

Perpetual Incarceration Machine

Structural Impediments to Postprison Success

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The prison system is a perpetual incarceration machine growing on failure. This article explores structural impediments that contribute to parole failure and recidivism. Prisoners exit prison with few material resources and many obligations. Upon arrival at the work release centers, they are subjected to the demands of "collection counselors." They complain about deductions from their employment checks, including restitution, court costs, fees for public defenders, and rent for work release beds. The correctional system perpetuates itself: Failures in work release, probation, and parole account for the majority of new prison admissions. Recommendations are provided for effective prison release programs.

One of the most perplexing problems facing policy makers, the public, and scholars, is how to reduce recidivism among released felons. Various proposals including "get tough" policies have been suggested at an enormous cost to the public. These policies have resulted in what Irwin and Austin (1994, p. 121) called "the rising tide of parole failures." Their research focuses on parolee misconduct, technical violations, drug test failures, and parole supervision as explanations for rearrest and return to prison.

This article explores how prisoners experienced release from the Iowa state prison system to work release halfway houses. Inmates did prison time and, on a given day, upon reaching the expiration of sentence, mandatory release, or, being granted work-release or a parole date, passed through penitentiary gates to continue their sentences in community facilities. Why do so many ex-convicts experience rearrest and reincarceration? What are

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the social-structural variables that may contribute to recidivism? What social-structural impediments and obstacles are related to work release and parole failure?

Qualitative research methods were used to explore the experiences of prison convicts with prison release and reentry to the community. Our study asked prisoners and correctional staff to comment on the problems of prison release, work-release, reenter to the community, and recidivism. The focus was on structural impediments to parole success, defined as legal and economic barriers to prisoner reentry to the community. Economic impediments include (a) problems with securing employment in both the public and private sectors (barriers to employment may include criminal records, restrictions on occupational licensing, bonding, and civil service requirements); (b) imposition of court fees and fines, restitution, lawyer bills, and child support; (c) years of imprisonment that result in the accumulation of various unpaid consumer bills; (d) the relative poverty of prisoners released as measured by their "gate money," assets, and debts; and (e) the rate of unemployment as compared with the general population. Legal impediments include the loss of civil rights and collateral consequences of criminal convictions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A prison sentence carries both direct and indirect consequences. The direct consequences of incarceration may be pervasive and profound, they are what Sykes (1958) termed the "pains of imprisonment." Upon being sentenced to prison, convicts lost nearly everything dear to them, including the intimacy of family and friends (see Holt & Miller, 1972; Parker & Lanier, 1997). Most of their worldly possessions were forfeited, loaned, or stolen while they served time in the penitentiary; homes, farms, businesses, and material possessions were repossessed by the bank or confiscated by the government. They lost their jobs and occupational status in the employment structure.

The indirect or collateral consequences of incarceration may not be evident to prisoners until they are released from prison. The collateral consequences of criminal conviction (Allen & Simonsen, 1995) include disabilities, disqualifications, and legal restriction. In a study of state statutes, Burton, Cullen, and Travis (1987) found that collateral consequences of a felony conviction were

In some sixteen states (nearly one third of the jurisdictions surveyed), courts may terminate parenting rights upon conviction or incarceration of a parent. (2) More than half (twenty-eight states) permit divorce for conviction or imprisonment of a felony. (3) Some 30 percent of the jurisdictions permanently bar convicted felons from public employment in their home states, unless pardoned or restored to full citizenship. (4) If one is a felon in nineteen states, one may not hold public office. (5) Almost every state forbids a felon from possession of a firearm. (6) Only eight states require the felon to register as a former offender, and only four states continue the practice of civil death. (p. 52)

These legal structural impediments to successful reentry to the community restrict the ex-prisoner to a structure of diminished resources.

Historically, the legal status of prisoners has been defined by civil death statutes. Johnson (1990, pp. 155-156, 168) discussed civil death:

When we sentence criminals to prison we suspend their civil lives, rendering them civilly dead until they are deemed worthy of return to the society of the living. Civil death entails the loss of one's freedom and of the attendant benefits of civil life in the free world. . . . Prisoners, until fairly recently, were viewed as the legal equivalent of dead men. . . . They were *civiles mortuus*, and their estates, if they had any, were managed like those of dead men.

