Parolee Statistics, Best Practices and Needs Assessment

City of San Bernardino Mayor's Parolee Reentry Ad-Hoc Committee

California State University San Bernardino Center for the Study of Correctional Education July 2008 City of San Bernardino Mayor's Parolee Reentry Ad Hoc Committee: Parolee Statistics, Best Practices and Needs Assessment Report.

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We must accept the reality that to confine offenders behind walls without trying to change them is an expensive folly with short term benefits— a 'winning of battles while losing the war.' (Former U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice W.E. Burger, 1981).

#### Introduction

Recent trends indicate a repudiation of the "tough on crime" mentality that has dominated the American mind over the past 30 years (CDCR, 2007). One percent of the U.S. population is now behind bars—leading the world in sheer numbers and by percentage of population (Pew, 2008). California leads all States in correctional spending with a 2007 budget of 8.8 billion—a 216 percent increase over the last 20 years (p. 11). It is important to remember that 95 percent of those incarcerated will eventually be released (Nieto, 2003, p. 3). California needs solutions to the inordinate burden its correctional system places upon its citizens. The CDCR's Expert Panel Report advocates evidence-based, cognitive programming as one solution to the revolving door of the California correctional system. The Panel's recommendations include "significant changes in the number and types" of programs offered to parolees (CDCR, 2007, p. 87), and the expansion of efforts regarding "reentry issues and initiatives" (p. 50).

Issues surrounding parolee reentry are present in many communities across the country. Any city wishing to address these issues would do well to examine current best practices from across the nation. The Mayor's Ad-Hoc Committee contracted with the Center for the Study of Correctional Education, California State University, San Bernardino to provide the Committee with research focused in three major areas: 1) how the City of San Bernardino's parolee population and related factors compare to other California county seats of similar size, 2) an overview of best practices/programs that have proven effective in reducing the recidivism rate of reentering parolees, and 3) a needs assessment for reentering parolees.

### **Comparable County Seats: Parolee Statistics**

The first stage of this research project involved providing the City of San Bernardino with an accurate assessment of its parolee population. This research focused on parolee statistics and negative benchmark indicators for comparable California county seats with a population of 100,000 or more. Sources of information included CDCR Parolee Automation Services, CDCR reports, California Department of Education, and the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics among others. Negative benchmarks recorded included: 1) UCR part 1 crime, 2) adult and juvenile arrests, 3) poverty level, 4) child abuse, and 5) school truancy rates. The data showed San Bernardino ranked very poorly among comparable county seats in the negative benchmark indicators, especially those related to income. Figure 1 shows San Bernardino has the highest percentage of its population below the poverty level when compared to other county seats.

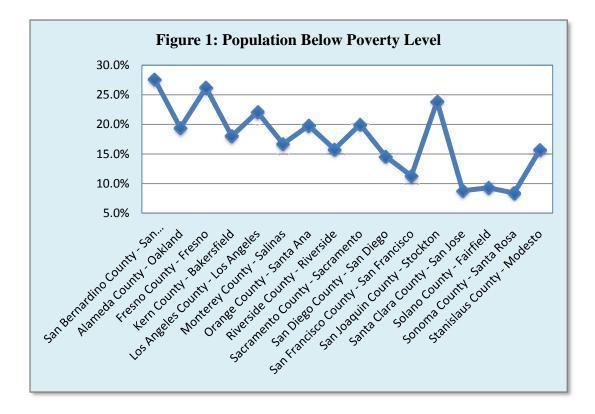
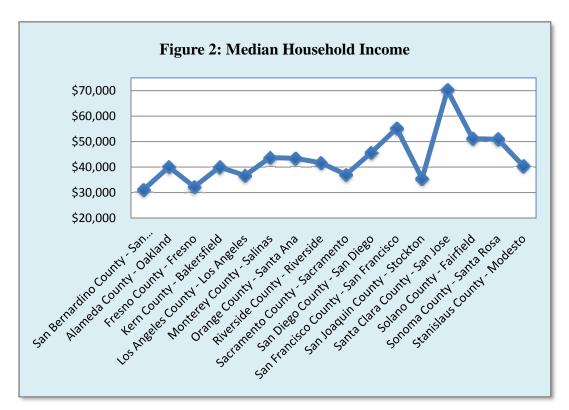
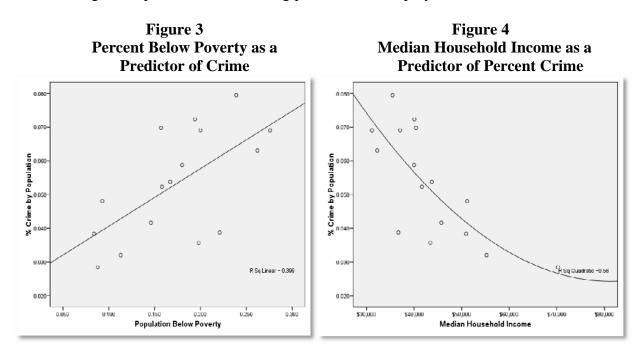


