

*FROM THE PENITENTIARY  
TO THE COMMUNITY*

# SAFE RETURN

## ISSUES IN ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG MEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

### ROUNDTABLE BRIEF

FROM DISCUSSIONS HELD ON  
THURSDAY, JULY 21, 2005

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

INSTITUTE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN  
THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
Institute on Domestic Violence  
In the African-American Community



# Introduction



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In exploring the intersection of prisoner re-entry and domestic violence, over the last two years, the Safe Return Initiative (SRI) has collaborated with three sites across the country which includes: Nashville, Tennessee; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Portland, Oregon. Each program focuses on specific traditional activities associated with incarcerated men, or men on parole. What is unique about these sites is their effort to include domestic violence intervention as a critical element in their strategy to increase ex-offenders success as they reintegrate back into the community from prison.

These sites have been willing to serve as examples to other communities and institutions about the importance of and methods used to address domestic violence in programming as well as in family and community collaborations. Their efforts and showcasing of specific methods to address this issue have increased SRI's standing and credibility in criminal justice, parole, re-entry, social services and domestic violence circles. They have been willing to share their knowledge through presentations and meetings. Yet, their work and success is not widely documented.

In this roundtable brief we will summarize these sites' descriptions of their work, what they perceive as challenges and what they believe can enhance their efforts. One theme that emerged from our roundtable discussions was that re-entry work has to be holistic. That is, domestic violence is an important issue to address, however it is not the only issue to be addressed with this population. Still, in doing programming with this population, it is imperative that institutions and organizations develop a comprehensive plan to address domestic violence.

Through SRI's efforts across the country, it is abundantly clear that domestic violence and relationship conflict is a serious challenge among men in prison and on parole. Minneapolis and Portland teach us that men and their female partners need ongoing community support when faced with challenges of re-entry and domestic violence. In addition, our collaborative partner in Nashville, TN, created their domestic violence program because they observed that large numbers of men were violating probation/parole and returning to jail/prison due to intimate partner violence. This report highlights the holistic work—including domestic violence intervention—of three sites in response to issues presented by men in prison and on parole.

## *Setting the Stage for Community Presentations*

Individuals that represented the criminal justice systems from the State of Minnesota; Davidson County (Nashville), Tennessee; and Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon convened to share their current and planned programming to address the intersection of domestic violence and re-entry. Participants represented an array of disciplines within the criminal justice system, including prison administration, parole, domestic violence programs, and re-entry professionals. Community-based social services were also represented and included individuals from battered women's shelters, faith-based programs, and non-profit organizations. Representatives from the state of Texas and Michigan were also present as observers.

Following introductions from participants, Dr. Oliver J. Williams, director of the Safe Return Initiative, gave the overarching goals of the event: 1) To hear what three specific communities and systems are doing to address the intersection of domestic violence and re-entry; 2) To provide networking opportunities; and 3) To build stronger connections to facilitate carrying out the work.

## Community Presentations

The following paragraphs summarize the presentations rendered from each of the three communities.

### **NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

#### **SAVE—SHERIFF'S ANTI-VIOLENCE EFFORT**

**Chief presenter: Mr. Paul Mulloy,  
SAVE Director**

Mr. Mulloy started his presentation by providing a brief history of the conception and implementation of the (Sheriff's Anti-Violence Effort) SAVE program. The goal and mission of SAVE is to help offenders become Aware, Accountable, and Responsible for their behavior, attitudes and how they can affect change in their lives. Change is defined as the reduction of criminal and violent behaviors toward others, particularly their intimate partner.

#### **HISTORY AND OVERVIEW**

In 1990, the correctional system for Davidson County, Tennessee initiated a state-licensed drug treatment program. After a few years of implementation, staff noticed a trend among graduates of the program who had been released from prison. Several of these former inmates were being placed back into the prison system. A review of these returning inmates' rap sheets revealed that most were not being arrested for substance abuse, but were being charged with harassment, stalking, kidnapping, and similar crimes. As a response to this trend, prison officials initiated the SAVE program. The first

participants in the program were two inmates with substance abuse related convictions. The criminal records of these individuals also indicated a history of domestic violence. Throughout the implementation of the program, prison officials have garnered input from inmates, as well as the counsel of victims' advocates programs to develop and revise the SAVE curriculum. The community has been very receptive and is a vital contributor to the program's success.

