

**HAMILTON COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Over each of the past four years the incarceration rate of criminalized persons in Canada has increased. In 2008/2009, the last reported year, the incarceration rate increased again by another 1%. On any given day in that year an average of 37,425 adults were in custody in Canada.

A closer examination of data on this criminalized population shows several trends which in part account for this rate of increase. Changes in remand rates are particularly significant. On an average day in 2008/2009 there were 13,500 adults being held in remand. This is an increase of 4% from the previous year. In Ontario, the number of adults held in remand has outnumbered adults serving sentences in provincial jails and this has been the case since 2005.

Statistics Canada reports that in 2008/2009 there were 13,419 adults serving a conditional sentence in the community and this was an increase of 5% over the previous year. This trend has been increasing almost every year for the past ten years.

These trends, among others, have created new issues and new pressures for community based corrections services in Hamilton. These changes also suggest that this is an important time to review local conditions more carefully and rethink the system of services. Local service providers consider this to be an appropriate time to examine the opportunities for changes in the way they operate in the Hamilton community to be effective.

This report describes the process and findings of a study undertaken to conduct a community needs assessment of the trends, issues and unmet needs of people using the current array of community based corrections services providing support to clients in Hamilton. The impetus for this study comes from the expressed concern of a number of those agencies providing support to clients in their transition from incarceration to reintegration into the Hamilton community. Changing conditions in the justice system, community context and capacity of community services to provide support have been significant enough to warrant a review and examination of the way in which community support services are provided with the intent of identifying new strategies which may be of value in improving the effectiveness of corrections services in Hamilton.

To carry out this study several agencies which provide services to community members involved in the criminal justice system came together to form an advisory team to guide and inform the study as well as facilitate access to clients and individuals in this service system that could provide first hand information and insights about local services based on personal experience. This advisory group, referred to as the Corrections Consortium of Hamilton was comprised of representatives from the following organizations: Elizabeth Fry Society of Hamilton, St. Leonard's Society of Hamilton, John Howard Society of Hamilton, The Hamilton Bridge Program, the Native Women's Centre and the Salvation Army – Ellen Osler Home. The Corrections Consortium then negotiated funding support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to conduct this needs assessment. The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton was then commissioned to design, implement and report on findings from the study.

The primary goal of the needs assessment was to document the needs and success of client reintegration into community following incarceration as the basis of information for developing strategies that could improve the system of community services.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a primarily qualitative research design. Locally, extensive consultations were conducted with both community correctional service providers, as well as clients of community correctional services. A series of interviews were also conducted with staff and management of community correctional service program in London Ontario, which is considered to be a promising practice. In addition to consultations, researchers conducted a review of relevant literature.

Following is an overview of specific research methods employed during the course of the study. Conclusions of the study represent a synthesis of findings from each research method employed.

2.1 Consultations with Clients of Community Correctional Services

In efforts to gain some insight into the perspectives and opinions of service users, thirty-five face-to-face interviews were conducted with clients of corrections consortium member agencies. Specifically, clients were interviewed the Elizabeth Fry Society of Hamilton, St. Leonard's Society of Hamilton, John Howard Society of Hamilton, The Bridge Program, the Native Women's centre and the Salvation Army – Ellen Osler Home.

During the structured interviews, the researcher asked interviewees to describe the specific challenges and potential solutions securing housing, finding employment, finding mental health supports, supports for addictions and counselling supports (See APPENDIX A for a copy of the interview guide). A thematic analysis was conducted with each set of responses. Common themes emerging from the respective data sets are presented in section 4.0 of this report.

2.2 Consultations with Community Correctional Service Providers

In the early stages of the study, a researcher met with representatives from each consortium member agency. The purpose of these meetings was to become better acquainted with the agencies and their mandates, and to begin to prioritize some of the issues and barriers to community integration facing criminalized individuals.

A focus group was also held with representatives from corrections consortium member agencies, as well as a representative from the Hamilton probation and parole office. The group was asked consider four key areas that appear to be the sources of the greatest barriers to reintegration: housing, employment, mental health supports, and addictions. The group was asked to provide their thoughts on what sorts of services/supports have shown the greatest success and how these supports could be better integrated into coordinated service delivery.

2.3 Review of Relevant Literature

A review of relevant literature was conducted to inform two aspects of the current study. The first was to establish a profile of the client population including such trends and issues as racial and cultural diversity, the prevalence of addictions and mental health issues, as well as trends in age and gender. While data representing these types of trends and issues is available at the national and provincial levels, there is little reliable data available at the local level. Findings from this part of the literature review are reported in section 3.1 of this report.

Secondly, researchers conducted a review of literature that identified 'promising practices' in reintegrating criminalized adults into communities.

2.4 Review of a best practice model

Maison Louise Arbour (MLA) is a project of St Leonard's Community Services of London & Region. Identified during the focus group session with community correctional service providers, it was felt that Maison Louise Arbour represented an innovative community-based reintegration program which sought to address the needs of post-release individuals with mental health and addictions issues in a residential environment.

Both the programming and the funding of MLA represent some departure from standard practice and it was felt that a detailed summary of the origins and strategic direction of MLA would be of use in reflecting on recommendations for Hamilton's correctional service providers. Data and information collected through interviews with agency staff and management is presented in section 6.1 of this report.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

3.1 Client Population Profile

As noted earlier, Canada's incarceration rate is increasing. Incarcerated people are defined as persons serving a custodial sentence and those in remand or other temporary detention. Adults serving a conditional sentence are not considered to be incarcerated. In Ontario the average daily count of adults in custody in the 2008/2009 year was: 2,802 persons in sentenced custody and 5,809 in remand.

The rate of incarceration in Ontario, at 87 adults per 100,000 adults, is higher than in the Provinces of Quebec, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. However the western Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta all have higher rates of incarceration among adults than does Ontario.

Demographic changes in the characteristics of the incarcerated population seem to reflect to some extent changes in these same characteristics in the general population. For example, there has been an increase in the average age of inmates. The population of offenders sixty-five years of age and older increased by 12% between 2001 and 2006. Beyond that more than ¼ of federal offenders released into the community are over 50 years of age. An aging population is a trend evident in the general population too. In Hamilton the population over sixty-five years of age increased by 7% between 2001 and 2006. This aging in the population generally and the incarcerated population in particular will be a factor influencing the prospects for employability. It will also have an influence on the physical health of offenders entering community life and this too will have a bearing on their adjustment.

Recent data indicates that there has been an increase in the proportion of inmates with unstable job history and that there has been an increase in the proportion of inmates who have not completed high school. Low levels of education are correlated to precarious employment patterns and low levels of income. These are also risk factors associated with individuals in conflict with the law.

Information released by Correctional Service of Canada indicates that several trends are evident in the offender population. There studies note there has been an increase in mental health issues among federal inmates. Rates are currently estimated at 26% of females offenders and 14% of male offenders have mental health issues. These rates are an increase of 71% since 2007.

There have been other changes of note with respect to the health of ex-offenders. There has been a slight decrease in alcohol abuse and a slight increase in drug abuse (the combined total in 2002 was 79%). There has also been a marked increase in the proportion of inmates with concurrent mental health and addictions issues.

Evidence being reported by Correctional Services of Canada suggests there has been an increase in male offenders who are poor at problem solving, unable to generate wise choices, and are impulsive.

In spite of these changes in the characteristics of the offender population, the supply and demand for community-based residential facility beds are reported to be relatively stable and balanced.

