

Families:
A Critical Resource for New Jersey's Prisoner Reentry Strategy

A Paper Prepared for the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice

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Executive Summary

New Jersey's Reentry roundtable, echoed by Federal Reentry Initiatives, has generated momentum and interest for reentry reform. Today, the State of New Jersey is well positioned to initiate the process of transforming reentry. By incorporating a natural resource: the family, broadly defined, New Jersey can seize a unique opportunity for innovation and leadership, creating cost saving benefits for the state, such as averting reincarceration and breaking cycles of multi-generational criminal justice involvement. Starting at the institutional level and moving to the neighborhood level, criminal justice practitioners and community-based organizations can partner with the family to create a web of support for returning adult and juvenile individuals under community justice supervision in addition to an enhanced public safety strategy for the neighborhood.

This paper outlines the empirical foundations for a family-support model for New Jersey's reentry process. It also includes a strategy for this process of transformation, blending the elements and tools of the Bodega Model with lessons learned from Family Justice's years of providing training and technical assistance in a variety of venues and jurisdictions, and adapted for the unique strengths and needs of New Jersey.

An effective strategy takes a two-pronged approach. First, it is necessary to explore the structure, practices and organizational cultures of the State's supervision systems, with a special emphasis on how they relate to the role of family. This process will engage key opinion makers and leaders in building a family-focused foundation and ensure that the family-support model is infused throughout key organizations and agencies. A second prong concentrates on and identifies one or more target communities that are rich in resources and dense with criminal justice involvement. An assessment process will note strengths and needs, map community resources, and develop and implement a plan for a comprehensive, customized family-support model. New Jersey Cities that account for the highest percentages of released adults and youth will serve as prime targets for local initiatives. These pilot applications will then create standards and "local experts" who can participate in and help sustain statewide applications.

The economic, political, and social benefits make it imperative to use families as a fundamental part of New Jersey's prisoner reentry approach.

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Introduction

Too often, in striving to provide an umbrella of support to returning prisoners, we forget that most are connected to loved ones. This year, more than 630,000 people were released from state and federal prisons¹, most on parole, many to their families, broadly defined.² A recent Bureau of Justice Statistics study confirms high national recidivism rates: within three years of release, an astounding 52% of individuals return to prison to serve a new sentence or for a technical violation of release.³ Recidivism rates among juvenile parolees are also high, ranging from 55 to 75 percent.⁴ While these cycles of arrest, incarceration, and release further tax an already over-burdened system, they can also be stressful for released individuals and their families. At the same time, these families—despite the many other stressors they typically struggle with—are an underutilized resource. With support and guidance, families can provide help and encouragement throughout the reentry process. Research indicates that individuals struggling with difficult transitions who have the support of their families are more likely to succeed than those who do not.⁵ And while families and government may not have identical agendas, they have a common goal: helping the returning individual successfully reintegrate and stay safely in the community.

Political pressure is mounting to change the reentry paradigm. This pressure is fueled by a growing concern over managing the record number of released individuals coupled with an unstable economic forecast. Family-focused programs provide an accessible, cost effective means for improving reentry outcomes, by changing the way we work with people under justice supervision and their families. Public safety concerns "...have elevated prisoners' families to a new level of

¹ A total of 630,207 inmates were released from state and federal prisons in 2001, 591,837 sentenced inmates were released from state prisons (an 8.6% increase from the 544,864 released in 1999), and 38,370 prisoners were released from federal prisons (up 20.6% from the 31,816 released in 1999). Harrison, Paige M. and Karberg, Jennifer C. April, 2003. "Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2002," *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*, NCJ 198877, Table 7, p.6.

² "Family" is broadly defined to include the network of people who are significant in an individual's life.

³ Released inmates in the study represented two-thirds of all prisoners released in the United States. Technical violations of release included failing a drug test, missing an appointment with a parole officer, or being arrested from a new crime. Langan, Patrick A. and Levin, David J. June, 2002. "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994," *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report*, NCJ 193427, p. 1.

⁴ Krisberg, B.A., Austin, J., and Steele, P. 1991. *Unlocking Juvenile Corrections*. San Francisco, CA: National Council on Crime and Delinquency. Although national juvenile reentry is not readily available, recent data shows that nationally, over 108,700 juveniles were in public or private custody on February 1995. See *OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book*, September 1999. <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/html>

⁵ Galanter, M. 1993. *Network Therapy for Alcohol and Drug Abuse: A New Approach in Practice*. New York: Basic Books.

visibility in the social discourse about crime and justice.”⁶ For example, the current federal reentry initiative, encompassing the efforts of several cabinet-level agencies, aims to “promote productive social roles and reduce the likelihood of a return to crime and imprisonment for released individuals under community justice supervision.”⁷ Many of the related reentry partnership initiatives, including those of the Governor’s Association, focus on the need to tap the resources of the community, service providers, families, and neighbors.⁸

Some states have already reaped the benefits of engaging the family and tapping their community connections. The Director of the New York State Division of Parole, Martin Cirincione, who has been instrumental in developing the PARTNER Project at Family Justice’s direct service arm, La Bodega de la Familia, in Manhattan’s Lower East Side said, “Connecting with families has helped our officers to have more insight into the lives of the people they supervise. Enlisting the help of family members who are invested in their loved ones’ success has given our officers a new and powerful ally.”⁹ Nonetheless, in other jurisdictions, community agencies involved in reentry frequently struggle with identifying, coordinating, and tapping family, government and community resources.