#### **THE FACILITY**

The program operates from a medium security jail, which has been redesigned to accommodate the program. The facility is now divided into six PODs. A POD is a dormitory unit within the correctional facility where the inmates are housed. Some facilities use other terms such as Cell Units, Cell Block, etc. Among the POD's are: orientation (100 beds), domestic violence (100 beds), substance abuse (100 beds), and aftercare. Inmates can volunteer for a POD or they can be ordered to a specific POD. Individual assignments to PODs are determined during the intake process. Regardless of an inmates assigned POD, inmates receive at least some level of treatment in each area through the core curriculum. As a result, inmates with co-occurring issues receive adequate treatment and intervention. Although the facility houses men and women, programming is conducted separately. Inmates from higher security facilities are also referred to and participate in the program.





*The hallmark of the program is its partnerships with and reliance on community-based organizations to implement services on every level.*



### **ELIGIBILITY AND POINT OF ENTRY**

Inmates must have at least 80 days left on their sentence to be eligible for the program. The portals of entry to the program include referrals from judges, district attorneys, attorneys, probation and parole officers, correctional staff, past program graduates, judicial line staff, family members, and police officers. Mr. Mulloy pointed out that his facility does not house sex offenders on a long-term basis.

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The SAVE program is eight weeks and is conducted five days per-week. The core curriculum includes three-hour group sessions and one-hour lectures each day. The syllabus also includes substance abuse treatment group sessions, two evening per-week, as well as victim guest speakers and recreation. Inmates are also given individual assignments that invite and encourage them to take responsibility for their actions. Program staff have adapted curricula from existing programs that focus on domestic violence and other pertinent issues to create the SAVE curriculum. The curriculum is fluid and SAVE staff continuously expands content to address emerging issues. Mr. Mulloy heavily emphasized the importance of adapting the curriculum to the prison context and unique needs of the prison population. The hallmark of the program is its partnerships

with and reliance on community-based organizations to implement services on every level. Community organizations are a major partner in providing prison-based services through the SAVE program. This arrangement eases the re-entry process by allowing the inmates to establish relationships with community based providers who can assist them upon re-entry. Inmates learn what community resources are available to them well before their release. Participants also develop relationships with individuals who can connect them to valuable services upon reentry. Additional pro-programming includes the following:

- **Education** – The facility has a computer lab that includes a self-directed GED program that holds an 87 percent first-try success rate. Inmates who are unsuccessful on their first attempt have the opportunity to complete the program until they are successful. In fact, inmates who are released prior to successful completion of the program will voluntarily go back to the jail for the purpose of completing the GED program.
- **Mentoring/Sponsorship** – Mentoring activities are multi-level and community-based. One such program, referred to as Men Mentoring Men, enlists African-American men from the community to mentor their counterparts within the prison system.
- **Past Participants Alumni Association** – Eight former program participants who have been out for a minimum of five years are assigned to work with newly released ex-offenders. These former inmates meet and develop relationships with current inmates. These interactions often continue post-release.
- **Job Readiness (Project Return)** – This community-based program works with prisoners to help them secure employment at a pay rate that will enable them to handle their financial obligations.

- **Culinary Classes (SERVSAFE Certification)** – This program awards participants with a certification, upon successful completion, that is recognized by regulatory agencies within the food service industry. The certification is a standard of the food service industry and is a marketable credential for ex-offenders.

- **DDS8 Classes** – Inmates often lose their driver's license as a collateral consequence of their conviction. Understanding that the possession of a driver's license is a critical asset to re-entry, a Nashville judge along with the county's safety department developed a program to address this issue. Through successful participation in the program, inmates may have their fees suspended or cut in half pursuant to obtaining a drivers' license. The court will also develop a payment plan to address money owed due to traffic adjudication.

- **Mental Health Evaluation and Education** – Mental health is one of the most prevalent issues within Nashville's system. Inmates are evaluated upon entry into the system and are given psychotropic medications as deemed necessary. Upon their release, the mental health staff within the facility provides former inmates with a three day supply of medication. They are also assigned a case manager prior to their release. Case managers help released individuals connect to mental health co-ops until they are adequately insured. This minimizes the gap that often exists in securing prescriptions upon release.

- **Parenting Skills (Child Support, Long Distance Dads)** – This program addresses the gap in support that often causes problems for custodial parents when their co-parent is incarcerated. Program staff emphasize that inmates are responsible for caring financially for their children, although child support payments can be

legally suspended while a non-custodial parent is incarcerated. To the knowledge of group participants, there is no current formal system that addresses this gap effectively. One participant who runs a shelter program for battered women indicated that her program turns to churches and other community-based organizations to help women in such circumstances.

- **PAWS (Animal Control)** – This program matches inmates in the domestic violence unit with an abused animal from the animal control shelter that is located near to the jail. Inmates visit the animal control shelter once each week. This activity has had a huge impact because the inmates have to deal with the issue of developing a relationship with animals who do not trust humans.

- **Creative Writing (Daily Journaling)** – Inmates often write things concerning their feelings that they may share in a group setting.