3.2 Inventory of Community Correctional Services

Local services were inventoried by the John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington Area, and presented in the 2009 Community Integration Services Directory. The directory describes a set of core services mandated to support individuals who have been in conflict with the law. The directory also lists related services that provide important supports for issues encountered by clients of corrections services. These include addictions services, housing services, education and employment services, counselling services, food banks, mental health services and more.

The Directory identifies seven services and their programs operating in Hamilton with a specific focus on corrections. The following provides a brief summary of these services:

- The Bridge From Prison to Community – Bridge House: This service offers transitional housing for ex-offenders that are looking for a safe and supportive environment while reintegrating back into the community. They also provide release planning, assistance with securing identification document replacement and making contact with Ontario Works for the purposes of securing income support when needed.
- Correctional Services Canada – Hamilton Niagara District Parole Office: This service provides: case preparation to assist in the orderly release of inmates into the community; case supervision and counselling to assist parolees in returning to the community; and develops volunteer programs that will facilitate links to other resources in the community.
- Elizabeth Fry Society: This service provides a range of programs including court support, release planning, community service order programs, a shoplifters alternative and resource education program and a violence against women counselling service that provides support, resources and options for women in conflict with the law. They also provide a resource center for criminalized women with a focus on finding and maintaining housing to support successful reintegration in the community.
- Salvation Army – Ellen Osler Home: This service is a ten bed residential facility for women which provides in conflict with the law, over the age of eighteen, that are returning to community life from a federal correctional institution.
- The John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington and Area: This service provides crisis intervention and reintegration services for persons in conflict with the law or at risk of becoming in conflict with the law. Forms of assistance include finding accommodation, employment, educational training, and advocacy with social assistance and information regarding the criminal justice system including pardon applications, and bonding.
- Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Probation and Parole Hamilton: These services operate out of three locations in Hamilton to provide supervision of persons on probation by the courts, on parole by the Ontario Parole Board, on temporary absence by provincial authority or referred by other federal and provincial correctional authorities. They also provide information and assistance to persons at risk or in conflict with the law.
- Native Women's Centre – This service provides a Native Counselling/Discharge Planning Program that provides counselling and awareness training to native offenders in a manner consistent with their cultural background, values and aspirations. Young offenders, adult females and adult male services are available to assist with legal concerns, employment issues, access to treatment services, literacy or education

upgrading and substance abuse counselling. They also provide an Aboriginal Healing and Outreach Program (AHOP) which is a wraparound service for aboriginal women being released into Hamilton from the federal Grand Valley Institution or the provincial Vanier Centre for Women at Milton.

A range of other related community support services exists in Hamilton although they are not specifically designed to provide service to persons in conflict with the law and so are not necessarily effective in supporting individuals leaving a correctional facility and returning to community life. Formal mechanisms in the community for managing coordination between and among community correctional services and related services do not exist. To compound this concern, there is a general lack of understanding on the part of other service providers, of the complex needs and circumstances of clients who have been incarcerated. This is of particular concern with respect to women in conflict with the law.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW OF COMMUNITY PRACTICES

A review of literature was carried out to identify community-based programming that facilitates adult individuals' reintegration from the correctional service into the community. Some innovative programming is underway in Hamilton and neighbouring communities. This review examined information on these programs and on rates of incarceration, profiles of particular incarcerated populations, as well as literature on educational or therapeutic interventions that occur within the corrections systems.

Articles from the *Juristat* series of reports published by Statistics Canada were also reviewed as many of these deal with rates of incarceration and profile specific prison populations and corrections issues. Details on the articles reviewed for this report are noted in the References section at the end of this report.

Discussions of recidivism and of increasing the potential for reintegration in the literature tend to focus on programming within the corrections system and on statistical analyses regarding the probability for reoffending rather than on the community-based supports which can help with reintegration. A report by Motiuk, Larry and Mark Nafekh, *Forum on Corrections Research* Vol 1 no. 1 (1996) "Using Reintegration Potential At Intake To Better Identify Safe Release Candidates." provides a detailed statistical analysis to determine reintegration potential for individuals within the prison population; however it does not consider fully the potential impact of long-term community structures or supports that might improve results.

To more fully address the value and impact of community services we also examined the Maison Louise Arbour (MLA) community based program operating in London, Ontario. The MLA program represents an innovative community-based reintegration program that addresses the needs of post-release individuals with mental health and addictions issues in a residential environment. As a project of St Leonard's Community Services of London and Region, MLA operates under the auspices of an organization that already provides services to those who have been involved in the corrections system. Both the programming and the funding of MLA represent some departure from standard practice and offers useful insights on issues for Hamilton's correctional service providers.

A significant theme in the literature with respect to community programs is that they play an important role in the reintegration process but also need to balance community interests with those of success of the offenders. Community based programming includes adult community-based reintegration. Gardner and Leslie, in *Review of Yukon Community Justice Projects*. (2007) note that reintegration programming is useful because it begins by reflecting on terms such as community justice and restorative justice. Gardner's point is that "there is variability in the definitions being used with respect to community justice practice and a lack of precision and clarity about the similarities and differences between community justice and restorative justice. A survey of various definitions shows that the positive reintegration of offenders into communities is a consistent thread throughout these related approaches. Gardner, citing LaPrairie (1998), notes several principles that must be kept in mind when considering any community-based justice initiative. They are "balancing the needs of victim, offender, and community so that the needs of one group do not dominate," as well as "recognizing and balancing the reintegration and surveillance roles of community in community justice" and "evaluating levels of victim, offender, community satisfaction to local justice and its impact on crime rates and re-offending". These considerations and others mean that community-based justice offers more than a reduction in recidivism demanding growth in community capacity as well – community capacity building happens when the community is involved in the justice process". However, Gardner goes on to note Karp and Clear's recognition that "the social fact

of extraordinary inequality has meant that those communities most damaged by severe levels of crime are least capable of mobilizing resources to deal with it. Community-based programming, then, for Gardner means not only a reduction in recidivism, but also a transformed idea of the relationship between community and the corrections system, one in which individuals and local groups can develop their resources to mediate and mitigate the disruption to community that crime represents.

Dena Keh Justice (DKJ) operates through the Liard First Nation. A first nation traditional approach to dealing with harm is used when dealing with cases from each program component and in providing sentencing recommendations to the Territorial Court, reintegrating offenders back into the community post incarceration and diversions. DKJ uses a circle concept process throughout their project. DKJ employs a full time justice Director, Justice Worker and a Native Court Worker. These paid positions are supported by a Community Justice Council whose members are paid for their participation in circles. DKJ works with adults, youth and children under the age of twelve who are associated with the Kaska Nation in Watson Lake.

Gardner lists nine community justice projects underway in Yukon. Of these, four engage in reintegration and post-sentence support. One example is the Dawson Community Group Conferencing Society (DCGCS). It is a non-profit society with a 12 member volunteer board that uses the Community Group Conferencing model for adult and youth pre and post charge diversion, post sentencing. References are accepted from the RCMP, Crown and the school and from the community. They provide services to offenders and victims who are residents of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation and Dawson City. DCGCS has a part-time Coordinator who arranges conferences, acts as liaison with referral agencies, ensures follow-up with victims and offenders on agreements, promotes community awareness and covers the administration released to the project.

