Pinching Pennies, Costing Dollars: Michigan's Offender Re-Entry System

Crystal A. Dussia

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Pinching Pennies, Costing Dollars: Michigan’s Offender Re-Entry System

Abstract
The current state of incarceration is a burden that every taxpayer bears. Through effective offender re-entry services, the financial, social, and physical burdens such as high crime rates, high recidivism rates, and the high cost of incarceration can be lessened for all citizens. Historical context establishes a foundation to be able to understand the current state of re-entry in Michigan as a small representation of the nation. The financial expenditures, social costs, and lack of evidence of past practice are explored. The content of this thesis is focused on Michigan within a national context of prison re-entry programs, history, and funding. Resources such as the Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative, Michigan Department of Corrections (2013a, 2013b, 2013c) and churches were utilized in the review. The financial expenditures, social costs, and lack of evidence of past practice are explored. Overall, it is suggested that investment, support, and advocacy for offender re-entry is needed and beneficial.

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First Advisor
Dr. Jennifer Kellman-Fritz

Second Advisor
Dr. Yvette Colon

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PINCHING PENNIES, COSTING DOLLARS: MICHIGAN'S OFFENDER RE-ENTRY SYSTEM

By

Crystal A. Dussia

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the
Eastern Michigan University
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation With
Departmental Honors Bachelors of Social Work

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It is imperative to give acknowledgement to my friends and family who reminded me of my strengths when I felt weak. Thank you, Nana; you have always being so much more than a grandmother. Talara, you are the love of my life, I appreciate you being available even when I was absent due to my thesis. I couldn’t have done it without your unwavering love and belief in me. Emily, you are my best friend and my heart, thanks for breathing truth into my life, especially when I didn’t want to hear it. I am indefinitely grateful to those who selflessly gave of their time and resources to build me into the woman that I am today. I will pay it forward. Most of all I would like to thank my higher power for providing me with the strength and courage to be the woman that I am today.

I would like to thank all those that are changing lives by, advocating for resources, conducting research and assisting prisoner’s successful re-entry into society.
Abstract

The current state of incarceration is a burden that every taxpayer bears. Through effective offender re-entry services, the financial, social, and physical burdens such as high crime rates, high recidivism rates, and the high cost of incarceration can be lessened for all citizens. Historical context establishes a foundation to be able to understand the current state of re-entry in Michigan as a small representation of the nation. The financial expenditures, social costs, and lack of evidence of past practice are explored. The content of this thesis is focused on Michigan within a national context of prison re-entry programs, history, and funding. Resources such as the Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative, Michigan Department of Corrections (2013a, 2013b, 2013c) and churches were utilized in the review. The financial expenditures, social costs, and lack of evidence of past practice are explored. Overall, it is suggested that investment, support, and advocacy for offender re-entry is needed and beneficial.
Introduction

Since the 1970s the United States (U.S.) experienced an enormous rise in rates of incarceration. The Michigan Department of Correction’s (2013a) prisoner costs report states that the Michigan prison population is 43,070, which is 31% higher than the Midwest average. It costs over $4 million a day, or $1.5 billion a year, to run Michigan’s prison system (State of Michigan, 2014).

It is hoped that providing an overview of the expense, cost, risks, historical context, political advocacy, evidence-based practice, community risks and consequences, will highlight the need for increased prisoner re-entry programs in Michigan. The leading program providing re-entry services to Michigan prisoners being released is noted.

Several decades of trends pertaining to prisoner re-entry and the scant scholarly literature and research on the topic of prisoner re-entry is integrated. The research in the area of state based prison re-entry is inadequate; therefore national statistics and information are given as a comparative reference. The lack of statistics on success rates has fueled national and state reductions in funding and support for re-entry programs. A proposed plan for action is suggested. Something must be done, because what is currently being done is not benefiting Michigan citizens.