Building on the momentum and insights of the statewide reentry roundtable and ongoing efforts that strengthen existing reentry strategies, New Jersey can promote effective collaborations between families, local justice agencies, and other community resources to infuse a family-support, strength-based approach into reentry and community-based supervision on state and local levels. The process can be built around the lessons learned and techniques developed by Family Justice and La Bodega de la Familia, where its innovative model has been applied and tested for several years. Developed

⁶ Hairston, C. F. 2001. Families, Prisoners, and Community Reentry: A Look at Issues and Programs. In Gadsen, V. (Ed.) *Heading Home: Offender Reintegration into the Family—What Works*. Philadelphia: American Correctional Association.

⁷ Lattimore, P. K. and C. Visher. “National Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative”. 2003. The Research Triangle Institute and Urban Institute Justice Policy Center.

⁸ Taxman, F. S., D. Young, J. M. Byrne, A. Holsinger, and D. Anspach. October 2002. “From Prison Safety to Public Safety: Innovations in Offender Reentry.” Maryland: National Criminal Justice Reference Service: Document Number, 196464, p. 14.

⁹ Press Release: “La Bodega de la Familia’s PARTNER Project with the New York State Division of Parole Is a Finalist for Prestigious Innovations in American Government Award. Family Justice, Inc.,” New York, April 1, 2003. Recently, La Bodega’s PARTNER Project with the New York Department of Parole received the Harvard’s Innovations in American Government Award in recognition of this unique collaboration that has promising implications for building similar community partnerships in additional settings.

by Family Justice, the Bodega Model?¹⁰ of family case management provides a methodology for government to partner with the family and the community to create a web of support for those living under community supervision. Rather than focusing on individual family weaknesses such as substance abuse, criminal behavior, or child abuse, the Bodega Model considers individuals, families, communities, and government in a larger context. In order to formulate and implement solutions, it identifies and taps strengths and resources that may not be immediately apparent. Integrating families into their work *as a resource* can improve reentry programs and participant compliance with justice and other mandates, such as substance abuse treatment and vocational programming. A family-support model for reentry will increase family cohesion as well as support loved ones under supervision, and families will start to use their own strengths to combat long-term challenges like addiction, domestic violence, mental illness, truancy, HIV/AIDS, and other issues.¹¹ Collaborations that draw on family members' mutual loyalties, inherent strengths, and motivation can transform New Jersey's paradigm for reentry and community supervision agencies that manage adult, juvenile, and other justice populations.

This paradigm can also be applied at the community level. Focusing on community resources and connections, rather than problems and deficits, can transform the community's response to those who are trapped in cycles of crime, incarceration, poverty, and their many adjuncts – and to their families.¹² By systematically engaging, training, supporting local community based organizations and local government entities such as police, probation, parole, and child welfare, these entities begin to experience the benefits of coordinating their efforts and incorporating a family and strengths based service model.

Developing an effective strategy for New Jersey requires a two-pronged approach. First, it is necessary to explore the structure, practices and organizational cultures of the state and county supervision systems, with a special emphasis on how they relate to the role of family. In addition to gathering insight and information, this process will engage key opinion makers and leaders in

¹⁰ Family Justice has applied for service mark protection for the "Bodega Model." The model refers to the tools and techniques developed, practiced and refined by La Bodega de la Familia, Family Justice's direct service storefront.

¹¹ Sullivan, E. M. Mino, K. Nelson, and J. Pope. 2002. "Families as a Resource in Recovery from Drug Abuse: An Evaluation of La Bodega de la Familia." New York: Vera Institute of Justice.

¹² Morris, P.M. 2002. The Capabilities Perspective: A Framework for Social Justice. *Families in Society, The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*. 83(3): 365 – 373.

building a family-focused foundation and ensure that the family-support model is infused throughout key government entities. To utilize these insights and connections, a second prong identifies one or more target communities that are rich in resources and dense with criminal justice involvement. An assessment process will note strengths and needs, map community resources, and develop and implement a plan for a comprehensive, customized family-support model. Communities prime for such targeting should significantly contribute to the high percentages of New Jersey adult individuals released each year, such as Newark and Camden.¹³ Communities challenged by an influx of juvenile individuals released from Juvenile Justice Commission facilities, like Paterson,¹⁴ are also ripe for a targeted reentry initiative. These pilot applications will then create standards and “local experts” who can participate in applying the model statewide. This paper outlines the empirical foundations for a family-support model for New Jersey's reentry process. It also includes a strategy for this process of transformation, blending the elements and tools of the Bodega Model with lessons learned from Family Justice's years of providing training and technical assistance in a variety of jurisdictions and settings, and adapting them for the unique strengths and needs of New Jersey.

Family-focused approaches grounded in evidence-based practice

The Vera Institute of Justice's formal evaluation of La Bodega de la Familia demonstrates the strong impact that incorporating families can have on the success of individuals under community justice supervision and their families. A majority of the interview group lived and ate with family; some received financial support from them as well. Family members helped locate work and encouraged abstinence from drugs and compliance with treatment. Those whose families accepted and supported them had a higher level of confidence and were more successful and optimistic about their futures. Individuals released to community justice supervision reduced illegal drug use from 80 percent to 42 percent after only six months of participation in La Bodega. Furthermore, overall family well-being was enhanced through increased access to—and utilization of—community-based

¹³ N. Fishman. 2002. “Briefing Paper: An Overview of Prisoner Reentry in New Jersey. New Jersey”: *New Jersey Institute for Social Justice*. http://www.njisj.org/reports/prisoner_reentry.html.