Gardner goes on to show that evaluating outcomes of these community-based projects is very difficult, frequently because of a lack of available data. The report points out that government reporting requirements are often a barrier to accurate reporting as projects indicated that they have considerable difficulty doing the reports, since the data elements do not capture where much of their effort goes (e.g., speaking with offender, victim and support people and organizing circles and conferences). Nevertheless through qualitative research, Gardner shows that community justice impacts have been experienced by a variety of stakeholders, who illustrated the existence of impacts in their plentiful stories and examples of: recognizing and repairing the harm; promoting community accountability and responsibility; responding to the needs of First Nations communities; increased ongoing support for the victim and offender; assisting in preventing crime through greater community involvement; and understanding what needed to be in place after things did not go well.

Gardner concludes by calling for consistent policy and definitions around community-based justice; more communication amongst all major partners (both governmental and community, but placing onus on government agencies; more clarity about what constitutes success from the funder's perspective; and government support for the facilitation of training for community staff.

Another significant paper discussing reintegration strategies is Robert E. Brown and Yvon Dandurand's *Successful Strategies That Contribute to Safer Communities*, 2007.

This report looks at new strategies for successful reintegration of high risk offenders. The authors note that it is already known from the limited research available that the most successful strategies are those which affect a balance between supervision and assistance through

interagency collaboration. However, they also point out the noticeable lack of detailed research in this field. Indeed they remark that practitioners have concluded that far more research and evaluation is required to support the development of effective offender reintegration and recidivism prevention strategies. They claim that there is no consensus as to whether prisoner re-entry support programs work and, to date, there have been few evaluations of existing programs. Nevertheless they observe that there is a recognition that preparation for reintegration should commence before the offender's release. After release, interventions should support the immediate transition of offenders from the prison to the community and reinforce the gains achieved through in prison treatment and continue until a successful reintegration is completed.

One of the models which is highlighted is the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) program which is in use in both Canada and England. Brown and Dandurand outline the basic structure of CoSA as having a core member who is the released offender who is supported and monitored by successive circles of volunteers and professionals; at the centre of the model is the fundamental objective of the program and the primary goal of the community voluntary participation: 'no more victims'. The authors cite the program as an exemplary instance of partnership between the community and government organizations. The volunteers are selected with care and trained by professionals who subsequently support them in their volunteer capacities. The process of working with released offenders begins with a covenant or agreement that is established between the core member and up to seven circle volunteers. Participation is voluntary on both sides. However, once the covenant is agreed to, it becomes the road map for both the support and the accountability that can be expected by all participants. The outer "professional" circle refers to the support, guidance and interventions that are provided by professionally trained participants and representatives of official law enforcement or correctional agencies.

Volunteers are carefully screened before joining the program and must present references and a criminal record check. They receive an initial 26 hours of professionally supported training as well as ongoing and experientially oriented training. Amongst the various CoSAs there is regional coordination in order to ensure consistency. Funding for the circles in Canada is provided by the Chaplaincy Service of the Correctional Service of Canada. The Service acknowledges that the involvement of CoSA volunteers "enhances public safety through providing a healthy environment for the Core member. Outcomes of the CoSAs' work are still being determined; however, initial study suggests some positive trends.

The Mennonite Central Committee with support from CSC determined how the Circle model could be developed as a program which could be widely used. The goal of CoSA, according to the CSC, is "to promote successful integration of released men into the community by providing support, advocacy, and a way to be meaningfully accountable in exchange for living safely in the community" (2). One of the principle mottos by which CoSAs work is "no secrets", words that encapsulate the friendly open relationships that are intended to sustain the Circle and is seen as the method by which accountability is most likely to be maintained. The report offers a more detailed description of the CoSA structure, highlighting the fact that the most intense interaction between the Core Member and his Volunteer Supporters is during the first 60 to 90 days after release. Not surprisingly, this is the period of time which experience has shown that social and housing support are the most necessary in order to prevent re-offending.

There have been impressive results for the outcomes of the pilot CoSA program. For instance, 90% of Core Members reported that in the absence of CoSA, they would have

had difficulties adjusting to the community, and two-third felt they likely would have returned to crime without the help from CoSA. Furthermore, Circle Volunteers reported that they felt the community experienced an increase in community safety as a result of CoSA and the Core Member would have reoffended had he not been involved in CoSA. Even the response of the community-at-large was primarily positive with 68% of respondents from the public reporting they would feel safer if they found out that a high risk sexual offender in their community belonged to a Circle. More concretely, a study of police records over an almost five year period showed that high-risk offenders who were part of CoSAs were noticeably less likely to reoffend than their counterparts with no CoSA support. One unexpected outcome of the CoSA pilot was the realization that they seriously misjudged what a CoSA could (or would) become. Essentially, CoSAs have become surrogate families for many Core Members. What was supposed to be a stopgap for a crack in the criminal justice system's management of offenders has become a way of life.

In their conclusion, Wilson, Pincheca and Prinzo observe that while the CoSAs have performed their mandated role very well, governmental agencies remain reticent to carry the full burden of financially supporting this endeavor. The authors applaud the fact that this initiative is community-based, and suggest that this is the most desirable format for this form of intervention. However, they also note that it is extremely difficult to recruit volunteers or funds for this type of support work. Nevertheless new CoSA projects have been established most major Canadian cities.

A national study of these CoSAs, entitled *Circles of Support & Accountability: A National Replication of Outcome Findings* was released in 2007 by the Correctional Service of Canada, authored by Robin J. Wilson, Franca Cortoni and Monica Verman. The findings of this study suggest that the effectiveness of CoSA is not specific to a particular location, but can be replicated in various environments.

Several other articles also offer some description of the CoSAs as well. These include: Anne-Marie McAlinden. "Restorative Justice as a Response to Sexual Offending – Addressing the Failings of Current Punitive Approaches." Cesaroni, Carla. "Releasing Sex Offenders into the Community Through "Circles of Support" -- A Means of Reintegrating the "Worst of the Worst." and Hannem, Stacy and Michael Petrunik. "Canada's Circles of Support and Accountability: A Community Justice Initiative for High-Risk Sex Offenders."

There are additional resources which address issues of reintegration of adults leaving correctional facilities. Most of these are created by community groups as hands-on resources for families who are dealing with the return or potential return of a family member after a period of incarceration. One example of this sort of resource is *Times Up: A Reintegration Toolkit for Families* by Lloyd Withers, Marg Holland and Elizabeth Martin. This booklet outlines a process called Family Group Decision-Making for Reintegration (FGDMR) which, at the time of publication, was available as a program at the Montée St-François Institution. The Toolkit is intended to help those families who are reuniting who do not have access to such a program. It gives suggestions concerning the changes that happen during family and community reintegration. It details how to plan and what goals to set. It also contains some suggestions about families who are anxious about their personal safety". FGDMR uses the family conference format in order to help the individuals involved make a written family-based reintegration plan. Under the best circumstances, a trained facilitator is present to

assist the family with this plan. This process takes the “time to discuss what is really going on and what needs to take place for successful family reintegration. After the plan is completed, volunteers are available to provide support to the family during the first critical stages of reintegration”.

There are seven areas on which FGD MR focuses: associates, employment, substance abuse, personal / emotional issues, attitude, community functioning, marital and family issues. Family members work through each of these topics, prioritizing what the most significant issues are under each and then brainstorming solutions. The handbook outlines the principles of good communication skills and provides space for writing down each person’s issues and the final plan. The toolkit focuses on healing, emphasizing that the plan is something to use and to refer to when the reintegration road gets bumpy. As with other works cited, the authors conclude by pointing out that successful reintegration also requires a community that understands the challenges facing the returning person and the family. Only with a strong partnership between all those who are affected by incarceration and reintegration can there be stronger and safer communities.