- **Community Health Fair (42 Agencies) /Housing Fair**

- These events occur bi-monthly.

- **Sponsorship/Weekend Retreats (AA)**

- **HIV/AIDS/Heath Care Education**



*One participant turns to churches and other community-based organizations to help women in such circumstances.*

## RE-ENTRY PLANNING

The re-entry program operates under the premise that an offender's re-entry planning should start from the day s/he is booked. In keeping with this principle, re-entry planning commences in the orientation POD—the initial POD in which offenders are housed upon entry to the jail. Prison staff within the orientation POD conducts an assessment of incoming inmates and develop their re-entry program. It is during this phase that the determination is made concerning which POD the offender will enter next.

Mr. Mulloy outlined the elements and phases of re-entry planning. They include:

- **Continuing Care Planning** – Planning for an inmate's return to the community begins at orientation.
- **In-House/Outside the House Aftercare PODS** - anyone who finishes the program before their sentence is over is moved to the aftercare unit.
- **Mental Health Care management**
- **ServSafe Certification** - This is a national certification in the food service industry. All Chefs are required to have their certification in ServeSafe. In Tennessee and elsewhere the ServeSafe certification is required of most employees in the food service industry. It is an extremely effective credential to have when looking for employment. The Health Department in Tennessee really covets the certification. It covers all food industry requirements such as sanitation, food preparation, serving, temperatures of food and health concerns. Preparation for the certification exam takes at least 8 weeks. The test takes 8 hours to complete
- **Work Release** (\$10 per day max. \$50 per week) - Child support and court costs are taken out of the work release money)
- **Job Interviewing/Job Placement**
- **Job Fair (Bi-Monthly)**
- **Young Men's Group (18-25)**. Other 18-25 year olds run this group; the focus is placed on redirecting their skill and energy in a positive direction.
- **Family Contact and Community Referrals for families and offenders** – To begin a dialogue with the place to hear the victim will return.
- **Sponsorship (Pickup upon release)** –
- **Transportation Program (RTA/MTA and Taxi)** – Churches and faith-based organizations arrange for individuals to be transported home on their released day through an agreement with a local taxi service or by bus tokens. Transportation home can be costly because the facility is not located near a residential area.
- **Transitional Housing (Pick Up at Release)** –
- **HIV/AIDS Placement** – This is done as privately as possible.
- **Campus for Human Development**
- **Project Return (Community Contact)**
- **Release Packet** - Release packets provide the ex-offender with all of the information they need to make the appropriate community contacts.
- **Develop Relationship with (State /County)** - Probation and Parole – Ex-offenders are assigned dedicated domestic violence parole or probation officers prior to release. Officers are able to establish relationships with their supervisee pre-release.

*Re-entry planning commences in the orientation POD—the initial POD in which offenders are housed upon entry to the jail.*



Face-to-Face interviews are conducted with the offender while incarcerated. During these interviews the parole/probation officer discusses pre-release requirements, future phone contact, obligations to court and other responsibilities associated with reentry.

## **MONITORING SUCCESS**

Correctional officers are the best source of information concerning what is going on with inmates. Correctional officers are on a 28-day cycle within an individual unit. This is enough time for them to get to know the prisoners they supervise. Case managers are also a good source of information concerning prisoners' attitude and progress.

## **SYSTEMIC BARRIERS**

- **Shift in political view** – Mr. Mulloy noted that the current Sheriff is very supportive of the program. However, there is always the reality, as with any system, that as administrations change the political view may shift and the program may not be a priority of the new administration. According to Mr. Mulloy, the program must be designed so that it is sustainable regardless of who is in charge.

Mr. Mulloy asserted that the key lies in finding the right mid and ground-level people to sustain the program. Another critical aspect to sustaining a program is to involve the community and gain their support. This moves the program from a jail/prison project to a community project. The community can be instrumental in various efforts, such as letter-writing campaigns that can result in programs being sustained and new services being offered.



- **Collateral sanctions** – Often, prisoners are not informed of all the ramifications of their sentencing when they are being charged. These social and civil restrictions that are often attached to a conviction can include a loss of a drivers' license and the prohibition from obtaining certain professional licensures and certifications. (See article entitled Understanding Collateral Sanctions and Barriers to Re-Entry at [www.corrections.com/news/feature/index.aspx](http://www.corrections.com/news/feature/index.aspx))

- **Staffs not being vested in program** – Some staff are not interested in the goals and objectives of the projects.

The following possible reasons are listed:

- Some staff face the same or similar issues that the inmates are confronted with. Thus, they are challenged to look at themselves in a way that is uncomfortable.