¹⁴ Nearly half of the adolescents committed to New Jersey's JJC return to five cities—Camden, Newark, Jersey City, Paterson and Trenton. See Stout, Bruce, D., 2003. “Community Re-Entry of Adolescents from New Jersey's Juvenile Justice System,” p. 6. Prepared for the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and the New Jersey Public Policy Research Institute's Re-Entry Roundtable.

services, from both private and public agencies.¹⁵ While La Bodega initially focused primarily on an adult male substance abusing population and their families, efforts are now underway to more extensively apply and test the Bodega Model with additional justice populations including youth, women, and people diagnosed with a mental illness. Early findings from La Bodega reflect great promise for broader applications.

On occasion, a family may not have any identifiable resources available at the time they are most needed to support their loved ones and may be unable to engage in this collaborative approach. In these cases, focusing on strengths and solutions are critical for improving the effectiveness of community supervision and the returning individual's success. Periodic re-evaluation of the family and its resources may reveal that the family is now ready for such collaboration.¹⁶ Asking a returning individual, "Who can help you when you get out? Who can you turn to when you are afraid?" may help identify a source of support outside the traditional family.

While the Bodega Model has yet to be fully adapted to address youth development and other issues inherent to serving the juvenile and youth populations, existing research indicates that, with appropriate modification, family-focused approaches can positively affect outcomes. For many years, there has been a growing interest in family-centered treatment for adolescents evidenced by several developments. Adolescents are seen as renegotiating the parent-child relationship rather than breaking away from parents. Alcohol and drug abuse counselors, as well as mental health and social services professionals, report that the simple provision of basic services to adolescents was not successful in producing lasting change. Developments in family therapy and the movement towards family preservation support research finding that family factors must be addressed in order for adolescents to initiate and maintain behavior change.¹⁷ This groundwork lays a sound foundation for adapting and testing family case management, building family-centered government and community partnerships, mapping techniques, and using other approaches with a youth population.

¹⁵ The evaluation was funded by the National Institute of Justice and the Robert Wood Johnson, Jacob and Valeria Langeloth, and Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundations. The full text of the evaluation of La Bodega is available on request or on the Vera website at www.vera.org/publications/publications_5.asp?publication_id=163.

¹⁶ Dunst, C J., C.M. Trivette, and A. G. Deal (Eds.). 1994. *Supporting and Strengthening Families*, Volume 1: Methods, Strategies, and Practices. Cambridge MA: Brookline Books.

¹⁷ Snyder, R.N., and Ooms, Theodora. 1992. "Empowering Families, Helping Adolescents: Family-Centered Treatment of Adolescents with Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Problems," *Technical Assistance Publication Series*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 00-3362, p.3-6.

The Foundation and Methodology of the Bodega Model: Family as an untapped resource

The Bodega Model flows naturally from a unique blend of three disciplines: family systems work, a strengths-based approach, and case management. The confluence of these disciplines forms the framework for Family Justice's practice. The first component, *family systems work*, draws upon a family members' mutual loyalties, inherent strengths, support, and availability. In a systems model, behavior is seen as a shared responsibility, arising from patterns that create and maintain the actions of each member. Second, the *strengths-based approach* incorporates each family members' inherent competencies, resiliencies, and unique culture as well as the strengths of the government and formal and informal community based services. The third, *case management*, recognizes the series of systematic interventions required to manage the entire family as a single case. While we have three disciplines, we rely heavily on a fourth component that partners and ensures collaboration between the family, community based organizations, and law enforcement. Engaging in a partnering process acknowledges the reality that families are intertwined with multiple systems.

Family Systems

Salvador Minuchin pioneered the structural family systems approach, which examines the problems faced by individuals within the context of their environment. Context includes both family and community. Solutions to these problems come from understanding how a family works together and how the family interacts with outside institutions such as governmental agencies. In particular, family systems, therapists examine how the members influence each other and their relationships with each other. By bringing to the surface strengths and resources within the individual members and the network as a whole, the members find new ways to interact that are beneficial to themselves and the unit.¹⁸

The Strength based approach

Strength-based approaches are organized around empowerment rather than problems. Empowerment is the "process of assisting individuals, groups, families, and communities to discover and expend the resources and tools within and around them."¹⁹ A strengths-based practice aims to improve an individual's sense of hope, resiliency and personal efficacy. Practitioners also hope to affect the broader community by improving client's access to resources and opportunities.

¹⁸ Minuchin, P., Colapinto, J., and Minuchin, S. Working with families of the poor. New York: The Guilford Press, 1998.

¹⁹ Saleeby, D. 1997. The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice. New York: Longman.

Dysfunction, from this perspective, can be the result of a deficit of resources rather than a deficit of personal capacities. An apparent personal or family dysfunction may reflect a basic lack of resources necessary to cope with the tremendous strains of addiction and criminal justice involvement.²⁰ Similarly, societal stigmas contribute to a sense of helplessness that results from being socially, politically, and economically marginalized.

Identifying a person's strengths is the primary focus. By taking the time to identify positive behaviors, successful coping mechanisms, skills and talents within clients and their family networks, these strengths then can be mobilized and their development encouraged. This results in boosting self-esteem and empowering the individual and family to take control over their lives.²¹ Solutions come from strengths and healthy patterns, not weaknesses.²² Professionals are merely helpers who can motivate families to take action where they have been previously unable to see their abilities or felt unable to exercise power. This approach is ecological. The unit of analysis is the interface or relationship between persons and their environments rather than just individuals themselves.²³ People can only be fully understood within the context of their lives.

Paralleling our focus on family strengths, we also look closely at the strengths of surrounding law enforcement and other community justice agencies. Often these organizations have a plethora of supportive services that can prove useful in forging strong and lasting partnerships between all stakeholders of a community, including the family.