Though the pilot project for FGD MR was funded through Correctional Service of Canada at Montée St-François, the development of the Toolkit was left to a community group, the Canadian Families and Corrections Network. Once again, government agencies appear to be reticent to fund in any sustained way reintegration assistance, leaving the community to take the initiative.

A similar handbook, specifically for women who are leaving incarceration to rejoin families, is also available at <http://www.cfcn-rcafd.org/text/newtime.pdf>. This publication is entitled; *A New Time: A Toolkit For Families Of Women Offenders Preparing To Reintegrate Into Their Family And The Community* is also published by the Canadian Families and Corrections Network.

4.1 Vignette - Maison Louise Arbour In London Ontario

A close examination of the Maison Louise Arbour service is useful because it illustrates the extent to which other services in a community have a bearing on the successful reintegration of criminalized persons into a community. It illustrates the potential role and value of a Human Service Justice Coordinating Committee. This brief examination also identifies similar service coordination issues in London which to some extent are addressed through the services of Maison Louise Arbour (MLA). There are issues of access to related services, shortages of other supports and services i.e. affordable housing, addictions treatment programs and facilitated support groups which this integrated community model addresses.

Maison Louise Arbour is an eight bed facility located in central London. It is operated by the St Leonard’s Community Services (SLCS) of London and Region. While St Leonard’s has typically worked with the male prison population, one of the organization’s primary areas of expertise lies in knowing “how to transition people” from incarceration back to the community – the issues and challenges that arise, as well as the services and community partners which exist to support this transition. Because of this history, SLCS was well-positioned to take on the task of attempting to fill a gap in transition support for women with mental health and addictions issues.

A local Human Service Justice Coordinating Committee was instrumental in laying the groundwork for MLA. Beginning in the late 90s, this group raised awareness around and attempted to find solutions for gaps in the community-based corrections services in the London

area. At the time there was no Elizabeth Fry Society in the city and so no residential programs for women leaving the correctional system. A broad consultation with other service providers in the area, as well as with federal and provincial corrections agencies and with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MHLTC) was carried out. SLCS concluded from this that they establish a residence that would be a mixed-use facility, with three crisis beds funded by MHLTC, two beds funded by provincial probation services, and two funded by CSC for federally released clients and one flexible assignment bed (at one point, CAS contracted this bed for a client). A substantial portion of funding is provided by the Correctional Service of Canada as part of its funding for mental health supports to persons being released to the community from federal institutions. This mixed-use model of service is considered to be a strength of the residence and also provides a broader variety of funding sources which increases operational stability.

MLA now employs two full-time social workers who act as case-managers as well as a Reintegration Services Coordinator who manages reintegration programming for clients at MLA and at two other SLCS facilities.

MLA opened in February 2008 and is different in appearance and design than many halfway house facilities. The bedrooms and communal living areas were designed to seem as 'homey' as possible. A large country-style kitchen adjoins the common area. The design of the bedrooms is unique as the layout is intended to be as flexible as possible, while still giving the occupant a feeling that this is "their own room." Each room is equipped with a fold-away bed stored in the closet. This extra bed can be used if a woman has a child staying with her or possibly if another family member comes to visit. The rooms also have doors which connect them. While these are normally locked at all times, they can be opened in order to create a suite of two rooms. This allows a woman with several children to stay at MLA without having to split up her family. MLA, therefore, accommodates family needs, recognizing the importance of facilitating the family reunification process.

MLA provides temporary, short-term accommodation for women. The maximum stay is thirty days. Consequently, much of the work of the staff centers on helping the client to plan their ongoing reintegration to the community and on accessing the services that will support that. However, there are lengthy waiting lists for affordable housing and for many treatment plans, so this thirty day timetable for access to longer term support is challenging. Recognizing this, MLA offers a limited number of support groups for women that are accessible to former clients and provide one means of continuing to sustain the progress of those settling into the community. These groups are: a relapse prevention group which was built by Addiction Services of Thames Valley (who also provided training to MLA staff); a healthy relationships group, which was founded in partnership with the local probation office and is co-facilitated with its staff; and anger management programming which was developed in-house to address a service gap for women in the community. This short time frame also means that release planning needs to begin prior to a client's release. In order for this to happen, MLA has a representative who regularly visits both the Special Needs Unit and the Women's Unit of the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre (EMDC). Program success is aided by close working relationships with staff from EMDC, particularly with the lieutenant of the Special Needs Unit. MLA will take referrals from various sources (clients can refer themselves) but the lieutenant of the Special Needs Unit will also make referrals. This situation is advantageous for the client because then EMDC will provide her with cab fare to MLA. In other cases, staff from MLA may pick up a client from the detention centre.

Case managers at MLA assess a client, determine her needs, and develop an individual plan for her. Because of the short length of time a client will be housed at MLA, much of the follow-up on this plan occurs once the client has transitioned to the community. Amongst the most common initial challenges for clients are addressing housing needs and medications. The case workers at MLA meet weekly or bi-weekly with clients. Workers may provide assistance in finding housing, may go with a client to apply for Ontario Works income support benefits, may help with finding health providers and may deliver medications as needed. Staff members have moved clients, helped clean their apartments, taken them to the food bank, helped them to get appointments, been present at appointments, taught them how to use the bus, and bought them bus tickets – offering, in short, whatever assistance the client needs to move forward with their reintegration plan. The case management team also places a priority in teaching clients about their respective illnesses and how to manage them. The long-term goal, of course, is independence.

Case managers at MLA adopt a risk management perspective, considering primarily risk factors in relation to reoffending. During the initial assessment, the manager will prioritize the principal criminogenic factors for the client, developing the individual plan in ways that attempt to minimize the possibility that the individual will be placed in a situation where they are likely to reoffend. For instance, a very common situation for clients is that they only commit crime when under the influence of particular substances or off their medication. Because of a lack of sufficient addictions treatment in London, including the complete absence of a residential treatment facility for addictions, many clients are at risk of reoffending. There are very few clients who do not have addictions issues in addition to mental health needs.

The process for ensuring clients get to MLA in the first place is quite hands-on. MLA has a representative who goes into the Special Needs and the Women's Units of EMDC. However, some clients are referred from other sources (including parole offices, other service providers, and even former clients) and do not always follow through after initial contact. In the case of a potential client who does not reconnect with MLA, the case managers will actively seek out those individuals, including scouting locations where the individual has been reported.

Because of the short timelines, however, a client may still end up in a shelter for a while after leaving MLA; this is difficult for the client, but at least the client will have a support worker and an individual plan. MLA case managers also can step in where Canadian Mental Health Association social workers will not as the former are trained to work with more violent clients. As the waiting list for CMHA support is also frequently long, MLA programming fills a gap for clients who otherwise do not “have the frustration tolerance to get through the referral process.”

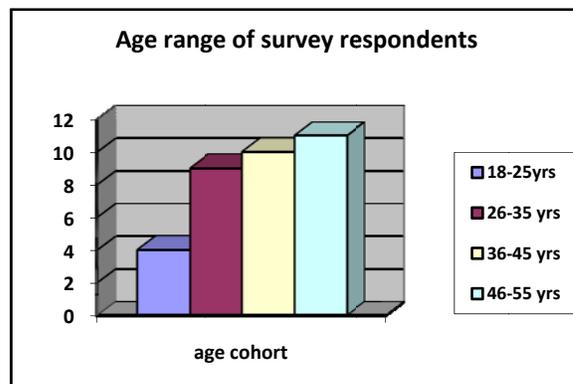
As MLA is still a relatively new program, a program evaluation data is not yet available. MLA does track its clients and have noted that a large majority were diagnosed with concurrent disorders. The majority of clients also fall partially under the care of the healthcare sector and partially under the responsibility of corrections and program evaluation will need to incorporate the impact of those services.