Figure 2 shows the City of San Bernardino to have the lowest average household income among those same cities.



Perhaps the most surprising outcome was the strong relationship between income and poverty as predictors of crime. It is common knowledge there is a relationship between economic hardship and crime, but the magnitude of the relationship in this data is surprising. Figures 3 and 4 (below) indicate the proportion of variance in crime per capita explained or accounted for by income and poverty. Forty to 50 percent of the variance in crime was explained by economic indicators. In other words, nearly 50 percent of the crime in comparable county seats can be predicted by economic indicators. These results suggest that economic stability is a key to reducing recidivism, consistent with the longstanding thinking that a holding good job would help keep parolees from returning to prison (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006) and underscoring the importance of connecting parolees with employment.



California releases large numbers of parolees back into its communities annually. In fact,

The number of parolees in California has increased 10-fold over the last 20 years compared to three-fold nationally. The result is that a disproportionate share of parolees in this country reside in California. Today 18 percent of the U.S. parole population resides in California (compared to 12 percent of the U.S. population). (Travis & Lawrence, 2002, pp. 4-5)

San Bernardino has long been home to a disproportionate number of parolees (Cruz, 2005; Weeks, 2007). While the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has been in compliance with California Penal Code Section 3003 (a) requiring parolees to be released to the county of last legal residence, the City of San Bernardino is home to 10 percent of the County's population but houses 23 percent of the County's parolees. This disparity is greater than any California county seat of comparable size. This means the City of San Bernardino bears a disproportionate burden on top of disproportionate burden—because of California's large number of parolees compared to other States. Figure 5 shows the county to county seat population disparity proportion across comparable county seats.

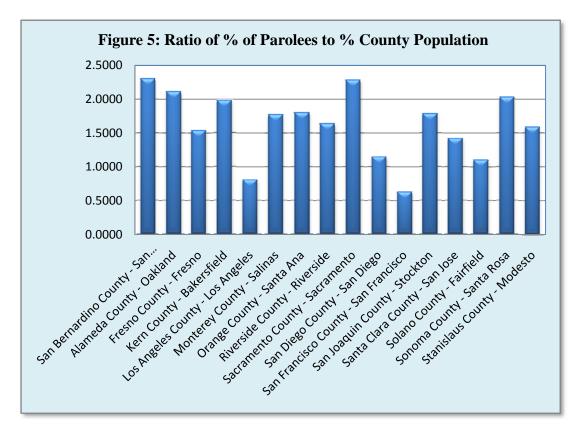
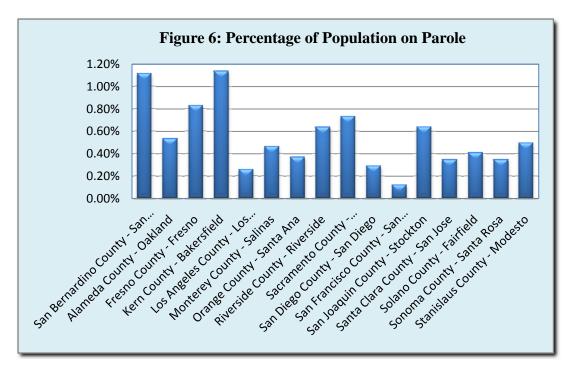


Figure 6 shows the percentage of county seat populations comprised of active California parolees. San Bernardino ranks second by just .02 percent.