Case Management

As its name suggests, family case management relies heavily on the practice of case management. Practiced regularly by social service providers, case managers assess an individual client's service needs, then arrange, coordinate, and monitor appropriate services. They also evaluate ongoing need and as necessary, advocate on behalf of their clients.²⁴ For example, case management has been

²⁰ Rapp, C. A. 1998. « The Strengths Model. Case Management with People Suffering from Severe and Persistent Mental Illness.» New York: Oxford University Press.

²¹ Kaplan, L., & Girard, J. 1994. Strengthening High-Risk Families. New York: Lexington Books.

²² Clark, M. D. 1996. Brief Solution-Focused Work: A Strength-Based Method for Juvenile Justice Practice. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, winter, 47, 1, 57-65.

²³ Germain, C., & Gitterman, A. 1980. *The Life Model of Social Work Practice*. New York: Columbia University Press.

²⁴ Case Management Standards Working Group (1992). *NASW standards for social work case management*. National Association of Social Workers. P. O. Box 431, Annapolis, MD 20701.

used to successfully promote employment among welfare recipients,²⁵ provide services to juveniles in detention, assist people with AIDS, handicapped individuals and at-risk children²⁶, the severely mentally ill²⁷, and individuals with alcohol and drug dependencies.²⁸ It is the integration and coordination of services that makes case management such a powerful tool. Case managers work to overcome what is almost uniformly acknowledged as a fragmented social service delivery system, where services reside in multiple levels of government, community-based organizations and faith-based programs, which all have their own eligibility requirements.²⁹

These three elements and major tools of the Bodega Model are by no means new concepts or techniques. The innovation is in the blending of the disciplines and incorporation of these tools for both the micro (family) and macro (government and community) levels. The strength in this configuration is that it identifies and recognizes existing resources, facilitates collaboration, and coaches the family and supervision staff in tapping those resources.

Family, broadly defined

A key component of the Bodega Model is an expanded concept of "family." Many people returning home after incarceration have a different sense of family than the conventionally accepted definition. For example, nationally, few individuals under community justice supervision are married, yet most are fathers.³⁰ Moreover, relationships between released incarcerated individuals and family members can change during incarceration. In the Bodega Model, family is defined by each returning individual to include not just blood relatives but also significant others such as godparents, friends, neighbors, and faith leaders. Many attitudes about family and its role in the lives of other family members are rooted in culture. In order to adopt and fully embrace a broad notion of family, one should be sensitive to the varying and diverse cultural norms represented in the target population.

²⁵ Doolittle, Fred, and James Riccio. 1992. "Case Management in Welfare Employment Programs." In *Evaluating Welfare and Training Programs*, Charles Manski and Irwin Garfinkel, eds. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

²⁶ Deal, A.; Trivette, C.; Dunst, C. 1988. *Family Functioning Style Scale: An Instrument for Measuring Strengths and Resources*. Asheville, NC: Winterberry Press.

²⁷ Chamberlain, R., & Rapp, C.A. 1991. "A decade of case management: A Methodological Review of Outcome Research." *Community Mental Health Journal*, 27(3), 171-188.

²⁸ Willenbring, M. L., Ridgely, S. M., Stinchfield, R. & Rose, M. 1991. "Application of case management in alcohol and drug dependence: Matching techniques and populations." National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information.

²⁹ Dinerman, M. 1992. Managing the maze: Case Management and service delivery. *Administration in Social Work*, 16, 1, 1-9.

³⁰ Wolff and Draine, 2002.

Family as an untapped resource

How is the family an untapped resource? An extensive body of literature documents the key role of social supports, including families, in boosting compliance with justice system mandates.³¹ What is more, many correctional managers recognize the benefits of jail- and prison-based programming that encourages family connections. Parenting classes, marital workshops, child-friendly visiting rooms, and space for conjugal visits are examples of programs that promote contact and enhance relationships during the period of incarceration. Yet the role of families within reentry discourse has remained predominantly philosophical, evading concrete policy changes³² and making integration of family-focused approaches across agencies difficult.

Why are families untapped *after* release? A major factor is the lack of a system that integrates families. While the *concept* of tapping the family as a resource may seem intuitive, the *methodology* for doing so is not. A strength-based model that blends family support and partnership with government can serve as this system. The experience of Family Justice and La Bodega de la Familia indicates that, with appropriate training, tools and support from community-based organizations, parole and other supervisory officers can learn to identify family strengths that may not be apparent at first (or second) glance. Without a *system* for integrating families into their practice, parole and other community supervision officers are likely to be overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of individuals with multiple needs who are entwined with complex systems. The Bodega Model provides such a system: a framework of principles and tools that offer a new way to look at and work with families.

A strength-based approach to partnership with families offers several advantages to the state and the community. Families are experts in their loved ones' behavior and motivation. Families have a long history with one another and therefore are often the first to notice an impending relapse or noncompliance with a condition of release. Family members can exert a powerful influence on their loved ones. When asked, returning prisoners often say that their families are the strongest influence

³¹ Travis, J. 2000. "But they all come back: Rethinking Prisoner Reentry. *Sentencing and Corrections: Issues for the 21st Century*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute; Travis, et al., 2001; U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice and Corrections Program Office, May 2000; Travis, J., M. A. L. Solomon, and M. Waul. 2001.; Wolff, N. and J. Draine, 2002, "The Dynamics of Social Capital of Prisoners and Community Reentry: Ties that Bind?" Presented at Public Health Dimensions of Reentry: Addressing the Health Needs and Risks of Returning Prisoners and their Families Los Angeles; the Urban Institute Reentry Roundtable.

