

Report of the Reentry Subcommittee

To the
Criminal Justice and Alternatives to Incarceration (CJATI) Board

And the
Tompkins County Legislature

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September 14, 2015

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Introduction

The Reentry Subcommittee (RES) was formed in February 2015 by the Criminal Justice and Alternatives to Incarceration Board following recommendations that arose from the Jail Task Force meetings that took place in 2013-2014.

RES was given the charge to develop recommendations regarding a Reentry Program to most effectively transition jail inmates out of the Tompkins County jail and back into the community. The committee was also asked to make every effort to identify alternative funding sources for its recommendations, strive for the most cost-effective solutions, and develop the statistical means to track recidivism and re-entry effectiveness. While the RES recognizes the real fiscal constraints on County government, we also recognize the large cost to the county's taxpayers of our current system of incarceration and re-incarceration.

RES has met thirteen times beginning February 25, 2015 and ending in September 2015. Several of these meetings were dedicated to meeting with representatives of other programs in Upstate New York to identify best practices. Others were used to meet with local representatives of various programs already operating effectively in Tompkins County. And finally, a number of meetings were used to explore the various barriers to successful reentry and to understand more fully the current delivery of services within Tompkins County.¹

This report represents only the first step in implementing a comprehensive and effective reentry program here in Tompkins County. The committee envisions a three year process before a fully functional reentry program is up and running at full capacity.

Background

Since 1998, criminal justice policymakers, practitioners and researchers have focused attention on the issue of prisoner reentry. Until recently this policy discussion has not addressed the reentry issues of the millions released from local jails. There has been increasing interest and

¹ See Appendix 1 for full list of meetings.

funding available from federal and state governments to assist communities in addressing the needs of those facing release from prison. There is less information and data with regard to the needs of individuals reentering the community after a stint in a local county jail. There is less research focused on these issues; less funding; and less programming available.

The challenges facing individuals reentering the community from jail differ in many aspects from those facing our citizens coming home from prison. Many of those incarcerated cycle in and out of jail on a regular basis. Their lives are unstable in virtually all aspects: unstable housing; mental illness; substance abuse and other health problems are the norm. **More than 80% of all jail inmates are incarcerated for less than a month, providing our jails with little time or capacity to address these overlapping issues.**² The cycling of individuals in and out of local jails undermines continuity of care. Though jail reentry efforts can build on many of the approaches developed for prisoner reentry, there are distinct differences in the nature of the jail population requiring a new set of strategies.

Jails are predominantly run at the local level though the correctional system is unified in six states.³ Jails serve more functions than prisons. Jail is the entry point to the correctional system, housing individuals for multiple reasons and for many jurisdictions. Local jails serve two primary purposes: to process and hold individuals awaiting arraignment, trial, conviction or sentencing and to hold convicted individuals whose sentence is typically less than one year. In Tompkins County, approximately 60% of the jail population is awaiting trial or sentencing (presentenced) and 40% are serving a term of less than one year.⁴

The majority of people passing through the Tompkins County jail are charged with misdemeanor offenses spending an average of 35 days in the Tompkins County Jail.⁵ Pretrial detainees go back and forth to court appearances and may be released along the way. Of those sentenced individuals, 18% are female, 82% male, 17% African American and nearly 80% white.⁶

Nationwide, little information exists on the unique characteristics of rural jails, of which Tompkins County Jail is one. Yet rural jails make up a substantial share of the nation's 3,365 jails.⁷ The majority of rural jails are small (based on the National Institute of Corrections' definition which is 150 beds or fewer). These small, rural jails face the same issues as large urban jails including a population characterized by substance abuse, mental illness and overcrowding yet have fewer resources available to address these issues. The Tompkins County Jail is largely funded by the county property and sales tax, resulting in fewer resources to address

² Life After Lock Up, p xv

³ Life After Lock Up, p.4 Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island and Vermont

⁴ New York State Commission on Corrections, Monthly Jail Population by County data

⁵ In 2013, 14% (21 individuals) of sentenced Tompkins County Jail Inmates were convicted of a felony, 62% (92 individuals) of a misdemeanor, and 24% (36 individuals) convicted of other offenses (usually violations).