- Some officers are resistant to becoming involved in programmatic activities and embracing change: instead favoring the administrative aspects of their job, such as conducting counts. This often occurs because leadership has not involved the officers and other staff in planning and

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*Cross training of correctional staff is a tool to bring program staff on board.*

implementing the program. Those who work directly with prisoners often have the best ideas to make the program successful. Corrections officers, program manager, and case managers, must monitor and be aware of what is going on within the facility. This involves physically walking around the facility. Also, cross training of correctional staff is a tool to bring program staff on board. Furthermore, it is important to develop relationships with staff by asking about their personal challenges and pointing them to the resources that are being used within the prison program.

– **Misconceptions from CBOs** – People from community-based organizations who provide services to inmates should also visit the facility to become more familiar with the inmate’s surroundings and to dispel their false perceptions of a prison/jail environment.

• **Funding** – This will always be an issue.

It should be noted that the offenders are not listed as a barrier. According to Mr. Mulloy, inmates are generally receptive to intervention programming because they want to get out and stay out. He also mentioned that the Sheriff is very supportive of the program and its objectives.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

Screening for protection orders during visitation – Mr. Mulloy indicated that screening for protection orders is based on the visitor rather than the inmate.

Nonetheless, inmates are held accountable for who comes to visit them. The inmate is aware of whom they are allowed to see and who they are not. If it is discovered that an inmate allowed an unauthorized visitor, he/she is immediately terminated from the program. Readmission into the program can only be

achieved by writing a formal letter requesting a second chance to complete the program.

## **EVALUATION**

Program staff examine several factors to determine the programs efficacy, including:

- **The percentage of inmates who complete the programs**
- **Recidivism**
  - How many people are being rearrested?
  - When an inmate re-enters the system, is it for the same offense?
  - How much time has lapsed between arrests? (For habitual offenders, are they staying out of trouble for progressively longer periods of time)
  - Are they following up on referrals? Did they take advantage of the community — based programs to which they were referred?

Mr. Mulloy also spoke of the intangible successes of the program that result when one ex-offender gets the message and passes it on to their children, friends, and others. This ripple effect is not quantifiable and the true impact may never be known.

## **MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

### **PROJECT SOAR**

**Primary Presenter:**  
**Dave Ellis**

### **Project Overview**

Dave Ellis spoke about Project SOAR (Safety Offender Accountability and Restoration), the state of Minnesota’s program associated with the federal re-entry grant initiative. The program has functioned for about three years. The official project term for this initiative is



June 2002 – June 2006; however, the project expects to run out of program funding by October 2005. The vision of the program is to establish a seamless reentry system for individuals returning from correctional placement that focuses on the community. That is, the program is community designed, community driven, and community implemented. Although funding was administered through the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, the funding originated from the U.S. Department of Labor with the expectation that inmates would acquire jobs upon their release. In addition, project administrators expanded the program's mandate to include domestic violence. As a result, the state of MN put a major emphasis on how to keep women and children safe and hold batterers accountable. Although funding is currently going to corrections, courts, shelters, and victims advocates programs, Mr. Ellis believes that it is imperative to develop effective efforts to stop batterers from battering. Without a concentrated effort to educate and reform batterers, their destructive behaviors will continue.

The current program employs former inmates who have successfully re-entered the community to work as community reentry coordinators. These coordinators interface with and assist inmates during the pre-release planning stage. The coordinators are effective in achieving program goals because as former inmates, the coordinators have credibility with the current inmates. Also, the coordinators take pride in their role because it gives them an opportunity to give back to the community as well as earn money. In fact, some coordinators have started their own nonprofit agencies to address re-entry issues.



## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In keeping with the vision of being community-driven, Project SOAR contracted with one community agency, which has been charged with administering the program. This includes sub-contracting with other community based agencies, particularly smaller organizations, such as faith-based organizations, that might have a greater impact because of their knowledge of and connection to the community.

Community involvement regarding this issue is challenging because the community is not well aware of the intersection between re-entry and domestic violence.

Different philosophies exist among community members. Some say perpetrators should be locked up and others say they need treatment. Some don't know. Project SOAR has tried to involve the community from the very beginning to understand communities concerns and viewpoints and to incorporate their knowledge into program development.

Mr. Ellis provided two primary reasons as to why Project SOAR is community driven:

*Project SOAR has tried to involve the community from the very beginning to understand communities concerns.*

*Establishing a relationship with a service provider while incarcerated increases the likelihood that the ex-offenders will access and utilize services upon release.*



- The workers in community-based organizations know more about dealing with societal issues, such as domestic violence, education, etc., and are better prepared to educate the inmates on what they will need when they are released.