³² Hairstein, 2001.

in their lives.³³ Families often serve as conduits or connectors to the community and neighborhood. While incarceration cuts people off from local resources, families have been living in communities during their loved one's absence. Most have connections and contacts already in place.

Rather than building an entirely new network of support, individuals reentering the community can take advantage of family connections until they can build or rebuild their own. Outside agencies and professionals, no matter how well intentioned, do not live with released individuals: families do. People closest to the individual under community justice supervision can provide around-the-clock support and monitoring. Combined with the intimate knowledge of their family member, this presence provides opportunities for early intervention while at the same time addressing the public safety concerns of government. Parole will max out, treatment will discharge, programs will terminate – but families often endure and thrive as support systems with long-term investment. Many family connections continue for a lifetime and, with guidance from trained professionals, can become the foundation for productive lives.

At the same time, partnerships encourage families and communities to recognize and invest in the assets of government and public-interest service groups. Just as New Jersey's parole board, Juvenile Justice Commission, and community supervision officers will benefit from the support that families have to offer, so will families and communities benefit from shifting their perspectives on state and local government agencies. These families, many from Hispanic and African-American communities, historically have regarded criminal justice and other government agencies with suspicion and sometimes hostility. Underlying perspectives may include distrust and disillusionment with the justice system or frustration with social program procedures along with a recognition that these government systems are not always sensitive to minority and family perspectives given their extensive impact on both. With support however, these families come to recognize and learn to tap the strengths and resources of government, just as government is learning from them. A grandmother participating in La Bodega de la Familia's family case management program related: "Our first family meeting at La Bodega was the first time that anyone had asked me why I hurt, what I might need, and what I had to offer. I was ashamed and scared at first, but then I realized that the family case manager and the parole officer were there to help me. They wanted what was best for

³³ Shapiro, C. and M. Schwartz. 2001. Coming Home. *Corrections Management Quarterly*. 5(3), 52-61.

my grandson...and me. When I thought he was back on drugs, I knew who to call. And they were there.”

Family Case Management Tools

The family case management practiced at La Bodega de la Familia relies on two important and concrete tools: the genogram and ecomap. The *genogram*, or family map, diagrams a returning individual under community justice supervision's personal network. Similar in appearance to a family tree, genograms typically have focused only on tracking the histories of family deficits such as substance abuse, mental illness, and criminal activity, in addition to demographics such as age and gender.³⁴ The Bodega Model uses genograms to give equal weight to the strengths of family relationships and data such as which family members are employed, educated, or especially motivated to support the family member returning from incarceration.

The genogram offers a look at an individual under community justice supervision's history in a broader context, somewhat relieving the individual's burden as the sole cause and agent of the family's "dysfunction." It also identifies attributes on which the family can capitalize: for example, three generations of full employment and independence from welfare entitlements, or two generations with at least a high school diploma and bilingual literacy. Family successes and accomplishments are emphasized as resources to look to when facing challenges of reentry. Information revealed in a genogram can be helpful in identifying opportunities to interrupt negative cycles and incorporating prevention and treatment to avoid the potential pitfalls in reentry. (See Appendix A for sample genogram.)

A second tool, the *ecomap*, visually represents the family's many formal and informal connections, including resources outside the family, from health clinics and child support mechanisms to local churches and schools to public housing and even the corner grocery. Visually, an ecomap resembles a diagram of a solar system: the family is in the center and other important people and institutions are depicted with circles rotating around the center, like planets around the sun. Ecomaps show all the people, organizations, agencies, and institutions significant or influential in the subject's life, both positive and negative. Thus, they can display conflicts between services and highlight the need for

³⁴ McGoldrick, M, R. Gerson, and S. Shellenberger. 1999. *Genograms: Assessment and Intervention*, 2nd Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

coordination. Historically, ecomaps have been used to convey the web of services and mandates in the life of an individual. By placing the *family* at the center of the diagram, rather than just the individual, the Bodega Model ecomap provides a broader and more accurate portrait of this web, highlighting tensions, connections, and the potential for creative partnerships. The ecomap can also be easily adapted to help understand relationships within an organization or community. (See Appendix B for sample ecomap.)

Complicating factors when considering a family-focused approach

Returning individuals and their families frequently struggle with a mix of demanding challenges—including substance abuse, child support and other child care issues, literacy, gang relationships, employment, HIV/AIDS and other health and mental health issues. Adult and juvenile justice populations often have specific challenges particular to their group. For example, women are more likely than men to have co-occurring mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders, and many women under justice supervision also are looking to reconnect with their children.³⁵ Seriously delinquent youth often struggle with specific problems related to school behavior, drug use, mental health and combinations of these factors.³⁶ Juveniles also frequently cope with issues involving gang affiliation,³⁷ changing familial relationships, transition to work,³⁸ and other developmental issues. For all returning individuals, these and other complications can be seen both within families themselves and within the structure of the various systems that poor families must navigate. These challenges and frequent inadequate or inefficient access to resources can strain family relationships.

As a result, some families do not want - or simply are unable - to help a loved one coming out of a correctional facility. "Families often have been victims of their loved ones' illnesses, suffering material loss and emotional and physical harm. Families of people with mental illness may despair that they cannot help."³⁹ Another complication may arise as a result of a family being simultaneously

³⁵ Many women lose custody of their children during incarceration. Some 60% say they want to parent their child after release. See "Addressing the Specific Needs of Women with Co-Occurring Disorders in the Criminal Justice System," National Gains Center, Delmar, NY http://www.gainsctr.com/pdfs/brochures/Address_Specific_Needs.pdf

³⁶ Huizinga, David, Loeber, Rolf, Terence, Thornberry P., and Lynn Cothorn, "Co-occurrence of Delinquency and Other Problem Behaviors", OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin, November 2000, p.1.