These data clearly show the City of San Bernardino to have a need greater than most regarding issues of parolee reentry. In addition, the City leads California county seats in negative benchmarks and criminogenic factors that lead individuals to a life of crime. While this accurate depiction of the City is not an ideal one, the City could be valuable as a demonstration city. If reentry initiatives work here, they may be even more successful in areas having less bleak economic situations.

### **Best Practices in Parolee Reentry**

This [parolee rehabilitation] is both an important and useful work, as it prevents a great deal of unnecessary expense to the public, a great deal of unnecessary detention to the accused, and a great deal of unnecessary suffering to their families. (Wines, 1880, pp. 121-122)

The above quote demonstrates that issues surrounding parolee reentry are not unique to our time alone. In fact, an observant reading of relevant literature shows a 200 year trend toward the realization of progressive ideals including rehabilitation and restoration over incarceration and incapacitation (Gehring & Eggleston, 2006). The reversal of this trend over the past thirty years, with emphases on repeated incarceration, determinate sentences, three strike rules, segregated housing, and removal of almost all services to inmates is an historical anomaly (Garland, 2001). Almost as soon as the penitentiary was invented, prisoner aid societies developed to alleviate the suffering caused by these early prisons.

Money spent keeping parolees out of prison saves on the increasingly higher and higher cost of incarceration. In California, parolees are released from prison with a small amount of "gate money" and ordered to report to a local parole office within a few days. Little or no time has been spent prior to release to assist the inmate in obtaining employment or training necessary for success on "the streets." Parolee statistics are alarming: a) 70-80 percent unemployment rates, b) 85 percent substance abuse rate, c) 50 percent illiteracy rates, and d) 60-90 percent of parolees lack the "survival skills" necessary to succeed. One out of three parolees recidivate in less than six months (Nieto, 2003). The first several weeks out of prison represent the best opportunity for intervention and assistance.

The majority of inmates leave prison without savings, without immediate entitlement to unemployment benefits, and with poor prospects for employment. Survey data indicate that one year after being released, as many as 60% of former inmates are not employed. (Petersilia, 2000, p. 3)

Additionally, parolees may owe thousands of dollars in child support, financial restitution to the State, and credit card or other debt. When rare college programs are offered inside, they are often paid for with loans taken out by the inmates. Ex-offenders often return to society without State issued identification or the skills necessary to obtain employment—and a permanent mark of "felon" on their record.

These issues may seem to affect individuals only, but all people are part of the larger society. The success or failure of an individual parolee has an affect on society as a whole.

Petersilia (2003) described social factors affected by parolee issues including community cohesion, family stabilization, physical and mental health, democratic participation, and homelessness. The issues surrounding parolee reentry can and should be tied to larger social issues such as those outlined by Petersilia. Few cities have had the foresight to address these issues together.

The CSUSB researchers presented best practice information at three Ad-Hoc Committee meetings. Aspects highlighted include innovative ideas utilized by individual cities, factors influencing recidivism, and recommended policy changes. Highlights from these presentations appear below.

- Encourage community businesses to hire ex-offenders by hiring parolees for municipal work.
- The most progressive actions acknowledge that parolee issues are closely related to issues of homelessness, child support, and welfare—among others. Parolees are often out of the economic mainstream and statistically tend to be parents. There are 10 million children in this country with incarcerated parents (Workforce, Inc., 2005).
- Philadelphia passed a law granting business that hire ex-offenders a \$10,000/year tax credit for each parolee hired
  - Business must spend \$5,000 over three years on training and benefits for each new hire
  - Parolees pay the city five percent of earnings—\$20 from a \$400 paycheck to fund the program (Johnson, 2007).
- Creation of a "drug court" type system to address technical parole violations
  - Normally, parolees are returned to prison for virtually any violation of their parole terms
  - These violations may be assigned more appropriate consequences including: fines, community service, program time, jail, etc. (This is consistent with post-custody recommendation 11 of the Expert Panel Report.)
- Research shows that longer time in parolee programs results in more days out of prison (Zhang, Roberts, & Callanan, 2006).
- Factors influencing recidivism: employment, housing, literacy, health care services, mental health services, education while incarcerated, family involvement while on parole, and level of parole supervision.
- One city works with the DMV at day reporting centers to ensure all parolees have state ID.
- Early release from parole for completing programs and services; other positive reinforcement. (This is consistent with recommendation 2 of the Expert Panel Report.)