Civil death (Allen & Simonsen 1995, p. 9, pp. 295-296; Davidenas, 1983, p. 61) implies that their worldly legacy is claimed or inherited by others; a prisoner's property is confiscated in the name of the state (a common practice of the federal government), a man's wife is declared a widow and is free to remarry, and a "dead" person is disqualified from signing contracts or conducting business affairs.

Many prisoners leave prison with barely enough money to survive a few days. According to Lenihan (1974, pp. 4-6; 1975), "Most State governments give each releasee clothing, transportation, and 'gate money,' ranging from \$10 to \$200—the median is \$28. Fifteen states do not provide transportation; six do not provide clothing; three give neither; and two give no money."

Convicts are released from prison with considerable debts and financial liabilities. These debts are a consequence of being locked up for years and being forced to work at prison wages. Prison inmates, with these meager earnings, must provide for their personal needs, for example, commissary, legal expenses, and collect phone calls to family. Released from prison, the ex-convict is typically hit with delinquent bills that have built up for years, including court costs, court fees, court fines, restitution, tax deficiencies, child support, child care, and domestic family bills.

The research on prison release documents parolee problems with unemployment. Pownell (1969, p. 49) reported federal male parolees experiencing three times the rate of unemployment of the general population; Tropin (1977) estimated the national rate of unemployment for all ex-offenders at three times the rate for nonoffenders. Dale (1976, p. 323) suggested that ex-convict unemployment is related to the rate of recidivism: "This high unemployment rate is reflected directly in the rate of recidivism. Of the more than 100,000 ex-offenders released from prison each year, 70 percent will return to prison—30 percent within a year after release." Recent studies (Dickey, 1989; English & Mande, 1991; Grogger, 1989) suggest that unemployment contributes to community program failure and recommend priority be given to job development assistance.

The unemployment rate of ex-convicts may be due to employment applications that inquire about criminal records. Smith (1984) reported:

The American Bar Association (1973) speculated that the reasons for an unusually high (36 percent and higher) unemployment rate among ex-offenders are not only their lack of skills but laws, regulations, and practices which prohibit certain jobs to those with a criminal record. (p. 5)

Generally, ex-convicts are unlikely to receive any prison training in marketable skills, employees are reluctant to hire ex-convicts, and ex-convicts have great difficulty in filling out employment applications. Ex-convicts are routinely threatened (Irwin, 1970) by employment applications that inquire about arrest records. Ex-convicts on parole must okay their employment with their parole officer. Parole officers are generally required to verify employment by calling or visiting the parolees' work site; this may lead to the termination of employment.

Restrictive laws and policies provide obstacles for ex-convicts in the labor market. Stanley (1976) discussed three barriers to ex-convicts securing legal employment: licensing restrictions, civil service rules and practices, and bonding requirements. A study by the American Bar Association (Hunt, Bowers, & Miller, 1973, p. 5) found "1,948 separate (state) statutory provisions that affect the licensing of persons with an arrest or conviction record." Ex-convicts are required by state statutes to prove "good moral character" to receive an occupational license for the following: restaurant work where alcohol is sold; bartender; chauffeur; plumber; physical therapist; teacher; tree surgeon; dry cleaner; midwife; funeral director; doctor; lawyer; stock broker; care sales person; insurance agent; barber; cab driver; and child care worker. As Stanley (1976) indicated, "There are lists pages long of occupations for which a license may be denied if the applicant has committed a criminal offense" (p. 152).

Ex-convicts may fare no better in public sector employment. Herbert Miller (1972) reported they faced formidable obstacles in securing government employment. Stanley (1976) suggested that civil service laws were worded to deny ex-convicts employment opportunities. Ironically, one innovative program, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Model Offender Program, was unable to hire ex-convicts as employment counselors because of restrictive regulations. Criminal records are used to deny ex-convicts employment as police, firefighters, garbage collectors, secretaries, clerks, and to prevent enlistment in the military. Bonding companies routinely denied bonding to ex-convicts. This practice effectively excluded them from many jobs, including truck driving, furniture moving, or employment that required handling currency or operating a cash register, such as fast food or retail sales.