5.0 PERSPECTIVES OF CLIENTS OF COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

For this component of the study, thirty-five face-to-face interviews were conducted with clients of corrections consortium member agencies. Specifically, clients were interviewed at the Elizabeth Fry Society of Hamilton, St. Leonard's Society of Hamilton, John Howard Society of Hamilton, The Bridge Program, the Native Women's centre and the Salvation Army – Ellen Osler Home.

Among those interviewed, 16 were male and 19 were female. The age of respondents was varied. Four respondents reported their age between 18 and 25 years; 9 between 26 and 35 years; 10 between 36 and 45 years, and; 11 between 46 and 55 years. One individual chose not to declare their age.

In efforts to gain insights into the circumstances of the interviewees, the interview guide included questions on current housing status, employment, income sources, and level of education. At the time of the interviews, 13 individuals identified living in a an apartment or rooming house; 4 with family; 16 in transitional housing (as part of a transitional housing program) and; 1 individual reported living on the streets.



The employment status of respondents was varied to some extent. Only one individual reported working full-time at the time of the study. One respondent was working part-time and 3 respondents were working in temporary or contract positions. Among those not employed, 10 were looking for work at the time of the interview, while 17 were not looking for work. One other individual reported working in the sex trade.

Outside of employment income, 12 individuals reported receiving Ontario Works benefits, 9 received Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits, and 12 reported receiving a personal needs allowance amounting to \$28.70 per week.

During the course of interviews, respondents were asked to indicate the highest level of formal education they had received. Responses ranged from 13 individuals reporting "less than secondary school completion" to 11 individuals reporting having completed college or university. In addition, 8 individuals reported completing secondary school, 1 completed trade school and 2 had completed "some college or university".

During the structured interviews, the researcher asked interviewees to describe the specific challenges and potential solutions securing housing, finding employment, finding mental health supports, supports for addictions and counselling supports (See APPENDIX A for a copy of the interview guide). A thematic analysis was conducted with each set of responses. Common themes emerging from the respective data sets are presented in the following sections.

5.1 Housing Issues

Clients of community corrections service agencies were asked to provide comment on the challenges they have faced in finding housing in Hamilton. Responses indicated that it is sometimes difficult to find an adequate place to live. For some the stigma associated with

coming from or being in the corrections service system can create barriers to accessing housing. In some instances access to housing is difficult because there are problems with routine requirements like having proper identification documents, references, a credit history, current telephone, transportation or enough money to afford a decent residence.

For some these barriers left no alternative but to go into the shelter system for housing although that was understood to be a dangerous option. In part the hazard there is that it is perceived as a place where clients could easily access drugs. Comments indicated that affordable housing is not always the most important or the most practical option if the goal is rehabilitation. With limited financial resources, individuals leaving correctional facilities are often forced to seek housing in areas where drug use is common. As one respondent noted “The cheaper places are all in the drug using areas. I have an addiction issue so I kind of need to stay away from those areas – certain hot spots”.

When barriers to housing were noted, respondents were asked to describe what people generally do as a result of these challenges. The answers were simple and straightforward. They rely on family and friends where possible, they go in to shelter services or they accept the slums they can afford. As one respondent said “Well, you have to take what is there which is what most people do right? Because they can’t afford to be fussy.”

Not all responses suggested that barriers were overcome successfully or in what would be considered an appropriate manner as indicated by this response: “I didn’t overcome these challenges. I went back to sex trade work. Most girls, that’s what they do.”

To aid in identifying better solutions to housing issues these client respondents were asked to describe the types of services or supports they thought would be most helpful in finding housing. Their responses indicated support for development of shelters specifically designed for individuals leaving correctional facilities, shelters that were free of drugs. They suggested that people need individualized supports that could work closely with them through all aspects of community reintegration. This struggle was reflected in the response “... it makes you feel worthless because you just don’t have the skills or the tools to make what other people make when you sure as heck would have the drive if someone gave you the chance and housing is a part of that.”

5.2 Employment Issues

When interviewed and asked about employment issues, clients described some of the challenges in finding employment in Hamilton. It might be worth noting that these interviews did take place in the mid-year months of 2009, a period being described as one of the worst economic downturns in a generation and so one with rates of unemployment climbing to the highest rate in a decade in Hamilton. Not surprisingly then, the downturn was cited as a factor making it difficult to find employment.

Respondents were also well aware that having limited education and training was creating challenges as was the stigma associated with having a criminal record. They also noted that not having a telephone or good access to transportation was creating difficulties. One respondent said: “You have to be mobile, you have to have a phone. You know, these things take money. If you don’t have money you can’t get a phone. If you don’t have a phone you don’t get work at a temp agency.”

The interviews probed responses about employment by asking what people generally do when faced with these challenges. Answers to the question identified few hopeful solutions suggesting that some would go back to committing crimes ('robbing people'), get involved in the sex trade, apply for welfare or just "give up".

Again respondents were asked to consider and suggest solutions to employment by identifying the types of services or supports that would be most helpful in finding employment. They responded by suggesting improved access to education and training programs. "A training program of some sort, maybe a month or two before they get out, or after they get out get them into some kind of a co-op program." They also favoured supported job placements or having social workers provide individualized supports.

5.3 Mental Health Supports

Interviews with clients explored issues about mental health and supports particularly the challenges in finding support for mental health issues in Hamilton. Clients clearly indicated that the stigma associated with having a mental health problem is an issue. They found it difficult to find a family doctor. They felt that people with mental health problems were isolated as indicated by the following comment: "There are a lot of people living on the streets with mental health issues or living in lodging homes. They are given medications but then left on their own."

When asked what people generally do as a result of these challenges the responses indicated grim results. They suggested that people often do not effectively address them and simply end up on the street: "They wander the streets. They don't know how to address their needs." Other options focused on "self medicating" with drugs or alcohol or sometimes clients would get angry and harm themselves or others.

When asked how could mental health supports be provided that would be most helpful, respondents suggested that more access to doctors and psychiatric professionals both in and out of correctional facilities would be helpful. They felt that people with mental health issues should not go to jail to begin with. They those with mental health problems are treated very poorly and their needs are not met in terms of mental health supports. These sentiments were typified in the following comment: "I think they do not know what to do with them, so they figure well we'll get this person off the streets for a while you know? Throw them in jail. But they are doing more harm than good I think."

5.4 Supports for Addictions

During the interview clients were asked to describe some of the challenges in finding support for addictions in Hamilton. Respondents noted that they face a challenge in staying away from old friends and familiar neighbourhoods. Waiting lists for access to treatment services was also seen as a barrier to dealing with addictions. Some respondents felt that addressing addictions was ultimately in the hands of the individual. It may be difficult to overcome, but "you must want it". One practice in particular was seen as very unhelpful. "Being dropped off in downtown Hamilton is bad! People have big plans coming out of jail but they don't happen because of the time lag between being released from jail and arriving at the first service provider." one response noted. Another said "A girl gets out of jail, she wants to get into rehab right away. She can't go so she gets frustrated and decides 'well, if I can't get clean now I might as well still do drugs.'" These comments suggested that quick interventions after release from a corrections facility are seen as critical.

Respondents were asked what people generally do as a result of these challenges and a common response was that many go back to their addictive behaviours and continue using drugs and alcohol. However, it was also noted that this result is not inevitable as some respondents reported that in some cases the individual is “able to stay clean”.