- 77 percent of the parolees in the local VISTA literacy lab have no GED or High School Diploma; 50 percent of the parolees in out Substance abuse classes (STAR) have no GED or High School Diploma.
- Offer alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders.
- Some parolees need very little or no post-release services. These people have social support networks in place and would not benefit from an increased service offering.

### **Parolee Needs Assessment Survey**

Discharged prisoners are a class who absolutely require aid, on grounds both of mercy to themselves and of the self-interest of the community. For if a criminal is not effectually rescued from his evil ways, and if he is not enabled to earn an honest livelihood, he will certainly return to his former courses. And few things are more costly to a nation than crime. (Tallack, 1896, p. 312)

One outcome of the Mayor's Parolee Reentry Ad Hoc Committee was the implementation of a parolee needs assessment survey. It was decided to distribute surveys at the Parole and Community Team (PACT) meetings all new parolees are required to attend within one week after release from prison. The meetings are held Wednesday mornings from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at the CDCR Division of Adult Parole Operations, San Bernardino Parole Complex at 303 West 5<sup>th</sup> Street in San Bernardino. Several local service providers and law enforcement attend the meetings to orient new parolees to the terms of their parole and to make them aware of organizations that operate to assist in the reentry process. Representatives from these organizations address and inform the assembled parolees. The CSUSB researcher gave brief a introduction to the research and verbally made the respondents aware of informed consent. This was done in such a manner to cause minimal disruption to the weekly meetings. The surveys were completed over a four week period starting June 4, 2008 and ending June 25, 2008.

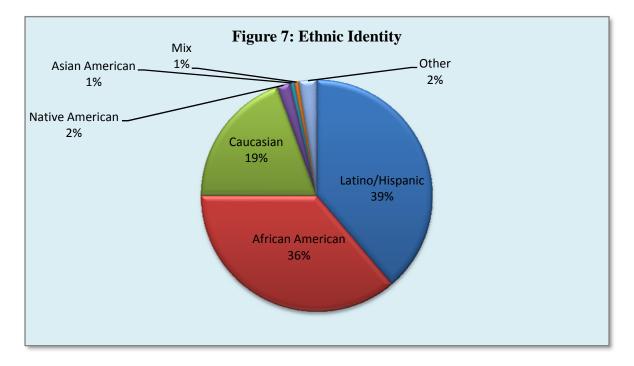
#### **Research Design**

Wanting to use an existing parolee needs survey to enable comparisons between cities the researchers chose not to create a new instrument. After a long search for an existing survey, Dr. Angela Irvine, Principal Researcher at Ceres Policy Research located in Santa Cruz, California shared a needs assessment instrument created with funding from the CDCR. The instrument was then adapted for use in the City of San Bernardino. The most notable changes were the addition of two questions addressing city of residence before and after incarceration.

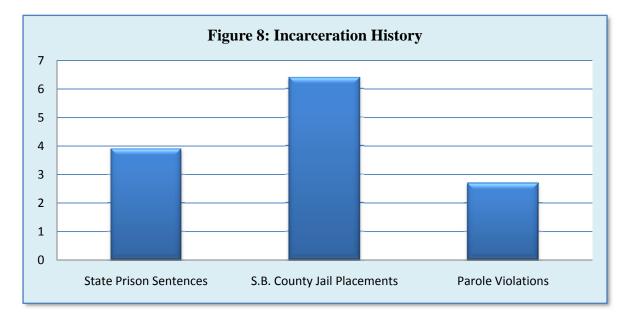
### **Survey Respondents**

Over the four week survey period, 179 completed, useable surveys were received, representing approximately 8 percent of the City's parolee population. Responses were coded into statistical computer programs with data presented in aggregate form. Respondents ranged in

age from 18 to 76 years old. The average age was 37. The number of respondents who identified themselves as male was 157, 18 identified as female. Ethic makeup is displayed in Figure 7, reflecting a disproportionate number of minorities.