In summary, the direct and indirect consequences of incarceration created legal and economic difficulties for prisoners who served time in prison and upon release to community facilities. Understanding prisoner experience requires a methodology that gives convicts a voice to report their problems with the many stages of custody.

METHODS

This study explores how Iowa prisoners report the transition from prison to work release. We interviewed 30 men just released from prison, following them from the prison gates to their designated correctional halfway house. We also interviewed correctional staff in prisons, halfway houses, and parole offices. Our criterion for selection of men was that they were convicted felons who had served more than 1 year in prison; most of the interviewees were recidivists who have served more than one prison sentence and a considerable part of their adult life in correctional institutions.

Two- to four-hour long interviews were conducted with work release prisoners. Interviews were conducted on site in person with audiotaped questions and answers. After a few initial interviews, it became apparent that the interviewees had their own stories to tell, regardless of our interview schedule. As a result, we consciously attempted not to control the interviews. They were conducted over a 6-month period at one prison, two residential work release centers, a house of hospitality for ex-convicts, parole and probation offices, and the offices of human service providers.

The vulnerable status of work release prisoners and their precarious foothold in the community while residing in a correctional facility with controlled movement dictated that we not jeopardize them personally. We did not ask compromising questions about criminal records, court cases, drugs, alcohol, or illegal activities. However, discussion of these subjects were initiated by the prisoners.

We decided not to review either criminal or prison records of prisoners. These records, including pre-sentence investigations (PSI), court records, police records, and central correctional files, are official records of stigmatization. Criminal history record information is used, by statutory provision, to deny felons the right to purchase firearms, to deny bail, to upgrade criminal offenses, to enhance sentences for offenders with prior convictions, to provide for mandatory sentences for habitual felons, to deny probation, as evidence in pre-sentence reports, to decide correctional classification, and to affect parole eligibility. Thus criminal history records were instrumental in processing of prisoners through every stage of the criminal justice system. Consequently, it is not surprising that some prisoners would be threatened by an outside researcher reviewing their records. Prisoners complained that official records were used to both enhance and sustain criminal sanctions; they are part of their punishment. Interviews of correctional staff provided an opportunity to get background information on both prison release and work release programs. As the study progressed, we were able to check contradictory or conflicting information by comparing prisoner and staff responses.

FINDINGS

Iowa operated a "staged release" program where prisoners were provided an opportunity to serve 3 to 6 months in work release centers. Prisoners left prison and were reassigned to work release centers that provided convicts

with an opportunity to adjust in stages to working and living in the community. Prisoners were processed through a series of structured environments of diminishing security levels, as they gradually progressed to release. The prison population studied consisted of men who individually had served time in a number of different prisons before being transferred to a work release facility. Upon successfully completing the work release program, the men were eligible for parole in constructive custody, until they finished parole supervision.

Prisoners were released from prison to work release with \$5 "gate money," a bus ticket, and \$50 release money from which the cost of their "prison blues" was deducted. Two prisoners interviewed together discussed release money:

First prisoner: Out of the money allotment for clothes (\$50) I bought two pairs of their jeans and a shirt. And basically it ain't like I went down to the clothing room, I got the clothing I already had up in my locker.

Interviewer: How much did that cost you?

First prisoner: The pants were fifteen, the shirt was seven, and they made me pay for my boots.

Interviewer: Did you have any of that \$50 left?

First prisoner: About \$10 or \$12, something like that.

Second prisoner: Did you get out in winter time man?

First prisoner: It was March, sort of winter.

Second prisoner: Did they make you buy the coat?

First prisoner: Yea, thanks man. The coat came along too. The coat and the boots.

Second prisoner: If you don't buy the coat they'll make you go without one.

Interviewer: They give you \$50?

Second prisoner: That you never see. You don't see the money. If you got personal clothes, they still won't give you the money if you don't want to wear the state clothes. It used to be they took you downtown and you bought straight from the store. But now they don't do that. It ain't like they take you to the clothing room and give you new stuff for the money. It's what you been wearing. And it's stuff you been wearing for awhile, working in and everything.

The balance of the \$50 was forwarded to the men's institutional account at their intended destination, the work release facility, where it was applied to their first week's rent.