⁶ Based on Statistics on Sentenced Inmates in the Tompkins County Jail in 2013.

⁷ Life After Lock Up, p. 9

unmet needs and implement programming. There are fewer resources for housing, treatment, employment and mental health services within the community as compared to larger jurisdictions such as New York City. The limitation of public transit in our county further restricts access to community resources, particularly upon release.

While nationwide many jails provide some services such as adult basic education, basic psychiatric services and 12 Step Programs, the extent of these programs is extremely limited. This situation is mirrored at the Tompkins County Jail. While there is very basic and limited programming available in the Tompkins County Jail (High School Equivalency- formerly GED- instruction and testing; limited mental health crisis intervention; drug and alcohol assessments for approximately 50 inmates annually; and limited reentry services for fewer than 25 inmates annually), space limitations are a key factor limiting more extensive programming. Short lengths of average stay also make the scheduling of programming more complicated.

Characteristics of Tompkins County Inmates

In 2014 there were 543 unsentenced and 251 sentenced inmates in the Tompkins County Jail. Of these 794 inmates, 34% were 25 years of age or younger; 64% were under the age of 33 upon admission. 23% of the population were African American, 72% were white and 5% were “other”. The Jail population is made up of 80% male and 20% female. The numbers of females both sentenced and unsentenced have been steadily increasing over the past five years.

Regarding the sentenced population conviction levels, there were 49 inmates (20% of convicted inmates) who were convicted of a felony. A total of 165 inmates (66% of convicted inmates) were convicted of a misdemeanor. A total of 37 inmates (14% of convicted inmates) were convicted of “other offenses.”

Nationally, most individuals enter our jails with limited work experience, low levels of education or vocational skills, and health issues including mental illness, substance abuse and high rates of communicable diseases.

Research indicates that 68% of all jail inmates meet the criteria for substance abuse or dependence nationwide. To put this in context, only 9% of the U.S. population abuse or are dependent upon drugs or alcohol. Additionally substance abusing and dependent inmates are more likely to have a prior criminal record than other inmates. They are also more likely to have been physically or sexually abused and to have family members who have been incarcerated or who have abused alcohol or drugs.⁸

Mental illness appears to occur at a higher rate among the incarcerated population than in the general population.⁹ Homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse, histories of physical

⁸ Life After Lock Up, p. 16

⁹ Ibid., p. 16

abuse are more acute among inmates with mental health problems and serious mental illness is correlated with higher rates of violence and longer criminal histories.¹⁰

The estimate for the share of prison and jail inmates with a history of mental illness is 16% based on self-reported mental conditions in surveys of prisoners and jail inmates conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 1996 and 1997. A more recent BJS study found nearly 25% of jail inmates exhibit symptoms of psychosis, compared with 15% of state prisoners.¹¹ Overall, Tompkins County's experience in recent years, though not quantitatively verified, would indicate similarity to percentages in the national research of characteristics of jail inmates.

Current Tompkins County Reentry Project

Tompkins County initiated a reentry pilot project at the Tompkins County Jail nearly eight years ago. The purpose was to reduce recidivism by offering additional resources to a limited number of inmates, thereby reducing the jail population. The Project began with the involvement of a wide range of county agencies and non-profits but is currently operating with the participation of DSS (through the Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor), Probation (through the Employment Specialist), OAR and Officer Potter of the Tompkins County Jail. It should be noted that there was no funding ever earmarked for the pilot period and beyond and at present there remains no additional funding for reentry services.¹² However, it should be noted that one Corrections Officer position was created to assist, in part, with re-entry services. It is believed that the lack of funding has contributed to the decline in stakeholder participation in reentry services, as initial stakeholders were not able to maintain involvement in the reentry program while continuing to perform their main job duties at the same time. After the first year of operation, the decision was made to use the limited Article 13A state funding available (\$25,000 for the first few years; currently less than \$20,000) for drug and alcohol assessments and referral to inpatient rehabilitation for fewer than fifty inmates annually.