³⁷ Gang-related research indicates that juvenile gang problems affect communities of all sizes and in all regional of the United States. In addition, gang members account for a greater number of more serious crimes. OJJDP Research: "Making a Difference for Juveniles," Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Report, August 1999, p. 11.

³⁸ See "Employment and Training for Court-Involved Youth", Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Report, November 2000.

³⁹ Shapiro, C. and M. Schwartz. 2001, 5(3), 52-61.

involved with and perhaps overwhelmed by, a number of government and community based agencies, each focused on an individual member of the family rather than their interconnectedness. For example, a parole officer cares about the parolee, child welfare worker about the children, public housing officials about the leaseholder; each agency may place competing demands on the family as a system. In addition, most funds and research are allocated based on the individual as the unit of analysis, not the family as its own unit of analysis. Changing this approach will enable families and government to function more efficiently.

We have learned that strained communities and families suffer from a range of cyclical social problems including increased criminal justice involvement, heightened health risks for residents, higher divorce rates and other negative social cycles that are difficult to break once initiated.⁴⁰ For example, La Bodega sees many cases where generations of family members have dropped out of school, experienced chronic unemployment, and suffer from substance abuse and other health issues. Most social service practitioners are cognizant of, but unequipped to address, multigenerational problems such as addiction and mental illness.

Recent research using a sample of genograms from La Bodega participants found that more than 82% percent of the families have multiple members with a history of addiction, over 70% have at least two family members with a history of criminal justice involvement, and in almost half of all families (48%), someone has HIV/AIDS.⁴¹ This sample substantiates what most of us know anecdotally.

Despite the strengths that exist within families, addiction, mental illness, and other health factors can overwhelm individuals struggling to succeed within the confines of a balanced approach for family, community and returning prisoners.⁴² Many of these families nationally, including in New Jersey, who have a loved one returning home from incarceration struggle with these very same difficult health issues. For example, we know that about 16 percent of the individuals in New Jersey jails

⁴⁰ Minuchin, Colapinto, and Minuchin, 1998.

⁴¹ Barreras, R and Drucker, E. 2003. "Intergenerational Prevalence of Substance Use, Criminal Justice involvement, and HIV/AIDS in Families of Ex-Offenders in the Lower East Side of New York City." Study of the Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine funded by the Jeht Foundation.

⁴² Minuchin, Colapinto, and Minuchin, 1998, 6.

were reported to have a mental illness.⁴³ In an average year, approximately six hundred special needs individuals are released from New Jersey prisons to come home.⁴⁴ And, as the research suggests, released individuals often come home to families suffering from some of the same health problems.⁴⁵

Families often are subject to additional difficulties upon a loved ones' return from incarceration. Supervision officers often conduct curfew checks or go through precious family possessions, interrupting private and family times. Individuals may feel ashamed or embarrassed to be under community supervision in front of their children, mother, or grandparent, perhaps tipping the power balance within the family. Barriers to housing and employment for a returning prisoner may create a housing or financial crisis for other family members. For example, as of 1999, the Camden Housing Authority operated eleven public housing developments.⁴⁶ How many residents in these developments have a loved one who will come home from prison this year? These family-related stressors may not be on the radar screen for supervision agents as they engage supervisees. As New Jersey considers the integration of family-focused approaches to reentry, it is critical to be mindful of how to address these potential complications.

The landscape of reentry in New Jersey

The reentry challenges highlighted make reintegration both difficult and timely for New Jersey's community supervision and other agencies sharing the reentry challenges as well as for many other communities across the country, particularly those areas experiencing a high concentration of returning people. Releases from New Jersey State prisons grew from 3,563 in 1977 to 16,032 in 2001. And while new court commitments make up the majority of prison admissions, since the mid-1980s, the number of new admissions based on parole violations has grown. Parole violator admissions grew nearly seven-fold between 1977 and 1998, with the most dramatic growth occurring in the 1990s when the number of parole violators tripled—from 2,185 in 1990 to 6,822 in 1998.

⁴³ N. Wolff. 2003. Investing in Health and Justice Outcomes: An Investment Strategy for Offenders with mental Health Problems in New Jersey. *Center for Mental Health Services and Criminal Justice Research*. Prepared for the "New Jersey Institute for Social Justice Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Reentry Roundtable" New Jersey: .p. 5.

⁴⁴ N. Wolff. 2003. p. 10.

⁴⁵ Barreras, R and Drucker, E. 2003. "Intergenerational Prevalence of Substance Use, Criminal Justice involvement, and HIV/AIDS in Families of Ex-Offenders in the Lower East Side of New York City." Study of the Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine funded by the Jeht Foundation.

⁴⁶ Guide to Affordable Housing in New Jersey. 1999. Trenton: *New Jersey Department of Community Affairs*.

