit

Program Partners:

Community Resources for Justice (CRJ is a not-for-profit organization that works with adult offenders to provide services and support to those transitioning from incarceration back to their communities.)

Massachusetts Trial Court Office of Community Corrections Department of Probation

Massachusetts Department of Parole

Forty-five male inmates are classified to the Brooke House, a residential facility in the Fenway neighborhood of Boston. Brooke House residents attend classes/programs at the Suffolk County Community Correction Center at 33 Bradston Street. This program serves hundreds of pre-release inmates, offenders on probation and parolees each month. A GED program, classes in computer graphics, resume writing, adult literacy, life and employment skills and random drug/alcohol testing take place at the center.

McGrath House serves up to fifteen women in a residential house located in the South End of Boston. They attend the Women's Resource Center where they participate in life and job skill programs. Residents are required to work or attend programs while actively seeking work or housing.

The SCSD Community Supervision Unit is staffed by trained deputy sheriffs who are responsible for the day-to-day supervision of pre-release inmates classified to halfway houses. These deputy sheriffs work closely and effectively in the communities of Suffolk County to assure that these pre-release inmates are working or participating in programs.