A presentation by the current members performing reentry services was made to the RES regarding the history of the program. According to data collected since the program's inception in 2008, it was learned that 143 individuals have been served by the program. It should be noted that approximately 1050 sentenced individuals have been housed at the Tompkins County Jail since 2008. Therefore, the Reentry Project has served approximately 14% (143 individuals) of those who could benefit from an improved Reentry Program. Of the 143 people served, 92 or 64.3% have not returned to the Tompkins County Jail indicating that re-entry interventions are effective at reducing recidivism.

The guidelines for choosing reentry participants include:

¹⁰"Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates", James and Glaze, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, 2006

¹¹ Ibid., 2006.

¹² In 2008, a Corrections Officer position was added to the budget for the Reentry Program but this officer now has additional duties.

1. Individuals coming out of jail who are not under any other supervision such as probation.
2. Individuals who plan to stay in Tompkins County.
3. Individuals who have not previously participated in the Reentry Program.
4. Sentenced individuals with at least 45 days remaining in their term.

The Reentry Project currently provides a limited range of services including:

1. Those in the project receive Public Assistance the day after they are released since their DSS applications are completed and submitted 45 days prior to release. (This is also done for additional inmates by OAR)
2. Transportation to DSS from the Tompkins County Jail for an intake appointment is provided by an officer of the jail.
3. Clients are assessed for additional needs such as housing, education, employment, substance abuse and mental health counseling, SSI/SSD, legal issues and are referred to appropriate agencies or assisted by members of the Reentry Project Committee.

The Reentry Project has identified a number of areas that need improvement including:

1. Many inmates remain unsentenced until their release date, never entering the reentry project. Average length of stay for unsentenced inmates was 37 days though this figure does not really capture the wide spread in the length of stay—many are incarcerated for only a day and serious charges frequently exceed 250 days.
2. There is a belief that some clients released with supervision could benefit from additional support, particularly those that are undomiciled and unemployed.
3. Ongoing contact with those in the reentry project is sporadic and unpredictable. This needs to be improved in order to more accurately capture outcomes.
4. Participation in the project is voluntary and there exist few incentives (bus passes) to continue to work with Reentry following release. Additional incentives such as guaranteed safe, sober housing, gift cards, and clothing vouchers could improve outcomes and ongoing communication.
5. More staff time for pre and post release work with clients.

Barriers to Successful Reentry

RES found the following barriers to successful reentry through discussions with community stakeholders, a survey of jail inmates¹³, presenters from other Reentry Programs, research and agency experience.

In Jail Programming

¹³ Appendix 2; Survey of Tompkins County Jail inmates, Spring 2015

Due to the fluidity of the Tompkins County Jail population, the severe programming space constraints and the expense of extra correctional officers to monitor programming designed to assist inmates with a range of skills and coping mechanisms is severely limited. This is true in the majority of U.S. jails, particularly in rural areas. Few jail inmates participate in vocational or educational programs while incarcerated though the Tompkins County Jail offers GED courses and probation sponsored pilot trainings such as T4C (Thinking for a Change) and Ready, Set Work!. One T4C course was piloted in 2013 with three individuals graduating and in 2015 Ready, Set, Work! was piloted with 14 enrollees and 10 graduating.

Despite the high rates of drug and alcohol involvement among our jail population, very few participate in formal treatment, although Drug Court has facilitated inpatient treatment for a number of individuals in Tompkins County. A total of 33 individuals were transported door to door to inpatient rehab in 2014. Alcoholics Anonymous meets weekly (once a week for males and once a week for females) and Narcotics Anonymous meets weekly for males at the Tompkins County Jail providing twelve step group work.

Inmates with mental health problems face limited access to a system of care in the community. A period of incarceration often suspends benefits depending on length of stay. Activating or reinstating benefits can take several months, interrupting access to prescription drugs and putting individuals at a high risk of relapse. In the Tompkins County Jail, treatment is most commonly in the form of medication alone without counseling or therapy.