Interviews explored respondent views on the types of services or supports that would be most helpful in dealing with addictions. Clients often suggested that more treatment options without waiting lists would be helpful. Treatments need to be available when individuals are ready. A waiting list can be discouraging, and for these clients, was like another door being closed resulting in continued drug or alcohol use. They suggested that individuals need to be escorted from jail directly to a service provider that can give them the support they need. Interview respondents suggested that treatment programs with transitional or ongoing supports would be useful and helpful as would the inclusion of social workers who could provide individualized supports.

5.5 Counselling Supports

In interviews, clients of corrections services were asked to comment on the challenges in finding counselling supports in Hamilton. Responses here generated mixed and varied views. Some respondents felt that support was easy to find while others felt it was difficult. For those leaving a Federal correctional facility for example, counselling is provided as part of their parole and so for them counselling support was easy to access. However they did note that it can be difficult to find a counselor that you are comfortable with, and who understands your history and circumstances.

For others, finding counselling support was more difficult as typified by the comment: “It’s sometimes a big long process to get in the door and then once you’re in the door you find out you don’t like that counselor and you don’t feel safe enough to share with them.”

To follow up on the question respondents were asked what people generally do as a result of these challenges. Their comments ranged from a kind of resignation, they would continue with their same routines, “..no matter how destructive they may be” to a kind of resilience, they would “keep trying to find someone who cares and who you can trust.”

When asked what types of services or supports would be most helpful in finding counselling, respondents suggested that more information on where to go to get counselling support should be provided upon release from a correctional facility. Others suggested that workers should be accessible at “street level” rather than dealing with waiting lists. They suggested that social workers should actively reach out to individuals once they are released. Again, isolation was a recurring theme and concern prompting some respondents to suggest that there be more support groups and social events “...so you don’t feel that you are alone. Keep families involved and informed.”

6.0 PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

The consultation sessions began with a facilitator providing some background on the Corrections Consortium, asking the group to consider four key areas that appear to be the sources of the greatest barriers to reintegration: housing, employment, mental health supports, and addictions. The group was asked to provide comments and suggestions on the sorts of services/supports that have shown the greatest success and how these supports could be better integrated into coordinated service delivery. The following sections summarize important themes and suggestions recording during the sessions.

6.1 Housing Issues

The groups immediately began identifying areas of need. They identified a need for an Aboriginal halfway house. It was pointed out that the Aboriginal community is usually included in the diversity category, which means that Aboriginal clients are not receiving services specific to their community. Another housing concern noted was that there has been a marked decline in support for gender specific services with the result that women are not being as well supported in their efforts to access to services as men are in their access to services.

Discussion among group members observed that there appears to be an overall lack of coordination of services. Evidence of this is the impression or feeling that “no one knows what other organizations are doing”. This was referred to as the silo effect which indicates a kind of isolation of services within the sector. Participants suggested that this isolation needs to be broken down.

Participants in discussions noted that there is also no continuity of funding to housing related services. As one participant remarked, the situation is always comes down to “who can write the best proposal”. This lack of continuity in funding, and therefore in programming, means that funding does not build anything long-term. All participating service providers agreed that this constitutes a poor strategy for the clients and community. Participants felt that two to three year contracts do not bring stability for clients or the correctional system. The resulting effect is a failure to develop a consistent, coherent approach to community reintegration. As several participants pointed out, this community condition leads to a greater risk of clients reoffending and lessens their possibilities of ever successfully leaving the correctional system.

There was a general consensus that for community correctional services and government-run correctional services, there is no clear shared plan for services and no collaboration process to support a coordinated delivery system across the community. This situation is worsened, according to the service providers, because almost no money goes into adult correctional services. The prevailing sense among participants was that a disproportionate share of investment of funding in corrections services goes to correction institutions rather than community based services and supports.

When discussion focused on ways to create housing options that help people move away from crime several insights and suggestions were noted beginning with the understanding that released inmates are very often essentially homeless at the time of release. Participants noted, even a ride scheduled to get released clients from prison to a shelter would help simply because this would discourage immediately moving back to old places, associates and habits. Some comments made indicated that the Wesley Centre drop-in was considered to be an unsafe place – particularly for women because of the exposure to high risk behaviours other shelter

users were engaged in. In general shelters were seen as not providing an environment which is conducive to client efforts to keep from re-offending behaviours.

For service providers, a major issue for client well being is the lack of affordable housing available to them in Hamilton. This was seen as a critical issue because there is a significant problem of clients getting 'lost' or losing contact, once they leave the correctional system. There was an expressed perception that there is almost no funding available for a housing initiative that would be of particular benefit to clients of corrections services. Here too, the lack of coordination of services is an issue because in order to apply for a significant amount of funding (eg. Homelessness Partnering Strategy or other federal grants), a service agency cannot work alone but should be seen as part of a collaborative engaged in a joint effort to better qualify for funding support. As one service provider remarked, housing is a big cost, it's hard to tap into big dollars because "you need big dollars to begin".

Another complicating factor is that many clients are not simply correctional clients but are "correctional *and* addicted", or are correctional and have mental health issues. Many clients need support to make a change. They are returning to the community with or without rehabilitation and support but they will be more successful with supports. These characteristics combined make it more difficult for services to collaborate on proposals to access resources needed to create suitable housing. However, it is not impossible. One example of a housing initiative that would be a prospect for replicating was a small scale program recently created in Peterborough that had shown some success. Participants noted that it is imperative for organizations to recognize their expertise. For example, the Elizabeth Fry Society deals with criminalized women, but in order to develop a housing initiative, they partnered with an agency which has expertise in housing; this partnership is fully collaborative and includes a commitment of money on both sides.

Service providers identified the need for supported living is great. This view is based on the experience of providing support to clients who are released institutions, notably Vanier or Grand Valley where policies are in effect that prohibit clients being discharged into Hamilton without adequate services in place to support them. These clients are looking for "stepping stones" to rehabilitation and many are dealing with addictions and need programming in place to support them. The necessary funding for supported living is not sufficiently available to meet current needs.

There was some agreement that that the ideal model for supportive service would be a one-stop approach to dealing with reintegration in which all of the potential barriers to a client's reintegration in the community could be addressed. In this model of service, the process for reintegration into the community would begin before a client's release and allow that individual to make a post-release plan that would include them identifying the supports they need to have in place in order to successfully leave the correctional system. This model is essentially a wrap-around approach to providing supports. Service providers envisioned a facility which would include an addictions counselor, mental health counselor, employment help, and housing support. Focus group members stressed that this sort of initiative did not require a whole new organization, but could be created primarily through the better coordination of already existing expertise. Such a model for service would be a collaborative effort which connected existing services and brought agencies together to create a foundation in the form of supported housing as the common link. The agency which provided the housing would not necessarily be the programming provider but might be the partner that would assume responsibility for coordinating the service support of participating services and ensuring the appropriate sharing of expertise. A safe, supportive living environment is very important to clients. Supervision and provision of a

meal helps individuals who have not had to deal with the complexities of life on the outside, perhaps in years, to gradually develop new patterns of behavior and to develop life skills. As one service provider remarked, the behaviors that help an individual to succeed in prison are almost “opposite those that succeed on the outside”. A supported living environment would allow those individuals to develop appropriate decision-making skills and planning skills. Mathias House and Emmaus House were mentioned as good examples of supported living models currently operating in Hamilton.