These men walked out of prison wearing old, worn out prison uniforms, carrying a cardboard box containing their personal belongings, with \$5 gate money in their pockets. Upon arrival at the work release center, most of them were "stone broke" until either their family arrived to provide them "walk around money" or their prison account money was delivered by mail, which may take a week or more. Many of them received loans from the work release center to tide them over while they looked for work, waited for their first real paycheck, or pursued alternative means to securing street money.

Why are these men exiting prison wearing prison uniforms? One community corrections employee discussed the problem:

They come in with no clothes. He came in [referring to one prisoner in a group interview] with no shoes. January 24th and no shoes no coat, t-shirt

and a pair of pants. Coming from prison, one guy from Oakdale came in with, in December, cut off shirt, one lens in his glasses, not two. They did get his hearing aid cleaned so he did have that. Pair of pants that's it, no coat. And we are seeing more and more of that. We are seeing more and more come in with nothing. And they are even talking about cutting the money they get when they leave [prison]. That's rumors from the budget cuts.

Another community correction employee responded to our question: "How long has it been that you have seen them walk in here wearing prison blues?"

Well they have always done that, oh yeah, forever. Even when they dressed people out, they really didn't dress them out in clothing that was really appropriate. You could pretty much pick them out in a crowd no matter what. I'm not sure it has to be that way but that's the way it's always been. The shoes are a big giveaway most of the time.

The prisoners arrived at the work release centers without appropriate clothing to wear when applying for employment. The same community corrections employee explained:

If they could get a stock of clothing that was varied enough that would fit in, I think that probably would help. I certainly don't like to see them come in here [wearing prison blues] because that's one of the first things we have to deal with. The work release prisoner says, "I don't have appropriate clothing to job search." I don't know what the answer to that [street clothes] is. At some point in time they need to address that, whether it be at the institution or give us enough money and resources here to be able to do it, one or the other. But it needs to be addressed, that is a problem. If we had a prerelease center, that certainly would be the appropriate place to deal with those kinds of issues.

The amount of "gate money," release clothing, and bus tickets were only some of the issues that needed to be addressed.

The prisoners did not have sufficient notification of their scheduled date for prison release. They did not have the time to psychologically prepare for their transfers from prison to community work release. The director of a work release facility stated:

Down there in the institution [prison], I would hate to have someone from the institution to probably take exception to this. What I see happening is there is a waiting list. I don't know that there is a hell of a lot of work that goes on with that individual prior to the time that he is to be released. Has that counselor really sat down and tried to work with and prepare that guy for release? I don't think so. They are jerking a guy out of a cell or off his work detail and saying, "Here pack your stuff you are going to Newton, your bus leaves in an hour." That's the kind of thing I see happening. That's the stories we hear.

Correctional staff reported that upon arrival at the work release centers, the prisoners appeared to be in a euphoric trance, happy to be out from behind the wall but unprepared for the challenges before them. The same director of a work release facility explained:

There is not a heck of a lot of time for that individual to get a mind-set about what he is going to try to do or try to accomplish while he's on work release. Maybe that somewhere along the line did take place but then with our waiting list we got with the halfway house maybe that was 3 months ago. He still has to get that mind-set going to say, "Okay, you know I've got to do this, I'm going to do that, I'm going to really try to do this, I'm going to try to avoid that." He is probably thinking about that on the way here on the bus. And then we bring him in here and nail him with all the rules and regulations in an orientation and he's just spinning. We know that that's a problem.

"Spinning" refers to the state of mind the prisoners were in upon arrival at the work release center. They have been transported from prison, with its rules and regulations, to a new environment, the work release facility, with an entirely new set of rules and specific obligations. Some of these men, particularly those who served a long time in the penitentiary, had not been required to pay rent, purchase food, or look for employment in years. The problem was that they had not been properly prepared for release from prison.

Two reasons why these men were without funds upon arrival at the community work release facilities: low prison work pay and the collection of restitution. Prisoners reported inmate pay as \$1 per day, that is 12.5 cents an hour, \$20 a month. One prisoner reported:

Two dollars was top pay [per day]. I was making 25 cents an hour top pay. The pay we get up there [prison] now is just ridiculous, it's nothing to live on. You have to have your people send you money in. If your people out on the streets don't have it, then you're screwed.