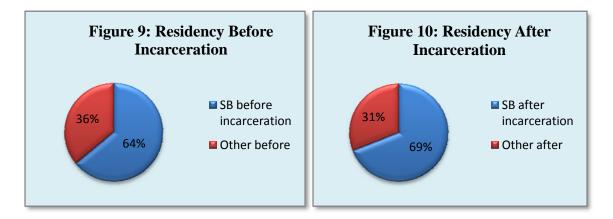


It is well known that an individual parolee may return to prison many times; California has a recidivism rate of over 65 percent. Figure 8 shows the incarceration history of survey respondents. Clearly, the same individuals are cycling in and out of our confinement institutions.



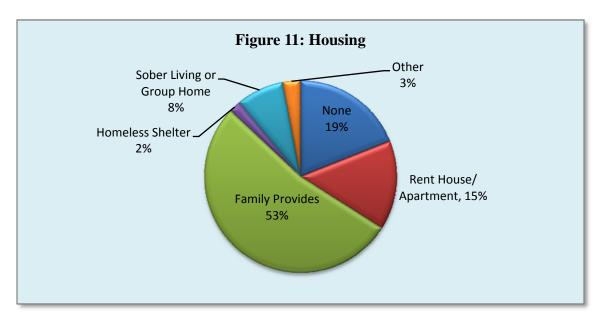
### Findings

There has been a concern within the City of San Bernardino that inmates who were not residents prior to incarceration were released to the City upon parole. The data gathered from this survey showed this to be unfounded. A small minority of parolees (approximately 5 percent or 9 out of 170 respondents) reported living in the City of San Bernardino after incarceration but not before. Figures 9 and 10 represent these findings.

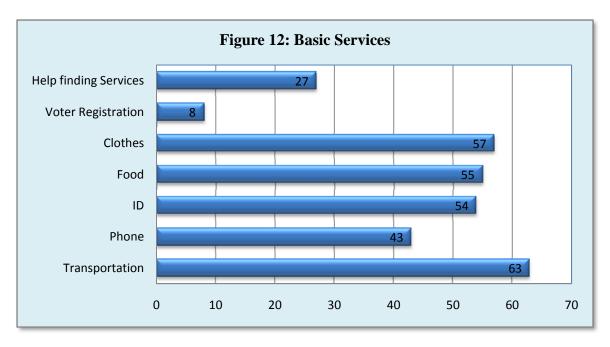


### **Basic Needs**

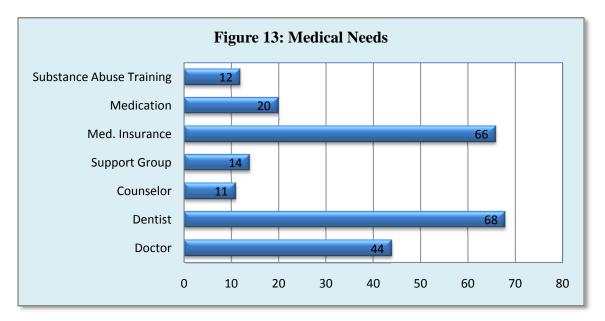
Housing is among the most basic of needs returning parolees have. This research showed that 21 percent of respondents reported being homeless or living in shelters. More parolees reported living in family provided housing than any other option. This is significant because California law allows the warrantless search of any parolee residence, linking parolee issues with the larger issues of family and community. Survey respondents report a total of 325 children. This is one obvious connection between parolees and the larger community.



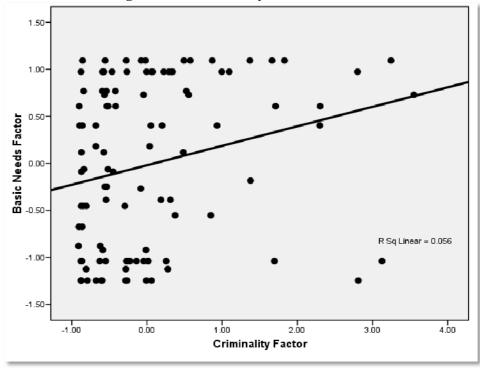
One survey question asked parolees about basic needs. Over half of all respondents reported needing the basic essentials of modern life: food, shelter, clothing, and transportation. Over 40 percent also reported needing identification and communication needs. Figure 12 illustrates responses to the basic needs question.