A number of focus group participants spoke of wanting to form a collaborative patterned after the Street Youth Planning Collaborative in Hamilton; however, they also felt that it would be important that such a group not be exclusive of service providers that have some connection to the corrections population. Participants were of the opinion that the benefit of a collaborative is that it provides a measure of accountability as agencies are committed to working with each other and supporting one another and that this value is shared by community based correctional service providers in Hamilton.

The focus group discussion also noted that there is a growing diversity of Hamilton’s population and this diversity is also reflected in the corrections population. Discussions indicated that the corrections service system “has not caught up” with Hamilton’s growing diversity. Consideration of this population characteristic should be built into the design of changing community supports. This change should be reflected in the staff complement of service providers and over time diverse representation in the staff members of service providers should change. As conditions are, members expressed concern that the situation creates a barrier to building trust between service providers and clients

6.2 Employment Issues

The focus group discussed examples of successful programs that addressed the issue of barriers to employment. They cited an effective program in Barrie that addressed the employment barriers faced by criminalized women. This particular program was praised for understanding the needs of criminalized women. The program starts with a pre-employment phase and follows clients through to graduation. The program includes a social enterprise that consists of a warehouse and auctioneering business that employs criminalized women. This program was identified as one worth further study to assess the prospects for replicating it in Hamilton. Another noteworthy program is Conviction Restaurant in Toronto. It gives former prisoners the chance to start a new life by working at the restaurant. In addition to teaching new skills, it has the added value of changing community perception of prisoners or ex offenders.

The focus group noted that resources for those under age 30 are slightly better than for those over age 30 in corrections in Hamilton. What little funding there is seems to be largely dedicated to the support of youth that are criminalized individuals to assist with their return to the workforce. Almost nothing is spent on re-employing adults. Another problem in the local service system is that with adult clients, workers are often dealing with individuals who do not see value in working. At the same time employers are unwilling to take the risk associated with hiring criminalized individuals. There are no wage incentives offered to employers for hiring criminalized individuals over 30 years of age. One service provider remarked that when it comes to finding job placements for adults, the agency is “selling the case worker too” in the sense that they commit to providing the ongoing support and monitoring of the criminalized employee. This support that the agency provides is often the only incentive that exists for

employers. The St. Leonard's Society has in some cases become the employer in place of the private sector employer: They hire the individual and then contract them out to the firm. This arrangement provides a financial and bookkeeping incentive for the firm as it means they do not have to pay WSIB or other government benefit programs. Other focus group participants spoke of the client's need to survive and attend to basic needs as a barrier to their improvement. For example, most Ontario Works or government-run training programs happen during the day. The consensus of the group was that there is a much greater need for supported work environments than has been recognized or funded.

Service providers indicated that many clients are essentially victims of poverty and note there is a clear link between poverty and the crimes, particularly misdemeanors that are committed. The focus group identified a number of areas which further prevent criminalized individuals from being hired or even being able to support themselves legally. One such barrier is that pardons can be costly to obtain. The process can cost \$200 or more and becomes more expensive if offenses occurred in various jurisdictions. The process for getting police records "wiped" is also quite challenging. One focus group participant noted that while the National Parole Board staff are trained to help with this, often clients find they get little assistance from the authorities in this matter. Another issue is that many inmates are discharged without any identification documents. Service providers pointed out that this prevents an individual not only from applying for jobs, but also makes it difficult for them to apply for Ontario Works (OW) income support benefits. All the service providers participating in focus group discussions indicated they have seen numerous cases of individuals who had no means of support at all because they lacked any proper identification after leaving a corrections institution. This situation creates conditions that make re-offending very likely.

The focus group indicated it would be very helpful if prisons could work with community services and clients ahead of their release to get the individuals' identification documents in order. Service providers would also like to see appointments arranged with OW counselors for clients before their release from a corrections facility. This would help to prevent gaps in financial support for individuals and help to reduce the chance of reoffending.

For community services, a major barrier for client success is that corrections institutions work entirely in-house and do not include or consult with community workers around release plans. This results in extremely poor coordination of services for individuals moving from an institution to the community. Corrections workers, because they are employed by the institution, have little time and less incentive to advocate for clients and can be pulled off a case at any time. Service providers noted that if Aboriginal clients were able to get assistance in obtaining records regarding their Aboriginal status, much more funding could be accessed to support their reintegration into the community, but the process for getting status is itself complicated and time-consuming and so tends to be overlooked.

Overall, the group noted that there is a large number of criminalized people in Hamilton in part because the city has more services than smaller surrounding communities. Still, these services are largely "band-aids" and lack coherence.

6.3 Mental Health Supports

When focus group discussions were directed to questions regarding mental health issues and supports, participants again noted the lack of coordination of services for criminalized individuals with mental health needs. They conceded that corrections staff are not at all trained to deal with any mental health concerns. They suggested that most often criminalized

individuals with mental health problems are “dumped” into segregation in corrections institutions, a tactic which usually worsens the situation.

The aging of the population is another feature of the population with mental health issues and a growing challenge. Prisons are not long-term care facilities and long-term care facilities are not set up to deal with criminalized individuals. As one focus group participant remarked, “the mental health side doesn’t understand corrections issues and vice versa”. This appears to be a significant gap in the service system.

Another issue for recently released clients who need treatment is that hospitals sometimes claim that the individual has ‘behavioral’ rather than mental health issues and will then refuse to admit him/her. One participant recommended Mme Louise Arbour House in London, ON as a promising project worth further examination and possibly replication in Hamilton. That facility has developed an effective wrap-around approach for working with female criminalized mental health clients.

The focus group discussions also noted that not all clients with mental health issues require clinical treatment. Often, short-term interventions and crisis-management are the service response that is required. This is a good example of a situation in which a wrap-around strategy can work well as it gets supports in place that can be called upon when needed.

It is also important to consider gender when discussing mental health. Some mental health issues, especially for women, are trauma-based. This requires specific treatment strategies that are distinctly different from many more routine mental health treatment strategies.

The group discussed the problems with the way criminalized individuals are perceived by institutional corrections services and by the general public as a limiting factor in the development and provision of appropriate and productive mental health services for the criminalized population. Participants noted that those with the highest risk of re-offending are those with the fewest skills. In order to ensure successful community re-integration, this characteristic of the criminalized population must be addressed. It was agreed the prevailing public attitude toward adults in the correctional system is that they “should just grow up”. However, the experience of the focus group members is that, in general, their clients are not as capable as might be expected. A pull yourself up by your bootstraps approach, therefore, does not work. The public assumption that criminalized individuals should simply be able to ‘mature’ prevents a wider wrap-around of support services from happening. It was pointed out that prison actually diminishes many of the skills associated with maturity, i.e. prioritizing, decision-making, independent thought, adaptability, and life skills.

6.4 Addictions Supports

The focus group emphasized the need for a holistic approach for the treatment of addictions. A coordinated strategy needs to be developed. As an example, housing solutions need to be flexible enough to allow a client to attend a treatment program without losing their accommodations. Addiction programs themselves do not, frequently, account for clients who may have mental health issues. As a result, most addictions programs refuse clients on medications and individuals end up going off their medications. Clients are often then expelled from the program because their behavior is inappropriate. As one participant remarked, “the programming needs to *get* criminalized individuals”. Treatment programs must also reduce distractions for the individual from the courthouse forward to help clients to stay away from

influences that may negatively impact their treatment and recovery. These influences might include contact with an ex-partner, former associates and so on.

Open discussion of other barriers to community reintegration dealt at some length with the inability of community correctional services to effectively remain well informed and up to date on service system changes occurring in the community that might prove valuable. They have difficulty knowing about all of the resources out in the community. This sense of 'siloing' or isolation of services within their particular sector is seen as limiting the capacity of services to work together to best meet client needs. At a minimum it indicates there is no established communication framework to keep varied services well informed across systems.