However, although the majority of prisoners are released to a period of parole supervision, an increasing number are being released without parole.⁴⁷

The reentry challenges confronting the juvenile justice and related systems—and the communities and families to which the young people return—are also complex. Each year, some 1,600 adolescents who have been adjudicated delinquent return home from a court-ordered, out-of-home placement in either a secure or residential facility operated by New Jersey's Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC). And although all adolescents released from JJC facilities are released to some form of juvenile justice supervision and support, the majority will be re-arrested and re-convicted for new crimes committed after release, and subsequently committed to a new term in a JJC facility or an adult prison.⁴⁸ In 2002 alone, 12,732 juveniles between the ages 10 and 20, most between 14 and 17, were admitted to juvenile detention facilities and detained an average of 27 days, with some staying substantially longer and some returning to secure detention more than once. Most of the young detainees were male; about 15% were female. Approximately 62% of the admissions were African American and about 15% Hispanic.⁴⁹ Ninety-four percent of those adolescents committed to the JJC in 2002 had one or more prior adjudication (the average was five), with approximately 21% adjudicated for a drug offense. In that same year, the most frequent reason for commitment among all youth committed to JJC was a violation of parole (i.e., violations of supervision, not of criminal statute).⁵⁰

While there has been an increase in the number of juveniles committed to the custody of the JJC by a family court judge and upon release supervised by the JJC's Division of Parole and Transitional Services, there are also a number of youth placed in JJC residential programs as a condition of

⁴⁷ In 1990, 81% of released inmates were subject to parole supervision, and 13% released without parole. In comparison, in 2001, 60% of returning offenders were on parole, with 33% not under parole supervision. (The remaining percent was released to programs other than parole.) Waul, Michelle and Travis, Jeremy. 2002. "A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in New Jersey." New Jersey Institute of Social Justice Report, Prepared for New Jersey Reentry Roundtable, p. 7 and Figure 8, p. 15. .

⁴⁸ An increasing number of juveniles have their release date controlled by the Parole Board, and upon release are under the jurisdiction of the JJC's Division of Parole and Transitional Services. Stout, Bruce, D. 2003. "Community Re-Entry of Adolescents from New Jersey's Juvenile Justice System": Prepared for the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and the New Jersey Public Policy Research Institute's Re-Entry Roundtable.

⁴⁹ Giles, David R. 2003. « School Related Problems Confronting New Jersey Youth Returning to Local Communities and Schools from Juvenile Detention Facilities and Juvenile Justice Commission Programs, » .p. 2. Prepared for the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and the New Jersey Public Policy Research Institute's Re-Entry Roundtable, Juvenile Reentry Session.

⁵⁰ Stout, Bruce D. 2003. p. 4-5.

probation. When released, probationers return to their home counties (again, in concentrated numbers primarily to a few counties, including Essex and Camden) under the supervision of the probation department (in the family court area where originally sentenced). Although the percentage of probationers in JJC residential facilities has steadily declined since 1999, an ongoing challenge is achieving a smooth transition for those youth transferred from the executive branch's JJC to the judicial branch's probation department jurisdiction, particularly ensuring continuity in case management and treatment.⁵¹

The extraordinary challenges facing returning individuals are also exacerbated by generational poverty and familial involvement in the criminal justice system. In addition, there is sometimes inadequate, but more often a lack of, systematic coordination of resources—including those available within the family as well as within government and community entities.

Changing the way in which these resources are tapped holds the promise of improving reentry outcomes, as we have seen at La Bodega de la Familia. Closer analysis of the special issues confronting target populations and the resources available to address those challenges must be undertaken as an interagency and community effort. For example, for juveniles released from JJC facilities, reentry community supervision and partnering agencies will be required to more closely consider how to effectively manage challenges identified as major issues affecting reentry: an increasing prevalence of youth with psychiatric disorders, significant family and community risk factors, and the interrelationship between the JJC and the Department of Youth and Family Services (DYFS).⁵² The analysis must include an assessment of the full range of family and community resources that lend themselves to addressing those challenges.

A Strategic Plan for New Jersey: A two-pronged approach for implementing a broad-based family-support model of reentry

New Jersey has the energy, resources and insight to strategically implement a family-focused tool on a statewide and local level. At first, the process of forming lasting, effective partnerships with

⁵¹ In 2002, 1,262 adolescents were in the custody of the JJC under commitment status, a 16% increase over 2001. In 2002, there were 414 probationers in JJC residential programs compared to 593 in 1999, a 30% decrease. In 2000, however, 60% of adolescents in JJC facilities were probationers and 40% were committed by a family court judge to JJC custody under commitment status; by the end of 2003, those percentages are projected to be reversed. Stout, Bruce D. 2003. p. 3-9.

⁵² Stout, Bruce D. 2003. p. 7, 11-12.

families who have a loved one involved in the criminal justice system may seem relevant only on a micro level, with each family. However, merely training local parole and probation officers and other community-based service providers in a family-support model will not yield long-term, pervasive change. For that, it is critical to have a systematic statewide process of identifying and engaging the leadership within the criminal justice system as well as within social service delivery system. Family Justice's two-pronged approach will generate the political momentum that changes policy across New Jersey and guides the implementation of community program.

Prong One—Creating a statewide mechanism

The experience of Family Justice offers several tools that have been effective in building a foundation. To begin, it is critical for New Jersey to create a mechanism for developing a comprehensive reentry strategy, supported by staff or consultants that will provide an anchor and a compass for the reentry initiative. Developing a plan may call for forming a new advisory board, or perhaps tapping a group that already exists. This process should draw in high-level policy makers representing the governor's office, police, the judiciary, parole, probation, the Juvenile Justice Commission, defender associations, prosecutors, public housing, statewide service organizations, and other leaders and opinion makers.

Developing a statewide mechanism for tapping resources of the criminal justice and related reentry support systems serves two purposes: overseeing the collection of quantitative and qualitative data about patterns of reentry and related information that incorporate the family, and providing a sense of investment that will foster collaboration and a commitment to family-focused work on all levels—direct-service, supervision, and top management—in order to communicate a clear and consistent message.