Medical needs are also prominent among San Bernardino's parolees. Sixty six percent report needing medical insurance, 68 percent need access to a dentist, and 44 percent access to a doctor.



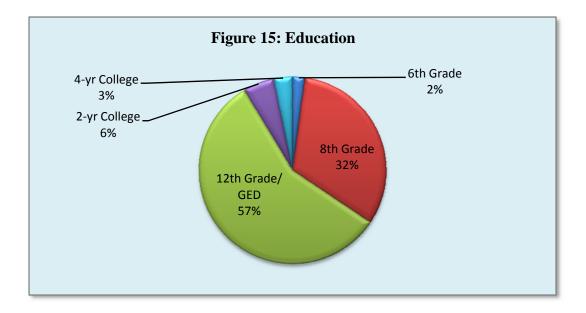
This research shows that the longer an individual has spent in the criminal justice system, the greater that individual's basic needs. Again, this is consistent with the general lack of meaningful services currently offered inside California's prisons. Figure 14 demonstrates the correlation between level of criminality and basic needs. Low level criminals demonstrate all levels of basic needs. In other words, their level of needs can not be predicted very well—they are all over the map. However, as the level of criminality rises it becomes more and more probable that they will have a higher level of basic needs. What we can learn from this is that those who have been in the penal system longer will most certainly have higher level needs.





### **Education, Training, and Employment**

Figure 15 represents the highest level of education attained by survey respondents. Thirty four percent of respondents do not have a high school diploma or a GED. Because of the link between employment and education, this is one area where improvement would provide direct benefits regarding parolee employability. In fact, as Figure 16 shows, those survey respondents with higher levels of education were 95 percent more likely to report having a job soon after release from prison.



**Figure 16: The Schooling/Employment Connection** 

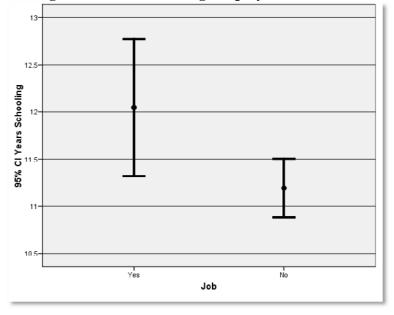


Figure 17 is consistent with the CDCR's Expert Panel Report (2007, p. 149) which shows a general lack of meaningful services for incarcerated individuals. Only 19 percent of parolees report receiving academic education while incarcerated (Figure 15), indicating a need among San Bernardino parolees for academic instruction. Twenty eight percent of parolees reported receiving no services while in prison. The same percentage reported paid work as a service received. This is significant to the City because parolees are returning home after incarceration without the tools that allow parolees to obtain and keep meaningful employment. Because these services were not offered inside the prison, the post-release need for them is much greater.

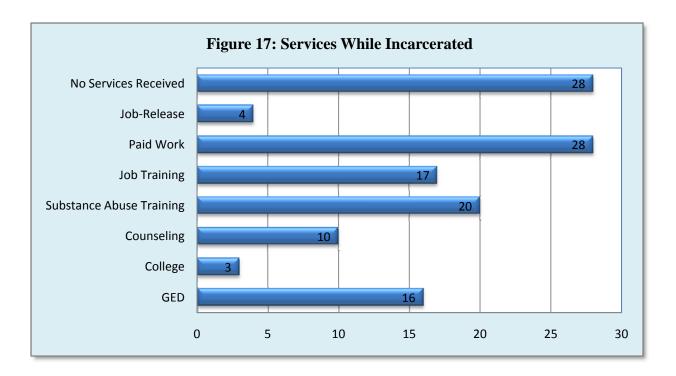
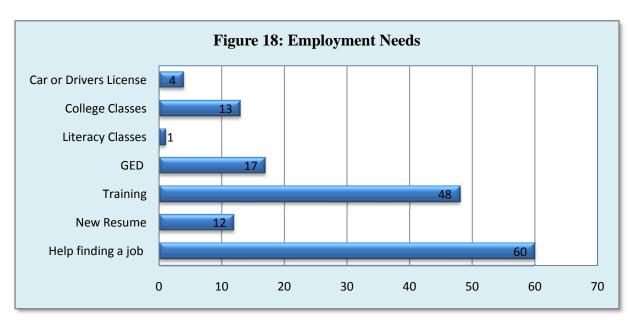


Figure 18 represents the employment related services needed by survey respondents. Help locating employment is reported as the greatest need, with training the second greatest. Employment is perhaps the single most important post-release service.



