Helping Hands to New Beginnings
A program for prisoners up for parole: a grant proposal

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Introduction

• In 2005, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) conducted a large-scale longitudinal study that examined recidivism rates of parolees released under community supervision from 30 state prisons (Durose et al., 2014). The BJS found that of the 404,638 offenders studied, 67.8% were rearrested within three years and 76.6% within 5 years of release (Durose et al., 2014).

• Studies have shown that those reentry programs that include an aftercare component for parolees are considered to be one factor that contributes to successful community Reintegration and, is associated with lower recidivism rates (Bahr, 2015; Kurlychek & Kempinen, 2006; Olson, Rozhon, & Powers, 2009; Petersilia, 2003; Wright, Zhang, Farabee, & Braatz, 2014) and yet, this area has been neglected in the pursuit of effective programming (Bahr, 2015).

• There are an unprecedented number of people with mental illness and substance use disorders involved in the criminal justice system (SAMHSA, 2015a).

• Other studies have shown that successful reentry is contingent upon securing employment and finding long-term housing (Bahr, 2015; Bahr et al., 2005; Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

Overarching Goal

The overarching goal of this program is to locate a potential funding source and write a grant to help male inmates transition from living in prison to the community by way of linking them with services such as rehabilitation, recovery, and reentry. The eligible inmates will enter a 3-year program that includes a multimodal approach to community reentry.
Social Work Relevance

- Social workers have an ethical and professional responsibility to help those most vulnerable to discrimination, oppression, and marginalization (NASW, 2015a).

- With initiatives mandating the release of thousands of inmates, there is an overwhelming need to help them face life after prison.

- Social workers who are trained in criminal justice are “uniquely qualified” to provide and address service needs of reentering ex-offenders (NASW, 2015b, para. 1).
Cross Cultural Relevance

- For the past 30 years, prison populations have experienced a change in the **makeup of the offenders**. Presently, inmates are increasingly diverse in regards to age, gender, type of crime, race and ethnicity, and their affiliation with organized crime and/or organized gangs (Bahr, 2015; Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

- Research shows an overrepresentation of Black/African Americans and Hispanics in the criminal justice system and those released on parole or probation show similar demographic characteristics (Hartney & Vuong, 2009).

- The fact that both Black/African Americans and Hispanics are disproportionately incarcerated in greater numbers is a serious issue in our society. Issues at the forefront are racial profiling and arrests, as inequity is a major issue that has led to the overrepresentation of some minorities in U.S. jails and prisons (Malai, 2015).

*Given the widespread diversity found within California’s prison and after-care systems, service outreach must be created to support the multi-cultural needs of this population.*
Methods

Funding Source Selected

- The organization and funding support that best meets the needs of this proposed reentry programs is the **SAMHSA, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment** (SAMHSA, 2015d)

Sources Used For The Needs Assessment Include:

- Although not exhaustive, a thorough review of the literature was executed by the author to investigate both the reentry needs of the target population and the type of program elements that would meet those needs

- Government documents, lectures, peer-reviewed journals, and internet searches, websites, and databases were reviewed to better understand the history of incarceration, the process of parole, parolees’ needs, and reentry challenges on a micro, mezzo, and macro level.

Program Budget

- The pilot program described below is designed to span a 3-year period. The **total operating budget** to support the grant for the HH2NB Program is $921,420.00, or a yearly budget of $307,140.00. The estimated yearly budget will cover personnel costs, direct program costs, and in-kind donations, and miscellaneous.
The Helping Hands to New Beginnings (HH2NB) program would support efforts to reunify ex-offenders into the community by creating a 3-year extended services program. The ultimate goals are to re-connect and better prepare ex-offenders for their return to their community of available services and resources and help them maintain those connections in order to lessen the likelihood of recidivism. The program will be held at the Weingart Center (WC), located in Los Angeles, California. The WC is a non-profit comprehensive human services organization that provides homeless individuals the skills necessary to rehabilitate and re-stabilize their lives, secure employment, and find long-term housing (WC, n.d.a).

This pilot program will pick up where other programs leave off; it will ensure that ex-offenders are not just instructed to reintegrate to society but that the parolee will do so effectively. The proposed program will provide reintegration services for men pending release from prison within 3 to 6 months until 3 years post release in order to reduce the chance of recidivism. Ex-offenders enrolled in this program will be provided with the following support services:

- Housing (assistance with government and private housing applications, placements, referrals)
- Intake Assessment (to determine eligibility for specific services)
- Mental Health & Substance Abuse Treatment (evaluation and referral for outpatient programs and support groups)
- Service Outreach (anger management, parenting classes, money management, support groups)
- Employment Assistance (job placements, referrals, and training)
- Benefits-Medical Assistance (assistance with filing for Medi-Cal, Medicare, disability)
- Case Management.