- Engaging the community and community organizations in working with inmates before they are released creates a seamless system of service delivery and eliminates the “hands-off” approach used by providers while the individual is incarcerated. Ultimately, establishing a relationship with a service provider while incarcerated increases the likelihood that the ex-offenders will access and utilize services upon release.

### **TARGET POPULATION/ PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

The target population for the program is offenders re-entering to Hennepin County, which includes Minneapolis. According to statistics, most of the offenders currently in prison come from a concentrated area within the city of Minneapolis. The city of Minneapolis, is confronting other social issues such as high crime rates, poverty and low achieving public schools.

The program has 400 eligible participants. The control group consists of 175 offenders and the experimental group has 225 offenders. Group assignments were determined through random assignment. The program serves those who were “written off from the beginning.” The program does not include sex offenders, because of the statutory requirements concerning re-entry of sex offenders.

Mr. Ellis distinguished re-entry from transition by noting that transition occurs constantly in the correctional system (i.e., from the community to the police, from the police to jail, from jail to court, etc.). Reentry is more specific and should be planned from the very beginning. That is, we must think and plan for re-entry at sentencing not just when release is

imminent. The program has several components, such as vocational education, mentoring, HIV/AIDS, and job readiness.

### **PROJECT GOALS**

- **Long-term employment** – Because the project is supported by the US Department of Labor, there is an expectation that the inmates will acquire employment upon their release.

- **Stable residences** – The state does not establish halfway houses; the community must take the initiative to fill this gap.

- **Domestic Violence Education and Prevention** – Domestic violence was not a part of the original proposal, however attention to this issues was later identify as critical to facilitating improved re-entry outcomes

- **Substance abuse intervention**

- **Mental health services** – The department has a unit that is specifically dedicated to providing mental health services.

- **Community support** – The program has partnerships with several community-based organizations that provide services to reentering individuals and their families.

### **KEY PARTNERSHIPS**

The program has partnered with the Safe Return Initiative (SRI) to address the intersection of domestic violence and recidivism. Programming from this partnership operates in two of the system’s correctional facilities:

- Faribault (adults) 1100 beds

- Red Wing (juveniles & adults) 210 beds

Project SOAR also has a cadre of 200+ community- and faith-based agencies with which it can partner.

## STRUCTURE

- Project SOAR/SRI Steering Committee

- This committee developed community assessment workgroups that comprised community representatives, faith-based agencies and two correctional facilities. The committee polled victims' services, advocates, children services, batterer education counselors, treatment counselors, and other stakeholders to determine how to structure the program.

Feedback from the stakeholders listed above indicated the following:

- There was no existing curriculum designed for the most serious and violent offenders
- There was no assessment component.
- Although there were several community-based organizations, project staff did not know which of these organizations were sustainable and solvent.

## PROJECT CHALLENGES

Mr. Ellis cited collaboration as the biggest challenge, noting that collaboration is necessary on multiple levels: federal, state, county, and community (including community- and faith-based organizations). He also stated that although organizations are accustomed to engaging in the surface-level aspects of collaboration, such as networking and sharing some resources, they fail to advance to true collaboration because individuals are competing against each other for the same funding. Mr. Ellis defined collaboration as "working together to achieve a common goal that is impossible to reach without one another." According to Mr. Ellis, successful collaboration incorporates the following elements:

- **Environment** – There has to be an environment of trust. Collectively, the collaborative needs to be viewed as a leader that can educate the community about project goals. There is also the issue

of the political climate. Changes in government have a trickle-down effect. The collaborative will survive if it is community-based and provides good programming.

- **Membership**

- There must be mutual understanding, respect, and trust. You must be able to work things out within the group.
  - Cast the net wide to achieve an appropriate cross section of members.

Some organizations will come to the table and soon realize that should not be there and will leave. People may eventually come back when the time is right.

- Members also have to see what is in it for them.
  - Each member must be able to compromise.

- **Process/ Structure** –

- Everyone must share in and take ownership of the process through multiple levels of decision-making.
  - Develop clear roles, responsibilities, and policies.
  - The structure needs to be adaptable

- **Communication**

- Must be open and frequent
  - Can be formal and informal

- **Purpose & Goals**

- Must be concrete and attainable
  - Collaborative members must have a shared vision, as well as unique purposes

- **Resources**

- Skilled convener
  - Sufficient funding
  - Materials and curriculum to get the job done







*Mr. Ellis defined collaboration as “working together to achieve a common goal that is impossible to reach without one another.”*

- Documentation – Documentation is the only proof that the project is achieving its desired goals. It’s the trail that reveals how the project has progressed to its current state and also provides valuable information that can inform other programs.

### **CURRENT STATUS OF THE PROJECT**

The following paragraphs summarize project activities that have been completed to date.