### **Current Services for Parolees**

There exists within the City of San Bernardino a disparate network of community and faith-based service providers. Each parolee who attends the PACT meeting receives a Community Resource Directory listing many of the social, community, mental health, substance abuse, sober living, education, employment, and faith based services available to parolees. Most of these services are offered on a voluntary basis with little or no structure beyond what is offered by individual programs. Parolees are left on their own to access appropriate services. These perennially under-funded service providers represent the only community-based social institutions acting to enable successful parolee reintegration.

### Conclusions

Reentry issues are prevalent in many U.S. cities, however California produces a disproportionate share of U.S. parolees. The California Department of Corrections' Expert Panel Report advocates for improved services as the way to reduce the population of our criminal justice system. The City of San Bernardino bears a disproportionate burden of the County's parolees. Additionally, San Bernardino ranks very poorly on economic indicators when compared to other California county seats. The link between economic hardship and crime in our community was surprisingly large.

Several aspects of best reentry practices from other communities were presented to the Mayor's Ad-Hoc Committee. These included: innovative incentives for employers, a drug-court model for parole violations, acknowledging the relationship between parolees and larger social issues, and the need for post-release services.

The parolee needs assessment demonstrated the desire among San Bernardino parolees for services ranging from medical and educational to housing and employment. Few of these necessary services were offered to this population while they were incarcerated, and the same people are returning to our jails and prison multiple times. San Bernardino parolees tend to be male and minorities. Those parolees who have been incarcerated more times and for longer periods reported a need for more basic services. A correlation was found between level of education and employment. Some basic current services do exist in a patchwork, non-structured format absent of overriding social goals.

### Appendix A

### Parolee Needs Survey

The City of San Bernardino would like to improve services for parolees.

This survey is totally voluntary. There is no penalty for not taking the survey.

You may skip any question, especially if you feel it is too personal.

We do NOT want your name. Your parole agent will not see your individual answers.

Your answers will be ONLY used by local researchers to develop a plan for improved parolee services in San Bernardino County.

THANK YOU!