Evidence Based Practices (EBP) require extended participation making these programs easier to complete for those individuals sentenced to the county jail. Providing EBP for the unsentenced population, with indeterminate lengths of stay, is much more difficult.

Identification

Obtaining a photo identification card has been an ongoing issue for incarcerated inmates being released from the Tompkins County Jail. Identification is required by employers and banking institutions for check cashing purposes and setting up accounts. In order to obtain an ID from the Department of Motor Vehicles, certain paperwork, for example a Birth Certificate along with other approved documents, must be presented to the DMV clerk and add up to the required 6 points in order to be approved for a non driver's ID card. This has been found to be a daunting task for clients and existing reentry, Day Reporting and OAR staff who have assisted in the process in the past. The barriers are numerous: clients have lost their birth certificates and must apply to the county of birth and pay a fee for another copy; most clients do not have the money for the fees and so the process cannot go further; the required point process includes a number of different identification pieces (i.e. Social Security Card), which most clients do not have in their possession; and the time factor in applying for and receiving new copies often takes months.

Lack of Coordination of Existing Community Services

At those meetings dedicated to learning about other upstate County efforts around reentry, a consistent theme that emerged was the need for a coordinator position—a point person—to pull all the available services together for those returning from incarceration. Several of these upstate programs, however, deal only with those returning to the community from prison—not from local jail. Tompkins County has numerous employment, housing, alcohol and drug treatment agencies working on these barriers to reentry. However, data is scattered among these agencies, measurements differ, services are disjointed and navigating the system is difficult. A Discharge Planner position and a Care Coordinator position, dedicated to serving the population returning to the community from the Tompkins County Jail would dramatically improve the coordination of necessary services. Currently, no one agency or nonprofit has the resources, nor the authority, to undertake this job.

Housing

Those released inmates who do not have stable housing arrangements are more likely to return to jail than those with stable housing.¹⁴ Individuals leaving the criminal justice system—jails and prisons—contribute significantly to the growing number of homeless throughout the United States. Tompkins County is no exception. Securing housing is one of the most immediate challenges and pressing need for many who are released from the Tompkins County Jail. According to the jail survey conducted by the RES, approximately 50% of the inmates who responded (total responses =53) indicated that they were either unsure of their housing or would be couch surfing or homeless upon their release.

Tompkins County offers several housing options available for various populations. RES heard presentations from Tompkins Community Action (who operates Chartwell House for men and Magnolia House for women with children) the Rescue Mission (shelter beds and SRO rooms), and Lakeview Health Services. In addition, RES learned more about the Second Wind Cottages which were recently developed in the Newfield area. Based on the information presented, a flow issue became apparent in these housing programs. Clients are able to remain in these housing programs indefinitely; there is no temporary or transitional nature to them. As such, once they are filled, the program is not able to offer housing to others who may be in need. This creates a substantial barrier to successful reentry for individuals with identified housing needs.

Given the restrictions of the private housing market (and the very high cost of housing here in Tompkins County) and the policies of public housing authorities, many of our clients end up living in the Jungle (currently being renamed to The Forest), couch surfing at the homes of friends, or living at one of the single room occupancy residences. Federal housing policies

¹⁴ “Homeless Shelter Use and Reincarceration”, Metraux and Culhane, Penn Social Policy and Practice Departmental Papers, 2004

permit, and even require in some cases, public housing authorities, Section 8 providers, and other federally-assisted housing programs to deny housing to individuals who have engaged in certain criminal activities, including ones that are drug-related, violent, or may negatively affect the health and safety of other residents.¹⁵ Even if our clients manage to find housing, most do not have enough money to pay for a security deposit, and many landlords refuse to accept the DSS security guarantee letter. Most affordable housing in Tompkins County is located in the outlying townships with limited transportation. Additional affordable housing is located in contiguous counties, also with limited public transportation options.

Employment

Research has shown that employment can make a strong contribution to recidivism reduction efforts because it refocuses an individual's time and efforts on pro-social activities. However, research does not support the proposition that simply placing an individual in a job is a silver bullet for reducing criminal behavior. The definition of "hard to employ" is a term commonly used to describe individuals with chronic unemployment and is associated with low levels of education or having a criminal record.¹⁶ As such, the issue of employment is a difficult one.