- Conducted staff training at Faribault (October 2004) – Forty-eight staffers voluntarily attended this training. The training revealed that corrections had no history of training in domestic violence. The training also disclosed that some staff members within the institution were either perpetrators or victims of domestic violence. The team referred these individuals to appropriate services. Mr. Ellis distributed a handout that outlined the questions and answers that were given during the training. An important insight gleaned from the training was the importance of providing the community with the same knowledge and tools that the inmates are receiving. This will facilitate the community’s understanding of these tools to use when the former offenders employ them.

- Completed Steering Committee Meeting (November of 2004) – This meeting included 50 people to talk about the feedback from the training.

- SRI Roundtable (Portland December of 2004) – Participated in the roundtable discussion and observed their program.

- Developed a concept paper (February of 2005)

- Conducted focus group with community stakeholders (Spring 2005) –

The purpose of the focus groups was to determine the community’s perspective of what needs to be done.

### **PROJECTS IN PROCESS INCLUDE:**

- Completion of a collaborative grant – Although the project is focused on African American men, Project SOAR partnered with Metropolitan State University’s Community Violence Prevention Institute to run a parallel process that examines other ethnic and racial communities.

- Fall 2005 Roundtable discussion – A local roundtable with Metropolitan State University, IDVAAC, and the state Department of Corrections will occur in the Fall of 2005.

### **ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE**

The following suggestions were put forth concerning encouraging state or local authorities to prioritize domestic violence issues.

- Find one or two people to lead the charge. There are agencies that have the level of stature and ability to “get in the door” and have enough credibility to start the discussion

- Play to the different groups and individuals. People want to be considered as pioneers and have a desire to talk and do good work.

- Show them how they can save money.

### **ANTICIPATED RESULTS OF PROJECT SOAR**

Mr. Ellis closed his presentation by stating what he expected of prisoners who have gone through the program:

- They will not go back to prison because they have been connected to the resources that will facilitate their successful re-entry
- They will be law-abiding citizens
- They will become weight-bearing members of society.

## MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

### AFRICAN AMERICAN PROGRAM (AAP)

#### Chief Presenter: Shadman Afzal

Multnomah County has a culturally specific re-entry program that is focused on African-Americans. Portland, which is a part of Multnomah County, has the largest concentration of African Americans in the state. AAP was established in response to statistics revealing that African Americans in Multnomah County are not only incarcerated at a higher proportional rate, they also return to prison at a higher rate. The program deals with the general issues that most inmates will face upon reentry, such as housing and employment. The program also offers specific services that address issues that are specific to African Americans. The program's strength is in its continuation approach from prison to parole, as well as the knowledgeable and passionate staff that is assigned to the program. They now have three parole officers in the system, each with a caseload of 45 – 50 ex-offenders.

#### INTAKE PROCESS

Offenders must send a letter articulating why they would benefit from the program. This occurs 9 – 12 months prior to release. Staff assesses each individual applicant's motivation for the program through personal interviews, prison counselor feedback, and collateral information from people who have known the inmate, such as a former probation officer.

The program operates from a minimum custody facility in the Portland area. Participants must be eligible to enter a minimum custody facility or they must work with the Department of Corrections to secure an override. Some people who are released want to stay in the group, which is

permissible. When this is the case, they serve as mentors and provide the other inmates with real-life success stories.

#### THE CURRICULUM

The 52-week program uses an evidence based curriculum. The first two sessions are dedicated to providing an overview of the program, setting goals, discussing standards and expectations. Group norms are also established during these sessions. Starting with the third session, every other week is dedicated to supervision, which involves parole officers meeting with the inmates, developing relationships, and explaining step-by-step expectations. These sessions are conducted in anticipation of the inmate's release to the custody of the parole officer. This eases the inmate's fear of what to expect from the parole officer and reduces the possibility of the inmate misunderstanding his/her responsibilities after s/he is released. Parole officers meet with inmates individually and in a group setting.

*The program's strength is in its continuation approach from prison to parole, as well as the knowledgeable and passionate staff that is assigned to the program.*





*The African American program (AAP) works with area employers to find jobs for inmates upon their release. They provide training on how to get an interview, and how to “sell yourself” in a face-to-face meeting with a prospective employer.*

The balance of the program is as follows:

**Week 4 – Communication**, which addresses effective speaking and listening techniques, as well as problem-solving skills.

**Week 6 – Stress Management**, which helps the inmate understand the possible stressors they are likely to encounter upon release. Inmates are taught practical methods for alleviating and handling the stress.

**Week 8 – Anger Management**, which helps inmates identify what triggers anger and how to develop a plan to effectively deal with those triggers.