Out of this \$20 a month, inmates were required to pay for their own cigarettes, paper, envelopes, stamps, and commissary food. Most of them, as a means of survival, relied upon money from home that arrived as U.S. Postal Money Orders and was added to their inmate accounts. Traditionally, money sent in to prisoners from their family and friends has been protected from institutional deductions for court ordered restitution.

Seven of the 30 men in the study received no visits at all while they were incarcerated. Many of them reported considerable anxiety about visits. One prisoner recalled his visiting days:

I remember a lot of days like that. My visits would be the next day, and the day before, I would get real quiet. On the day my visit was coming, I always got real nervous. And I never understood why because I had known this girl for 10 years. When it was time to go visit her, I would always get real nervous. I'd get nervous to the point where my hands would shake.

Some of these men refused visits, whereas others had no family or friends that were interested in visiting them. A number of men referred to their families' low income as the reason the latter did not visit their sons, husbands, and fathers in prison; other men preferred that their families not visit them because of the degrading treatment they would receive from penitentiary staff. The number of visits a prisoner receives per year may be related to his length of sentence and number of prior incarcerations. Prisoners serving long sentences, 10 years to life, or who have served a number of prior sentences, may lose their community ties and have fewer visits per year.

We asked the prisoners what their most significant needs upon release from prison were. The most frequent responses were money (24), job (23), new friends (18), job training (13), and education (13). Money was needed immediately to comply with work release centers' rules that they pay weekly rent, purchase institutional sheets (\$15 is deducted from their money that arrives from the prison), and provide for their own food and transportation. The men reported being under constant pressure from the staff to work for money that would be deducted from their paychecks to pay for mandatory rent and restitution. The prisoners called the correctional staff "collection officers" because they were more concerned with collecting rent and restitution for the state than providing assistance to their clients. One prisoner reported, "I ain't going to do time and pay for it too. You don't have to pay that restitution."

The correctional counselors were ordered to collect restitution and rent. Prisoners paid \$4, \$7, or \$12 a day rent for their bed in a work release center, depending on the facility and their status; \$120, \$210, or \$360 rent a month plus a 20% deduction for restitution. The rent was for a bed or bunk in a dormitory or four-man apartment in a controlled movement facility and did not include food. Most of the prisoners were in debt to the work release center for back rent. In some cases, their resentment of correctional staff handling their paychecks and deducting for restitution and rent dampened their interest in legitimate employment. One prisoner voiced his resentment:

You leave the penitentiary on a Tuesday, you come here, and you're broke for the whole week or two till they send your money from the penitentiary. What kind of shit is that? Ya know, I mean a man come home from the penitentiary they don't even give you gate money. They give you \$5 [and] bus fare. You got rent to pay, bus tokens to pay for. They make you buy sheets. They give us two sheets, pillow case, face towel, and a bath towel, and charge us \$15. And it ain't like do you want it, you got to take it. There ain't no option. They do that and that ain't right.

We coming straight from the penitentiary, they trying to take our money. And then you get your money, okay my money just come [from the penitentiary], I owe for sheets, owe for bus tokens, I owe for my rent. You're automatically 2 weeks behind in rent, see what I'm saying. Then your counselor, I don't where, they get the power to take your money and spend it like they want to.

I didn't ask to come here and be put in the hole by your all program. Ya all know that when I come here it would take awhile for me to find a job.

Even if they do locate employment, in their first few weeks at the work, they find themselves in debt for rent, sheets, and bus tokens. Every week that passes without working puts them deeper in debt to the program. This debt contributes to the tension and bad feeling that exists between the staff and some of their less-than-successful clients. Men who are unable or unwilling to find work, usually at minimum wage, and do not have the resources to pay restitution and work release rent, are restricted to daily release only to look for work.

The prisoners had accumulated considerable debt, including restitution, court cost and fees, back child support bills with the county, and miscellaneous domestic bills. The debt ranged from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands of dollars, most of this in restitution and court costs. They are subject to a 20% deduction from their paychecks that started in prison and continued on through work release and parole.

Many of the men complained bitterly about being assessed legal fees for court appointed lawyers. At the time that their court cases were being decided (by their public defenders pressuring them into pleading guilty), they were unaware that they would be assessed attorney fees. None of them understood how they could be charged legal fees for public defenders. A prisoner stated:

Court costs, reimbursement to the place we broke into, the stuff that we took. It's really weird, it's suppose to be free [public defender], when you lose [plead guilty] you have to pay.