The RES heard presentations from several providers of employment services, including Tompkins Workforce NY, Finger Lakes Reuse, City of Ithaca Personnel and Tompkins County Personnel. These presentations revolved around services and hiring practices for individuals who have criminal convictions in their backgrounds. There appears to be an internal screening process with both the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County Personnel departments and the presence of a conviction does not automatically eliminate the applying individual from prospective employment. However, in the private sector discrimination more routinely hinders employment opportunities. As of 2010, an estimated 92 percent of all large employers conducted criminal background checks as part of the application process for some or all job candidates, illustrating the extent to which employers are concerned with an applicant's criminal record.¹⁷ In addition, many of the individuals returning to the community from the jail do not possess the job readiness skills needed to not only obtain a job, but to also retain the job for any length of time.

Some strides have been made in this area with the new evidenced based **Ready Set Work!** curriculum being offered in the county jail prior to release by the Tompkins County Department of Probation and Community Justice Employment Specialist. However, this curriculum meets

¹⁵ Presentation by interns of the Tompkins-Tioga Neighborhood Legal Services Corporation, July 2008.

¹⁶ *Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies: Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness* by the Council of State Governments Justice Center, September 2013, page 2, page 18.

¹⁷ Maurice Emsellen and Michelle N. Rodriguez, *65 Million "Need not Apply", The Case for Reforming Criminal Background Checks for Employment* (New York: National Employment Law Project, 2011).

only a small population as it requires continuous attendance in a 6 week block of time, thus making it nearly impossible for the unsentenced population to participate in the program.

One area of discussion in the RES meetings was the lack of follow up with employers when a re-entry participant does gain employment. The time involved to perform this function just does not currently exist given the other duties and responsibilities of the reentry Employment Specialist. The benefits of being able to provide such a service are numerous; it would foster relationships with employers who would be willing to hire reentry individuals, being able to intervene when issues arise with a reentry employee might prevent loss of the job; additional skill work and training could be provided to ensure employer satisfaction with job performance.

Coordination of Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health Treatment

Research shows that substance abuse and/or mental health problems are present in a large percentage of those incarcerated in jails. The deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill has resulted in an increase in the use of incarceration to respond to the behavior of those with mental health problems. The number of people with mental illness who are incarcerated has increased significantly in recent years. Many large jail systems, such as those in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, have become primary providers of mental health care in their jurisdictions.¹⁸ In recent years, staff within the Tompkins County Jail has noted an increase in individuals with mental health problems being remanded to the jail. Further, the incidence of co-occurring disorders (substance abuse and mental health) in the Tompkins County Jail most likely mirrors or exceeds that of the nationally incarcerated population—approximately 25%.¹⁹

Drug and Alcohol treatment is available locally through two major programs—the Alcohol and Drug Council and Cayuga Addiction and Recovery Services. Mental Health treatment is provided by the Tompkins County Mental Health Clinic and a host of private providers in the community. Those with co-occurring disorders are difficult to treat as there is often a conflict with the treatment providers over which condition should be treated first. Further, both mental health treatment and substance abuse treatment for those formerly incarcerated is compromised largely due to the individual's noncompliance with alcohol and drug treatment (abstinence) recommendations, poor past treatment attendance and follow through and noncompliance with taking medications to treat mental health conditions. For this population, self-medicating with drugs and alcohol is often the approach to dealing with mental health problems.

Integrating the two systems at the state and local level would be of benefit to all individuals suffering with dual diagnosis, and particularly to individuals being released from the jail. In

¹⁸Freudenberg N: Jails, prisons, and the health of urban populations: a review of the impact of the correctional system on community health. *Journal of Urban Health* 78:214–235.

¹⁹ Life after LockUp, p. 17.

addition, the Committee stresses the need to explore additional psychiatric and mental health resources based on what we learned from other communities.