**Week 10 – Cognitive Awareness**

**Week 12 – Re-entry Plan**, which involves a variety of tasks, including determining where the offender will live after s/he is released. Because the re-entry process starts 9 – 12 months before the offender is released, there is ample time to find an alternative if family will not receive the offender. Currently, the inmate provides a release address. The parole officer visits the address to see if it is legitimate and if it is a suitable habitation (i.e., a substance abuse offender going back to a crack house)

**Week 14 – Family Systems**, which includes contacting the family of the

offender, developing a relationship with them, and working with the family and the offender to facilitate the reunification. They also talk about family documents, especially in “criminal families” in terms of setting boundaries.

**Week 16 – Domestic Violence**, The program borrows from IDVAAC’s 52-week curriculum. The women’s program focuses on survivor trauma and recovery and “what happens when your abuser is waiting for you when you get out.”

**Week 18 – Healthy relationships**

**Weeks, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, & 30 – Alcohol and Other Drugs** – These groups are run by the participants themselves, with prison staff in attendance.

**Weeks 32 & 34 – Grief and Loss**

**Week 36, 38, 40, & 42 – Health Issues**

**Week 44 – Life Skills and Employment** – The African American program works with area employers to find jobs for inmates upon their release. They provide training on how to get an interview, and how to “sell yourself” in a face-to-face meeting with a prospective employer.

**Week 46 – Historical Contributions of African Americans in the community.**

**Men’s Group** – The program conducts weekly process groups to provide continuity and accountability after inmates have been released. These meetings are open to the families and intimate partners of ex-offenders. This gives the ex-offenders a safe environment to address problems they may encounter on the outside. Currently, the men’s group has about 20 participants and the women’s group has 10 women. Program graduates are required to attend for the first 90 days unless the inmate is working, in school, or in treatment. People also bring information about employment, so the session also serves as a resource and networking forum. If issues of criminal behavior arise (i.e., an intimate partner of an ex-offenders mentions that the ex-offender assaulted them), the issues are dealt with legally.



## Operation Clean Slate

This program was conceived to assist people in Multnomah County who have had pending charges for quite some time. These charges, ranging from substance abuse to traffic violations, have created barriers for these individuals in several areas. A group of community advocates coordinated an event that involved having a court judge hear cases, rule on them, and sentence offenders to community service in lieu of stiffer sentencing. There was a cost of \$80 per charge, which, in some cases, was handled by donations from the community. Individuals whose driving privileges had been suspended were able to renew their licenses on the spot. Approximately 2,700 individuals registered for the event and; more than 3,000 persons attended. The event was a huge success.



## Leisure Activities

The program has established relationships with the African American health coalition in Portland to teach yoga, weightlifting, aerobics, and other healthy activities. Ex-offenders receive a personal trainer and access to area health clubs at no cost.

## Batterers' Intervention

Program staff found that prior batterers' intervention, which focused on anger management, actually empowered the batterer with more knowledge to control the victim. Batterers' intervention programming now focuses on issues of power and control. They have had difficulty finding a program that is culturally specific.

## Project Partner Presentations:

### **Chiquita Rollins, Domestic Violence Coordinator for the Department of County Human Services for Multnomah County's**

Ms. Rollins provided an overview of countywide domestic violence programming and how her office assists the corrections system. The department provides 2- hour trainings once per month that are open to community and government agencies. Topics discussed include many intersecting issues such as child custody. In Multnomah County, the district attorney has a domestic violence unit, as does the probation unit. There is also a domestic violence court within the local judicial system. The department is continually looking at how culturally specific domestic violence programming can be interjected into all programs.

### **Jeremiah Stromberg of Multnomah County's Department of Community Justice's domestic violence unit**

Mr. Stromberg gave an overview of his division. This unit is separate and distinct from the African American Program. Mr. Stromberg indicated that the unit is looking to find ways to incorporate culturally specific elements into its programming. Persons who are incarcerated for domestic violence offenses are required to attend batterers' intervention. The program has a 35 percent completion rate. The unit has two parole officers assigned to it.

*The department provides 2- hour trainings once per month that are open to community and government agencies. Topics discussed include many intersecting issues such as child custody.*

# Common Themes

Although each community represented had distinctions within its programming and facilities, there were four overarching themes that were common to all programs.

## **Re-entry planning begins at sentencing-**

Participants spoke of the importance of not waiting until an inmate is about to be released to plan for his/her re-entry. From the time an offender is sentenced, corrections staff should provide programming for inmates with an eye toward preparing them for re-entry.

## **Programming should focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment-**

Perpetrators should be held accountable for what they have done; yet, the punitive style of corrections that has been traditionally employed has not been effective. Prisons and jails should be about the job of corrections and rehabilitation, particularly when considering the reality that most prisoners are not, “lifers,” but will, at some point re-enter the community. Offenders, while they are incarcerated, need to be given the tools they will need to be successful and productive citizens when they re-enter the community.