Working on a state level will provide ongoing support and insight, individually and as a group, for infusing a family-support model within the statewide reentry system. It is important that this planning process examine the data and analyses prepared for the recent reentry roundtable held in New Jersey to build on issues already identified, potential barriers to this process, and opportunities for integration of these reentry efforts. An ecomap similar to that used with families will visually reflect these findings by mapping all involved agencies. The organizational culture and capacity of New Jersey's reentry and community supervision systems, with an emphasis on experience, skills,

and attitudes related to working with families will be examined. In addition to conducting interviews with staff and management, staff will assess and provide feedback on existing intake forms, policies and procedures, contracts and MOUs, and communication methods and styles, among others.

Based on the findings of this cultural and practical assessment, staff or consultants are then able to facilitate the crafting of a strategy for grounding the state's reentry system in a strength-based family-support model. New Jersey would benefit from adopting a pre-release assessment form that will help create a bridge for adult or youth returning home. Statewide trainings also can use this material to work with managerial and line staff to begin to incorporate on a broader, statewide level, a family focused element into the very practices of parole and probation for adults and youth returning from confinement. Alongside statewide training and curriculum development, those engaged on the state level will also help to design a strategy for developing and evaluating pilots of the family-support model in two target communities. (See below.) Ultimately, these pilots will yield templates for further replication in New Jersey along with a pool of practitioners who can participate in the training process for future applications.

Prong Two--Customizing and piloting a local model

A key step, complementary to that of the statewide initiative, includes intense and focused work on a local level. Because the number of people under community justice supervision returning is not distributed equally among communities across New Jersey, it is critical to target efforts where the volume and impact is highest. Newark and Camden are among the major urban areas in New Jersey that are heavy consumers of criminal justice resources both for adults and youth, although by no means the only areas greatly affected by the criminal justice activity and a paucity of collaboration amongst relevant community-based organizations and government agencies.

A number of New Jersey communities are profoundly affected by criminal justice system involvement and an infusion of returning prisoners. Eric Cadora, who has worked on reentry issues for a number of years, has developed maps that provide a telling visual picture of the saturation of the criminal justice system by city block. In Newark, for example, the neighborhood maps reveal the highest concentration of prisoner commitments in the West, Central and South Wards.⁵³ (See

⁵³ Prisoners per 1,000 Residents by Block-Group: Newark, New Jersey. E. Cadora, Production Director.

Appendix C.) Many other neighborhoods also bear the brunt of high concentrations of returning prisoners and are challenged to provide community based criminal justice supervision interventions.

On the surface, one is immediately struck by the significant weight this criminal justice and government infusion places on communities. However, rich community-based resources also pepper these communities, both formal and informal. Houses of worship, drug treatment, job training, health, educational, and many other services that can be tapped already exist within some of these neighborhoods.

Finding the footholds in the community is essential to developing a family and strength based support system. The first step is to identify the right organization, one with the capacity to integrate a family focused methodology into its existing work. Clearly, the ethos must be evident by the organization's staff, and a mechanism, such as a local community advisory board, must be established to support the innovation and partnerships.

In order to find the right match, it will be helpful to consider the following questions:

- Which community-based organization is best situated to receive training and technical assistance in the Bodega Model in order to spearhead the family-support model in that community?
- How can families be engaged before their loved ones are released from prison? What resources are available to support that?
- What are the key elements of the Bodega Model that must be incorporated? What elements must change?
- How is current common practice among service providers different from the Bodega Model? How is it similar?
- What should a partnership between parole, local service providers, families, and other community partners look like in each community?
- Where are the key points in the reentry process that should be targeted for family-support-model interventions?

- How can the voices of families be heard and integrated into the planning process for each community, given the shame and stigma that is so often experienced in connection with having a loved one involved in the criminal justice system?

Once the target neighborhood(s) and local community based organizations have been identified, a community advisory board must be established. As mentioned earlier, this group mirrors a statewide mechanism and encompasses multiple disciplines involved in the issues and services that support families and their loved one as they return from prison. On the local level, this step is critical to generate the commitment and buy-in of stakeholders, as well as facilitating access to resources, process and outcome data, and oversight. The following are some examples of potential advisory board members: local representatives of police, probation, and parole, treatment providers, child welfare agencies, resident councils and block associations, faith-based institutions, public housing developments, health providers (mental and medical), educational facilities, community leaders, businesses, politicians, legislators. Each pilot site selected by New Jersey must have a corresponding community advisory board.

Ideally, state level public officials will serve on the community advisory board. Together, these two groups model the collaborative process and provide feedback loops to incorporate new learning on different levels as it is generated. The parallel nature of the community and state level groups also insures that a family-focused methodology is infused at different levels and provides for consistent policy and practice reform. Working with the community advisory board and the local community-based organizations ensures that the models implemented are appropriate for those particular communities, on the program and practice levels.

The community advisory board, with the assistance of a facilitator, should examine the nature of existing partnerships within the targeted neighborhood(s). Questions to be considered include: What is the role of community policing, justice supervision, and other enforcement agencies? What current linkages are already in place among parole, probation, and the police? Is community service part of community supervision programs? What community resources are typically tapped by returning individuals, and what additional ones need to be accessible? What is the nature and prevalence of crime in the target communities? And what is the culture and impact of gangs? At a programmatic level, the community advisory board will ensure that the models implemented are

appropriate for the neighborhood. Program appropriateness refers to the structure of the family-support case management program and its partnerships with community and government, while practice reflects the model implemented by the program in its direct-service work with participants. In each community, the family-support model implemented for reentry will include a highly integrated methodology for monitoring, documenting, and evaluating processes and outcomes.

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