Court-appointed lawyers collect their fees for services rendered to indigent clients through the imposition of court costs on those who plead guilty; the fees are collected from the prisoners by the state and paid to the attorneys. Defendants who plead not guilty and demand a trial are not assessed legal fees. Seasoned prisoners, those that had been through the court system more than once, were not surprised that they were pressured by public defenders to plead guilty.

Prisoners experienced a dramatic reduction in material resources as the result of serving prison time. The sample of 30 work release prisoners in this study reported losing the following as a result of their prolonged removal from the community during their incarceration: 11 of them reported losing a marriage (divorced while in prison); 8 reported losing homes or farms, either by bank repossession or divorce; 17 lost cars upon going to prison; 10 had their furniture disappear and 11 reported not being able to locate their clothes upon release. The most commonly reported loss was employment, with 17 losing the jobs they held prior to incarceration.

The men, with the exception of the disabled and impaired, who may require assignment to sheltered workshops, did find employment. But they were limited—by their interrupted work histories, the missing years in their work records, the requirement that they disclose their place of residence to prospective employers, employment application questions about criminal

records, and other legal restrictions—to the lowest paid occupations. They took minimum wage dead-end jobs: laundries, food service, car washes, day labor, service stations, hotel service, low-paid factory or construction labor, or telemarketing.

The work release centers required prisoners to take the first available job. At the time of the interviews, 23 of the 30 men were employed. The unemployed men had either just arrived from prison, were disabled, recently laid off, or had had their employment terminated. Many of them expressed dissatisfaction with the low pay and working conditions of their jobs. Most of them had worked at jobs before going to prison that paid considerably better than their present employment. The mean wage for their highest paid job was more than \$10 an hour prior to going to prison, with a number of the men working union construction and factory jobs. The mean wage of the men upon finding their first employment while at the work release centers was just more than \$5.50 an hour, with only 1 man of the 30 receiving a wage that was significantly above minimum wage. As a group, the work release prisoners were being paid approximately half the hourly wages they made before going to prison.

In 1988 the total prison population in Iowa was 2,890. By 1989, this population had grown by 3,322, an increase of nearly 15%. For 1989, there were 2,913 total admissions and 2,481 total releases. At this rate, the state will have to build a new medium-sized prison every year to keep up with the anticipated increase in incarceration. Of these 2,913 new prison admissions, only 1,156 were new court commitments, whereas 570 were revoked probation, 650 were parole violators, 56 were shock probation returns, 205 were escape returns, 139 were work release returns, 38 were OWI (operating while intoxicated) returns, and 99 were other admissions. For 1989, more than half of all prison admissions were former prisoners returned on either new criminal charges or revocation of community custody. These revocations of probation, work release, and parole were largely due to increases in program violations other than new convictions for felonies or aggravated misdemeanors. In effect, the state's prison population continues to climb as the result of prison release failure and the high rate of community custody revocation.

Direct and indirect, or collateral consequences of incarceration are reflected in the rules and resource structure that prisoners encounter upon leaving prison. Felons as ex-convicts are subject to a plethora of bewildering restrictions upon release from prison, as stipulated by the rules of first work release facilities and then parole. These rules are predicated on the requirements of custodial supervision and not the needs of the released prisoners. At the same time these released prisoners are subject to low-tolerance parole rules and regulations, they have experienced a dramatic decrease in personal resources.

Iowa operates a perpetual incarceration machine, a system of institutional facilities designed as human warehouses for the return of damaged goods. Prisoners are released to work release or parole with little preparation for success. More than 50% of the men fail work release, and nearly 70% fail parole and eventually return to prison. Many of these probationers and parolees are being returned to prison for status offenses, as they have violated

the rules and regulations of their community custody status. The prison system is perpetuating growth on its own institutional failure to properly prepare prisoners for release. The system is a revolving door that shuffles prisoners from one level of custody to another, from probation to prison, from prison to work release and parole, and from parole back to prison. The Iowa state prison system is growing because of its own institutional failure.