Education

Education plays a critical role in enabling the successful reentry of people with criminal justice backgrounds. According to Susan Sturm, one of the leading researchers on education after incarceration, “without adequate education, people with criminal justice backgrounds are ill-equipped to rebuild their lives and obtain employment that can break the cycle of poverty.”²⁰ This is particularly important at a time when the prediction is that by 2018 over 60% of jobs nationwide will require some kind of college degree.²¹ Federal Pell and New York State TAP grants are available to almost everyone coming out of jail and generally cover all tuition and book expenses at a SUNY college.

Currently, the Tompkins County Jail offers high school equivalency preparation for those individuals who would like to obtain their degree. However, for those inmates who already have a high school diploma, there is currently no service within the jail to help individuals begin the process of thinking about furthering their education at the college level. Assistance with applications, financial aid information etc. would possibly open the door for some individuals who either never thought about this possibility or who do not have the skills or the know how to navigate the system of higher education. During the course of the RES meetings, it was learned that the Upstate Downstate College Initiative, led by Benay Rubenstein and currently funded by the Cornell Prison Education program and private donors, will be providing pre and post release assessment of higher education “readiness” to Tompkins County Jail inmates.

Transportation

Transportation from the rural townships of Tompkins County into the City of Ithaca is limited to the traditional work day time periods. Inbound transport from Groton and Enfield (two townships with available housing under the Safety Net funding for single individuals) is scheduled most heavily in the early morning hours and outbound transit to these townships ends between 5:10 and 6:00 in the evening. This schedule is designed to accommodate those regular commuters who work traditional day time hours. Many of those recently released who find employment work in the service sector with less traditional hours including early mornings and evenings and cannot use the public transit system.

Recommendations by Topic

The RES determined, based on extensive research, that everyone leaving the jail would receive some degree of reentry service from simple contact information to intensive case coordination.

²⁰ Sturm, Susan (2013) Center for Social and Institutional Change, Columbia University

²¹ 2013. Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce Analysis

Those individuals identified as low risk with a family support network would simply receive a listing of reentry resources—a cheat sheet of where to go for different kinds of assistance. A wallet sized Resource Guide listing agency names and telephone numbers has been created. This is to be handed out to all inmates being released back into the community, regardless of their status. Those identified as medium to high risk would receive a more comprehensive package of reentry services based on an individualized discharge plan. Most of the comprehensive package of reentry services would be available only to those sentenced inmates. Given the uncertainty of length of stay combined with the time requirement for transition preparation, it is not feasible at this time to provide unsentenced inmates with a full array of services, particularly long term trainings. However, every inmate should have a preliminary assessment and discharge plan. Our recommendations to implement a comprehensive Tompkins County Reentry Program, focusing on those individuals leaving the Tompkins County Jail follow.

Lack of Coordination of Existing Community Services

- The County should hire two full time Reentry Coordinator/Discharge Planners who will serve as the point persons for the Reentry Program. The Coordinators' primary responsibilities would include conducting a preliminary assessment and discharge plan for all inmates incarcerated in the Tompkins County Jail, coordinating identified services and providing follow up in the community. The RES views a continuum of care based upon the risk level of the inmate. This continuum of care is in line with evidence based practices which dictate that services and resources be provided to those most at risk to recidivate.

The Reentry Coordinator/Discharge Planners would also work collaboratively with those community stakeholders: the Jail, Criminal Justice and Alternatives to Incarceration board and others interested and knowledgeable about reentry to further consider and develop the recommendations that follow. Collection of data is also a primary responsibility of these positions to assist future planning efforts and evaluation of the program.

In Jail Programming

Programming space within the jail is limited and in demand. The RES recommends that the existing space be reviewed and that other options for space be explored. This could be in the form of adding space in the existing jail or examining off site locations, such as the Day Reporting program, as a possible venue to inmate programming.

- At intake, ask about educational background and interest in continuing education after release.
- Schedule monthly College Orientation sessions for those interested in college prep/remedial programming while incarcerated.
- Offer Alternative Federal Credit Union "MoneyWise" sessions for inmates.