### Parolee Needs Survey

### **Background Information**

a1. How old are you?    male    female      a2. What is your gender?    male    female      a3. What is your race/ethnic identity (i.e. White, Latino, etc.)?    a4. How many children are you responsible for?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a4. How many children are you responsible for? (at least part-time)?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a5. If yes, how many people (besides yourself) do you need to provide housing for?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a6. Do you have a significant other/partner?    yes    no    1	Background mormation										
a3. What is your race/ethnic identity (i.e. White, Latino, etc.)?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a4. How many children are you responsible for? (at least part-time)?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a5. If yes, how many people (besides yourself) do you need to provide housing for?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a6. Do you have a significant other/partner?    yes    no	a1. How old are you?										
Latino, etc.)?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      (at least part-time)?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a5. If yes, how many people (besides yourself) do you need to provide housing for?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a6. Do you have a significant other/partner?    yes    no    -	a2. What is your gender?	male		f	ema	le					
a4. How many children are you responsible for? (at least part-time)?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a5. If yes, how many people (besides yourself) do you need to provide housing for?    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8+      a6. Do you have a significant other/partner?    yes    no    5    6    7    8+      a7. How far have you gone in school?    elementary school 8th grade    12th grade    5    5    5    5    5    5    5    6    7    8+      a8. What city did you live in before your most recent commitment offense?    a8. What city did you live in before your most    a5    b    5    6    7    8+	a3. What is your race/ethnic identity (i.e. White,										
(at least part-time)?    If yes, how many people (besides yourself) do you need to provide housing for?      a6. Do you have a significant other/partner?    yes    no      a7. How far have you gone in school?    elementary school      8th grade    12th grade      2-year college degree    4-year college degree      0 ther    0      a8. What city did you live in before your most recent commitment offense?    I	Latino, etc.)?										
a5. If yes, how many people (besides yourself) do you need to provide housing for?    yes    no      a6. Do you have a significant other/partner?    yes    no      a7. How far have you gone in school?    elementary school 8th grade    12th grade      2-year college degree    4-year college degree    0      a8. What city did you live in before your most recent commitment offense?    a8. What city did you live in before your most    a8. What city did you live in before your most	a4. How many children are you responsible for?	0 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+		
do you need to provide housing for?      a6. Do you have a significant other/partner?    yes    no      a7. How far have you gone in school?    elementary school      8th grade    12th grade      2-year college degree    4-year college degree      4-year college degree    Other      a8. What city did you live in before your most recent commitment offense?    Image: College degree	(at least part-time)?										
a6. Do you have a significant other/partner?    yes    no      a7. How far have you gone in school?    elementary school      8th grade    12th grade      2-year college degree    4-year college degree      4-year college degree    Other      a8. What city did you live in before your most recent commitment offense?    Image: No	a5. If yes, how many people (besides yourself)										
a7. How far have you gone in school?    elementary school      8th grade    12th grade      2-year college degree    4-year college degree      4-year college degree    Other      a8. What city did you live in before your most recent commitment offense?    other	do you need to provide housing for?										
8th grade      12th grade      2-year college degree      4-year college degree      Other		yes no									
12th grade      2-year college degree      4-year college degree      Other      a8. What city did you live in before your most recent commitment offense?	a7. How far have you gone in school?	elementary school									
2-year college degree  4-year college degree  Other  a8. What city did you live in before your most  recent commitment offense?		12th grade 2-year college degree									
4-year college degree  Other   a8. What city did you live in before your most  recent commitment offense?											
a8. What city did you live in before your most recent commitment offense?											
a8. What city did you live in before your most recent commitment offense?											
recent commitment offense?		Other									
	a8. What city did you live in before your most										
a What situ da you live in new?	recent commitment offense?										
ay. what city do you live in now ?	a9. What city do you live in now?										

### Housing Needs

b1. What type of housing do you currently have	None
(please circle all that apply)?	I rent my own house/apartment
	Family members provide space for me
	I stay in homeless shelters
	I live in a sober living environment
	Other
b2. What city do you stay in most of the time?	
b3. Are you looking for other housing?	

### Job Needs

yes no		
yes no		
Help finding job openings		
A new resume		
Training		
GED		
Literacy classes		
College classes		

### Health Needs

d1. Do you need any of the following (please	Doctor Dentist			
circle all services you need)?	Counselor Support group			
- ,	Medical insurance Medication			
	Substance abuse treatment			
d2. Have you ever been sexually abused in any	yes no			
way?				
d3. Have you ever been physically abused in	yes no			
any way?				

#### Basic Needs

e1. Do you need any of the following? (please	Help finding support services
circle everything you need)	Transportation
	Phone
	ID
	Food
	Clothes
	Voter registration
	Other

### History of Incarceration

f1. Why were you in prison most	Circle all that apply:					
recently? (please place	New Violent offense					
circles in the following two	offense	Sex offense				
boxes)		Property crime				
	Parole	Drug-related crime				
	violation	Other				
f2. How long were you in prison (m recently)?						
f3. Do you have to pay restitution?		yes no				
f4. While you were in prison (most recently), did you receive any of these services (circle all that apply)?		High school classes (toward a GED) College classes Counseling Substance Abuse Treatment Job Training Paid work Job-release Other				
f5. How long have you been out of						
f6. How many times have you been of a crime?						
f7. How many times have you been state prison?	-					
f8. How many times have you been San Bernardino County jail?	placed in					
f9. How many times have you retur prison because you had your pa revoked?						

### IF YOU WOULD BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN A MORE DETAILED STUDY, PLEASE LEAVE YOUR NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION WITH THE RESEARCHER. THERE IS PAPER AVAILABLE AT THE FRONT OF THE ROOM.

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