## **The community must be involved in the re-entry process-**

Participants agreed that involving the community in re-entry programming is paramount to program success. Community-based organizations should be involved in the re-entry process well before inmates are released. Given their knowledge and expertise in specific areas, such as housing, employment, etc., these organizations are better equipped than prison staff to assist inmates. Each of the programs represented at the roundtable relies, to varying degrees, on services from the community.

## **Services must be holistic-**

In order to be effective, programs must seek to address the multifaceted needs of inmates. Effective programming is not limited to addressing surface issues, but should seek to address deeper concerns that are causing these surface issues to manifest. Effective programming deals with the mental, physical, and emotional aspects of the inmate.



# Fact Sheet on Intimate Partner Violence in the African American Community

## STATISTICS

In a nationally representative survey, 29% of African American women and 12% of African American men report at least one instance of violence from an intimate partner.<sup>1</sup>

African Americans account for 1/3 of the intimate partner homicides in this country<sup>2</sup> and have an intimate partner homicide rate four times that of whites.<sup>3</sup>

Black women comprise 8% of the U.S. population but account for 20% of the intimate partner homicide victims.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1976-1999, intimate partner deaths among African Americans decreased by 67%.<sup>2</sup> Intimate partner deaths have decreased most dramatically among black men: from 1976-1984, black men were more likely than black women to be a victim of domestic homicide; by 1996, black women were 1.6 times more likely to be murdered by their mates.<sup>2</sup>

## RISK FACTORS

As with other groups, intimate partner violence among African Americans is related to economic factors. Intimate partner violence among blacks occur more frequently among couples that have low income, those in which the male partner is underemployed or unemployed,<sup>4</sup> particularly when he is not seeking work,<sup>5</sup> and among couples residing in very poor neighborhoods, regardless of the couple's income.<sup>6</sup>

When income and neighborhood characteristics are controlled for, racial differences in IPV are greatly reduced.<sup>4,6</sup>

Alcohol problems (drinking, binge drinking, dependency) are more frequently related to intimate partner violence for African Americans than for whites or Hispanics.<sup>7</sup>

As with other abusive men, African American men who batter are higher in jealousy and the need for power and control in the relationship.<sup>5</sup>

Among African American women killed by their partner, the lethal violence was more likely to occur if there had been incidents in which the partner had used or threatened to use a weapon on her and/or the partner has tried to choke or strangle her.<sup>5</sup>

Among African American women killed by their partner, almost half were killed while in the process of leaving the relationship, highlighting the need to take extra precautions at this time.<sup>5</sup>

Among African American women who killed their partner, almost 80% had a history of abuse.<sup>5</sup>

As with other women, domestic violence is more likely to end in the serious injury or death of black women when there is a history of her partner having used or threatened to use a gun or knife or the partner has tried to choke or strangle her.<sup>5</sup>

## IMPACT OF ABUSE

Black women who are battered have more physical ailments,<sup>8</sup> mental health issues,<sup>4</sup> are less likely to practice safe sex,<sup>9</sup> and are more likely to abuse substances during pregnancy<sup>10</sup> than black women without a history of abuse.

Battered women are at greater risk for attempting suicide<sup>11</sup> particularly if they were physically abused as a child, for being depressed<sup>12</sup> and to suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).<sup>13</sup>



## DYNAMICS OF ABUSE

Domestic violence re-occurs. In a large sample of battered black women, in about half of the cases in which abuse happened, the violence did not happen again; however, over 1/3 of women reporting abuse had at least one other incident of severe domestic violence in the same year, and one in six experienced another less severe act of domestic violence.<sup>5</sup>

Women attempt to leave abusive relationships. Seventy to eighty percent of abused black women left or attempted to leave the relationship.<sup>5</sup>

Women do better in abusive relationships when they have the support of friends and family. Battered black women who reported that they could rely on others for emotional and practical support were less likely to be re-abused,<sup>14</sup> showed less psychological distress,<sup>15</sup> and were less likely to attempt suicide.<sup>11</sup>

## TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Black youth are over represented as victims and perpetrators of teen dating violence. In a sample of middle school students, almost half (46%) of the black students who dated had been a victim of partner violence and 29% had perpetrated partner violence.<sup>15</sup>

African American girls are as likely as boys to slap or hit their partner,<sup>17</sup> but studies of racially diverse groups find that girls are more likely than boys to be violent with their partner in self defense<sup>17</sup> and to be injured as a result of dating violence<sup>18</sup>.

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# SAFE RETURN



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