- At least twice weekly 12 Step Programs should be offered to both male and female inmates (for a total of six 12 Step Meetings per week).
- Explore possibility of offering mental health counseling.
- Alternatives to Violence programming should be offered. A basic course requires 20 hours of workshops. Participation and graduation from an AVP course could assist the individual in qualifying for better housing. It could be used as a screening tool to place individuals in transitional housing, once this is developed.
- T4C and Ready, Set, Work should be offered on a regular basis in the jail.
- Private detox space should be developed in the jail with medical staff support.
- One time trainings and information sessions should be offered to the unsentenced population.
- Parenting Education and Nutrition classes should be offered.
- Consider downloading educational courses to jail computers for ongoing development.

Identification

- RES has already implemented some improvements to the current identification requirements. The Sheriff's ID card has been enhanced for identified re-entry program inmates. DMV has agreed to accept the enhanced Sheriff's ID as required proof toward obtaining a non Driver's license ID.
- Agencies such as Probation and OAR need additional funding to assist individuals with the costs of obtaining birth certificates and social security cards.

Housing

- Lack of safe and adequate housing has been identified by inmates and members of the subcommittee as contributing to instability and potential recidivism. 50% of female inmates responding to a survey indicated they were unsure of their housing, would be homeless or would be couch surfing upon release. Males responded similarly, with 49% indicating housing issues. (see Appendix 2)

The RES believes that transitional housing, ideally located in the City of Ithaca and staffed with a resident advisor, would provide a supportive atmosphere for those high risk inmates leaving the jail who have no or inappropriate housing. The RES believes that the transitional housing period should not exceed 6 months, with the goal to move on to independent housing.

- To increase the availability of safe and accessible housing for those leaving the Tompkins County Jail, the RES recommends that regulations regarding the Safety Net Housing allowance for a single individual be examined for possible increase from the current \$400 a month in order to provide access to accessible and safe housing. The current allotment only manages to secure a room in substandard housing located in the rural townships with limited transportation.

- Supportive housing has proven itself a cost effective strategy to end homelessness, but the supply of units here in Tompkins County is extremely limited. It is in the interest of our local institutions of government to take the lead in providing both capital and operating support to enable the creation of supportive housing for ex-offenders in partnership with non-profit organizations.

Employment

- Evaluation for further training, education and employment readiness should be conducted as part of the creation of a discharge plan. Identification of appropriate training opportunities and training programs should be lined up prior to discharge.
- Create trainings that meet the needs of specific employers who are willing and interested in hiring those that successfully complete targeted training.
- Work collectively with the City and County to hire ex-offenders who meet job requirements, thereby setting an example for local private sector employers.
- Housing should be aligned with employment locations.
- Public transportation options be expanded to the rural townships to include schedules which accommodate service sector work.
- The Reentry Coordinator should work closely with the employment specialists in the county and also develop relationships and financial incentives (internships, stipends and scholarships) with a number of county based employers including Finger Lakes ReUse, Cornell, Ithaca College, Tompkins County, and the City of Ithaca.
- Explore a mentoring and apprenticeship program for youth being released from the Tompkins County Jail
- Tompkins County could consider legislation to “Ban the Box”. The City of Ithaca could also consider legislation to “Ban the Box”.

Education

- RES Coordinator should collaborate with Upstate/Downstate and local colleges to support college ready inmates upon their release from the Tompkins County Jail.

Transportation

- Van service be instituted for rural areas where many released from the jail are housed together.
- Donation of a van be sought.
- OAR is currently exploring a “Welcoming” program with the Society of Friends and possibly other churches. The program would provide rides from the jail to downtown upon an individual’s release from the Tompkins County jail. In addition, the driver could deliver the individual to DSS, Probation or OAR for scheduled appointments, share a cup of coffee, and assist an individual with getting basic personal care items.

Mentoring

- Lack of emotional support upon release from incarceration is an identified issue for those leaving both the prison system and the Tompkins County Jail. RES recommends that a workgroup be formed to examine the possibility of developing a volunteer mentoring program for Tompkins County jail inmates upon their release. This work should be done in close conjunction with the Ultimate Reentry Project and the Community Faith Partnership.