The proposed program will provide reintegration services for adult male inmates with mental health and/or substance use needs pending release from prison; services provided from 3 to 6 months prior to release up until 3 years post release in order to reduce the chance of recidivism. The HH2NB is designed to be a Los Angeles community-based service provider for ex-offenders who prefer continued services when paroled.

Sustainability
After its initial implementation, the main costs will be employee’s salaries and office supplies. It is a sustainable program that is contingent upon reapplying for the SAMHSA Reentry Grant every 2 years in order to support ex-offenders with community reintegration.
Program Objective
The overall goal for the proposed program is to provide comprehensive re-entry services to male parolees through a 3 year long, residential housing, mental health and substance use, and case management program to increase the likelihood of successful reentry into the community for parolees living in Los Angeles County, California. The following program objectives focus on interventions and treatment, community outreach, and data collection, evaluation, and staff education:

Objective 1: To increase available social support and community resources for parolees.
Expected Outcomes: Parolees will have access to an improved and expanded social support network.

Objective 2: To increase onsite comprehensive social support and mental health services afforded to ex-offenders.
Expected Outcomes: Parolees will show an overall improvement in their mental health and life skills as evidenced by pre- and post-test measurements (see below).

Objective 3: Increase comprehensive service outreach (aftercare services) to ex-offenders once they have been discharged from the host agency’s residential program.
Expected Outcomes: Parolees will demonstrate their ability to access reentry services, independently, as evidenced by the checklists and follow-up visits from case manager/social worker

Objective 4: Program staff will collect qualitative and quantitative data on program participants, services provided, and outcome measures (e.g., successful reentry).
Expected Outcomes: Data collected will provide information regarding the effectiveness of program components, services provided, and reentry and recidivism rates for parolees to program staff

Program Evaluation
Collecting qualitative and quantitative data as well as conducting process and outcome evaluations will be focused on strengthening the quality of the program and improving the likelihood of parolees being successful post-release. To consider the program a success, the following must be true: (a) at least 50% of the participants have not recidivated while enrolled in the program; (b) participants will report an improvement in at least three problem areas they listed during their initial assessment (e.g., lack of housing, employment, social support, substance abuse problems); and (c) participant dropout rate will remains below 30% for the first year.

The survey measurements include:
- Pre-post surveys
- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) (SAMHSA, n.d.c)
- Screening, Brief Intervention, & Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) (SAMHSA, n.d.d)
- PC-PTSD, a four-item screen for PTSD (SAMHSA, n.d.e);
- Participant satisfaction surveys.
Implications for Social Work

• The criminal justice system would benefit from an increased presence of social workers. The social work profession requires a set of skills that are learned through a combination of intensive schooling and fieldwork experience. These skills are extremely useful in helping the ex-offender population, their families, and community address the many issues of reentry. Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships. Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process. Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance wellbeing of individuals, families, social groups, organizations and communities (NASW, 2015a).

• Social workers can help in many aspects of corrections. For example, the biopsychosocial assessment tool used by social workers is useful in identifying each parolee’s primary needs during the process of reentry. Also, social workers are especially skilled at navigating and linking clients to different community reentry resources. Creating cohesion between service providers is a strategy that can help the reentry process. Social workers can take an active role to educate community agencies and neighborhoods about the needs and challenges of parolees in order to be better prepared for their return home. Social work practitioners can also effect change at a macro level by advocating for policy change.

• The social work relevance of the HH2NB program is to make service providers, community agencies, and policy makers more aware of the needs of parolees as they transition from prison life back into society. Lack of extended services has shown to contribute to recidivism. The HH2NB social work staff will be instrumental in helping the parolees understand how the program can help teach them to be successful in society. In order for this program to be successful, it is critical that all program staff continue to be educated and trained on community corrections, prison culture, issues affecting inmates and parolees, and appropriate evidence-base practice interventions. The African proverb “It takes a village...” is a fitting phrase for the HH2NB program, as it will take the efforts of the entire community to provide reentry assistance to the ex-offender population. In order for parolees to develop a sustainable connection with their community, a collaborative effort among all agencies must be in place, which may be possible through a program such as HH2NB.
References


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