DISCUSSION AND PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Our observations and interviews at work release facilities convinced us of three essential facts: Prisoners have not been properly prepared for release to work release facilities; Work release prisoners need a carefully planned staged release program; and There is a need for better communication and program continuity between the prisons and the work release centers.

Prisons need exit programs that prepare men for release. This program should include expanded visitation privileges, home furloughs, and family and employment counseling. The prerelease program should arrange for the prisoners to have driver's licenses and social security cards before leaving prison. Prisoners with outstanding consumer or tax debt could receive legal counseling on filing bankruptcy—for example, Chapter 7 for persons without assets. They should be supplied with a set of clothes appropriate for their employment search, this includes shirts, pants, eye glasses, coats, boots, and sufficient gate money to meet their needs until their first paycheck.

All prisoners should have a detailed prerelease plan prepared while on community furloughs. This may be a parole plan or work release plan. The plan should include specific reference to family, place of residence, and employment or school. Social workers or parole officers should be assigned to take these men home for a first visit with their children and spouses or ex-spouses. This provides the prisoner and his family with a professional observer if assistance or intervention is required. States might consider a program that waives the first year of tuition at state supported schools and universities for men just released from prison. The state would save money by sending men to school, including college, rather than back to prison. This prerelease program needs to be one step in a carefully planned program of staged release that includes institutional vocational and education programs, the prerelease program, and work release facilities. The director of a work release facility explained:

I think that there needs to be a natural progression in the chain again. From there it needs to slow down, bring it back in there, let's do those steps, let's hammer those things into these people, let's work with them. Get it to a natural progression again. Get it going again. We did that years ago. We did it and we had a seventy some percent success rate. We are not doing it now. We are getting a fifty some success rate. And believe it or not we are working harder than ever with people, working with resources that we have never worked with before, in manners that we have never done before. We are knocking our brains out and getting less pay back. The system is just not working properly.

A carefully planned program of staged release requires increased funding, a commitment to helping prisoners, community cooperation, and a steady flow of information and feedback between the prisons, community corrections, and conditions on the street. Community corrections cannot be funded on the "cheap" (Gibbons, 1986), or at the expense of prisoners, without a high rate of predictable program failure.

We recommend an ongoing effort be made to improve communication and coordination between this preprison release program and the work release centers and parole offices. As the situation now exists, prisoners have a better understanding of the correctional system than the staff does. Prisoners have lived and experienced the succession of correctional stages, whereas correctional staff have worked cemented in place without a comprehensive understanding of the system as a whole. One community corrections employee stated:

I don't know what they tell these people. I don't know who does what in the prison system. But I will tell you there is very little communication between the institutions and community-based corrections.

This lack of communication between the prisons and community corrections does not allow for effective prison release planning and implementation. We recommend that the Iowa Department of Corrections encourage staff to apply for positions both inside and outside of the prison, as a means of acquiring experience with different stages of the correctional system.

Another recommendation concerns the need for work release facilities that operate with less supervision. Few work release clients require the intensive supervision of controlled movement facilities. Some prisoners may benefit from a less structured work release center that is operated informally, on an honor plan. We suggest that state department of corrections may want to visit and tour less restrictive work release centers currently operated by the federal government and nonprofit agencies.

One such facility is the Salvation Army Shelter located at 6th and Walnut, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This facility is a former Holiday Inn motel operated by the Salvation Army as a shelter for homeless families. The Wisconsin Department of Corrections and the Federal Bureau of Prisons place work release prisoners at these facilities. The Salvation Army has a contract with the state of Wisconsin and the federal government to provide rooms for prisoners just released from prison. This contract supports a community shelter that provides rooms, food, and services for hundreds of homeless families each year.

Another less restrictive facility, located on 6th Avenue in Des Moines, Iowa, is the Hanson House of Hospitality operated by Criminal Justice Ministries. This group home for men released from prisons operates without any government funding. The Hanson House charges nothing for rent and food and has successfully assisted nearly 700 former prisoners with their reentry to the community over the last 12 years.

States need to rethink the public defender system. Why are indigent defendants being assessed court costs for court appointed attorneys? In this

study of Iowa prison release, we did not ask work release prisoners questions about the court system. However, in nearly every interview we conducted, when asked about court-ordered restitution, the prisoners complained bitterly about being assessed for court-appointed attorneys. We recommend that the present system of appointing and paying for public defenders be investigated. We suggest that this is a topic for further legislative and academic study, and possible legal action.