Children's Aid Society of Hamilton (CAS) and Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton (CCAS) present something of a problem for clients, especially for women. When mothers are not able to see or regain custody of their children it can be very disturbing and a major barrier to success with rehabilitation or reintegration into community life. This may be a more significant issue for those with mental health challenges or addictions. Service providers indicated that it would be helpful to be able to better integrate family considerations into the addiction treatment process e.g. perhaps some sort of facility which allows the client to have regular access to family while receiving treatment.

The increasingly diverse corrections population presents issues and concerns which need attention. There are frequent allegations of systemic racism and there is little no recourse for individuals or institutions to respond. Strategies need to be developed which understand and more effectively address this concern. Corrections institutions and community based corrections services, in fact the entire system, needs to recognize this emerging trend and develop clear strategic plans which will provide an active response to this concern.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

While a full range of community support services exists in Hamilton, they are not always effective in supporting individuals leaving a correctional facility. Community correctional service providers identify a lack of coordination between and among community correctional services and mainstream services. They also identify a general lack of understanding on the part of mainstream service providers, of the complex needs and circumstances of client who have been incarcerated.

While consultations with service providers and clients of community correctional services considered key issue areas separately i.e. housing issues, employment issues, mental health issues, etc., it was clear from this input that these issues cannot be addressed in isolation from each other.

The system must respond to range of needs simultaneously, like a wrap-around approach. Client needs are complex and interconnected. Mental health and/or addictions issues can derail an individual's progress in securing employment or housing or other essential supports and individualized supports are needed with effective case management. The complex needs of women in particular are not well understood among community service providers. Each of these concerns are addressed to some extent in the following recommendations.

Housing:

The shelters system in Hamilton presents a hazardous environment for individuals leaving corrections services as it presents easy access to high risk behaviours they are not well able to resist or avoid.

Recommendation: *That alternatives to standard shelter services be developed to address the specific needs of persons leaving the corrections system and that those alternatives provide a stable, affordable, low risk environment for criminalized individuals.*

Employment:

Persons entering community corrections programs often have very limited education or skills training. This severely limits their ability to reintegrate into community life in a productive way.

Recommendation: *Enhanced training and employment support initiatives be developed and supported. These could include increased opportunities for entry into skill training programs as well as access to co-operative work placement programs or support for the development of social enterprises that are designed to meet the specific needs of the corrections population in Hamilton.*

Mental Health:

There is a very high incidence of mental health problems in the criminalized population of Hamilton. Existing resources to attend to their condition appear to be inadequate to the process of fully understanding, diagnosing or treating these conditions.

Recommendation: *More work needs to be done to engage the mental health treatment system in understanding and more effectively responding to the health and treatment needs of the corrections population in Hamilton.*

Addictions:

Persons with addictions problems are at particularly high risk when leaving corrections institutions. This seriously undermines their capacity to successfully return to community life. It appears that even a short interruption in the transition from institution to community service leaves these clients particularly vulnerable to high risk behaviours which lead back to addictive behaviour.

Recommendation: *Corrections clients should be connected directly with a community corrections service when leaving a corrections institution to more quickly identify and assess supports and resources that will be of value in improving their prospects for reintegration into the community.*

The addictions service treatment system in Hamilton is oversubscribed and as a result there are waiting lists for individuals in need of treatment and support to address their substance abuse problems. This often results in persons re-entering the community from corrections institutions having to wait to receive treatment. As we have learned through this study, this wait often leads to a sense of resignations on the part of criminalized persons and a return to addictive and criminal behaviour.

Recommendation: *To address the problem of wait time for treatment services, addictions and community corrections services need to work together to define specific strategies that will eliminate wait times for access to treatment services for clients of the community corrections system.*

Criminalized persons often face a complex set of issues and challenges when returning to community life. In Hamilton a wide array of services exist, some of which deal with the reintegration of criminalized persons and some of which provide supports which address related issues. It is well accepted that in this complex environment it is important and effective for services to collaborate and coordinate their efforts. This approach to providing service will ultimately reduce duplication of efforts through improved awareness of services, capacity and potential for innovation and improvements. Other sectors of the human services community in Hamilton have been proceeding along this course with some success in recent years.

Much of the information gathered over the course of this study indicates a strong interest in the development of a collaborative initiative in Hamilton focused on attending to corrections issues and services. The formation of such a collaborative and through them work to develop a comprehensive long term plan for working together in the years ahead would be a logical next step to take in this process.

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APPENDIX A

Community Correctional Services: Interview Guide

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton is working with local community correctional services to better understand the needs of individuals who are in conflict with the law and settling in Hamilton. To help us with this, we would like to ask you some questions about your experience here in Hamilton, and what types services or supports that you think would be most helpful for someone settling in Hamilton. The survey is confidential, and you do not have to give your name.

1. Housing

Research shows that finding housing can be a challenge for individuals in conflict with the law...

- a) In your opinion, what are some of the challenges in finding housing in Hamilton?
- b) What do people generally do as a result of these challenges?
- c) What types of services or supports would be most helpful in finding housing?

2. Employment

Finding employment has also been identified as a challenge for individuals in conflict with the law...

- a) In your opinion, what are some of the challenges in finding employment in Hamilton?
- b) What do people generally do as a result of these challenges?
- c) What types of services or supports would be most helpful in finding employment?

3. Mental Health Supports

Research shows that some people in conflict with the law suffer from mental health issues and have trouble finding community supports...

- a) In your opinion, what are some of the challenges in finding support for mental health issues in Hamilton?
- b) What do people generally do as a result of these challenges?
- c) How could mental health services be provided that would be most helpful?

4. Addictions

Research also shows that many people in conflict with the law are struggling with addiction to drugs and/or alcohol, and have trouble finding community supports...

- a) In your opinion, what are some of the challenges in finding support for addictions in Hamilton?
- b) What do people generally do as a result of these challenges?
- c) What types of services or supports would be most helpful in dealing with addictions?

5. Counselling Support

Sometimes people have unresolved issues (such as anger management issues, childhood trauma, or just have trouble coping day to day) but have difficulty finding counselling support in the community...

- a) In your opinion, what are some of the challenges in finding counselling support in Hamilton?
- b) What do people generally do as a result of these challenges?
- c) How could counselling supports and services be provided that would be most helpful?

6. Other Challenges

In addition to the issues identified, what are some of the other challenges facing individuals settling in Hamilton who are in conflict with the law?

7. A Bit About You

a) Gender
Male Female

b) Age group
18 to 25 years
26 to 35 years
36 to 45 years
46 to 55 years
56 to 65 years
66 years +

c) What is your current housing situation?
Community residential facility
Transitional Housing Program
Apartment or rooming house
Living with family
Living with friends
Shelter
Streets
Other: _____

d) What is your current employment status?

Unemployed - looking for work

Unemployed – not looking for work

Employed full time

Employed part time

Employed temporary, contract or piece work

e) If you are currently unemployed, what is your main source of income?

Ontario Works

ODSP

Personal Needs Allowance

Support from friends or family

Other:_____

f) Highest level of education?

Less than secondary school

Secondary school completion

Trade school/apprenticeship

Some college or university

Completed college or university

Other:_____

g) Have you spent time in a federal or provincial correctional facility?

Yes No

If “Yes”, what type of facility?

Federal

Provincial

When was your most recent release?

_____Weeks | Months | Years ago

Thank You