Courts are now handing out multiple sentences, what Morris and Tonry (1990) call "punishment packages," that include prison time and alternative sentencing. Prisoners complain that they understood probation, restitution, and community service to be alternatives to incarceration. (Probation, restitution, and community service orders were originally designed as community alternatives to prisons.) Community supervision—for example, probation or court-ordered treatment for substance abuse—were developed as a means to divert minor or first-time offenders from prison. Financial sanctions, such as court-imposed fees, fines, and restitution, were intended to reimburse the state for administrative and judicial costs, compensate the victims of crime, and teach the defendant civic responsibility, as an alternative to prison. Why are judges imposing multiple sentences of prison and financial sanctions on defendants?

The state's fiscal needs dictate that the courts charge defendants for public defenders and impose financial sanctions along with prison sentences. Lawyer fees, court costs, and restitution orders serve as a means of paying part of the state expense for operating courts and prisons. Although the policy makes sense to state fiscal managers, it may be counterproductive in the long run. What is the point of charging defendants for court-appointed lawyers, for court costs, and for restitution, and then sentencing them to years in the penitentiary? This policy is counterproductive if it contributes to increased status violations, recidivism, and subsequent incarcerations.

In Iowa prisons, the prisoners were paid a dollar a day for work. Under a new program where 20% is deducted from prisoner pay, inmate accounts, and checks received from family and friends, the total sum of funds collected from Iowa prisoners does not amount to more than \$30,000 a month (Hovelson, 1992). This collection of \$30,000 a month works out to an average of \$10 a month for 3,000 prisoners. Meeting with these prisoners, keeping records, and completing the monthly paperwork consumes precious staff hours. Considering all the court, prison, community corrections, and parole staff time devoted to collecting restitution payments from prisoners, we doubt the effort is worth the trouble. States may save money—from salaries paid to state employees required to collect restitution—by terminating the collection of restitution from prisoners. Research is needed to compare the cost of restitution collection and the funds received, as a means of evaluating the present policy.

Even if the collection of restitution from prisoners was profitable for the state, is it the best use of staff resources? Why are state court and correctional professionals being employed as bill collectors? Prisoners complain that correctional counselors are more concerned with collecting restitution than providing counseling. Considering the emphasis put on collecting restitution

by prison authorities, it is not surprising that Iowa convicts refer to correctional counselors as collection counselors. We recommend that the practice of deducting restitution and rent money from prisoner paychecks be terminated. We suggest that work release facilities negotiate banking services with local banks for the benefit of their clients. Prisoners, upon receiving their paychecks could deposit their own paychecks in a joint savings account. The account would accrue interest and be subject to rules as decided by the work release director. For example, withdrawals could be limited to specific amounts and require the cosignature of both the prisoner and work release director. This policy recommendation would provide the prisoners with an opportunity to save money to reestablish a private domicile, purchase an automobile, and save for the future.

Another policy recommendation concerns restoring prisoners' civil rights. Why should a convicted felon lose the right to vote? Why should people, without being convicted, be held in pretrial detention because they cannot raise bail, be denied their right to vote on election day? States should consider installing voting booths in all the state's jails and prisons. The restoration of voting rights to felons and prisoners may have interesting repercussions for prison conditions and correctional budget demands. For example, if prisoners could vote, politicians may suddenly become interested in providing increased budgets for prison educational and vocational programs. At the very least, restoring voting rights to prisoners would encourage state politicians to visit prisons. This may result in dramatic improvements in the food service, reductions in overcrowding, and increases in general funding for maintenance and repair of facilities.

Finally, we recommend that states close the "big house" prisons and replace them with smaller facilities. Penitentiaries are outdated, a relic of the nineteenth century. Modern prisons should be small, with populations of 200 or less. One correctional counselor suggested, "If you had unlimited resources, you could plunk one of them down here for 100 people. And I still think that it takes probably less money to do it that way than to build a gigantic prison, and probably going to be more productive in the long run. Small facilities provide the staff with an opportunity to get to know the prisoners, to know their names, their needs, and their ability for self-improvement."

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