Defining Prisoner Re-entry Programs

Seiter and Kadela (2003) defined re-entry programs as those that: 1) re-entry programs specifically focus on the transition from prison to community, or 2) initiate treatment in a prison setting and link with a community program to provide continuity of care. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2005), more than 650,000 people are released from state and federal prisons annually. This means the number of people released from prison has increased 350
percent over the last 20 years. Prisoner re-entry applies to all individuals transitioning back into society regardless of length of sentence, severity of convicted crime, or whether they are incarcerated at the federal, state, or local level.

Prisoner re-entry programs are intended to help transition post-incarcerated individuals back into communities. The resources that are provided include, but are not limited to: transitional housing, employment training, transportation, family reunification services, education/vocation training, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, assistance with accessing public assistance and community based services. These programs take many different forms. They can be based within prison or in the community. Re-entry programs may be government funded or non-profit. Some programs are mandatory or self-referral. According to Hughes & Wilson (2003), over 95% of people incarcerated will be released at some point.

**Historical Context**

It is essential to give national historical context before describing the current position of Michigan’s prisoner re-entry programs. Prisons were originally called penitentiaries, originating from the Latin word *paenitentia*, meaning repentance (vocabulary.com). Around the world, prisons have been used as a form of punishment and isolation since as early as 1 millennia B.C. Imprisonment is talked about in the bible, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and ancient scrolls. Kings, pharos, and the like have used prison as a way of detainment, usually before execution (Johnson, 1996). Prison is not a new concept.

What is modern is the idea of utilizing punishment and turning it into an opportunity to assist ex-offenders in overcoming barriers, which in return will produce constructive members of society (Kenemore & Roldan 2006). Imprisoning people and not giving them resources or new skillsets inhibits them from eradicating criminal behavior. In the early 1900s there was a
heightened awareness of the need to increase public safety and reduce the financial strain on the states (O'Donnell, 2004). It became public knowledge that something had to be done to decrease the crime rates and break the cycle.

**Earliest Re-entry - Parole**

The first implemented prisoner re-entry programs were in the form of parole. The origin of the word parole means “word,” as to give word or a formal verbal promise (Petersilia, 1999). It is now used in reference to an inmate’s oath to behave in a lawful manner in order to be released before completion of his or her full sentence. Chief credit for developing the early parole system is usually given to Alexander Maconochie. Maconochie developed a system of rewards for good conduct, labor and study. In collaboration with Maconochie, Sir Walter Crofton developed a system based on reformation and led to release to parole (Cromwell & Del Carmen, 1999). The primary varying factor is that Crofton started the prisoners with strict imprisonment, and then inmates were placed in an intermediate prison, where they had opportunities to earn a ticket-of-leave. The implementation of this structure motivated prisoners to behave while incarcerated, learn new skill sets, become educated and be empowered to make constructive choices. This model for prisoner re-entry started to be successfully implemented in European countries first (Petersilia, 1999).

In 1907, New York became the first state to adopt all the elements of the modern parole system: indeterminate sentences, a system for granting release, post release supervision, and specific criteria for parole violations. By 1942, all states and the federal government had adopted the parole system as we know it (Clear & Cole, 1997; Petersilia, 1999). Parole was the first push towards a standardized prison re-entry that the United States had experienced. The primary
emphasis was that some prisoners could break the cycle of crime and that would be expressed through lowered rates of recidivism.

When ex-offenders are released on parole, they will serve out the rest of their sentence being monitored in the community instead of in an institution. The rates of early releases from prison to parole systems sky rocketed to a staggering 70% by the late 1970’s (Miller, 2012). Beginning in the 1970’s, the landscape of sentencing philosophy shifted. Since the implementation of parole, there was little to no scientific base to demonstrate its success. Two politically and academically powerful individuals gain broad support for their ideas and change resulted. Andrew Von Hirsh a penal theorist argued that the discredited rehabilitation model should be replaced with sanctions that reflect the harm associated with prisoner misconduct. David Fogel, the executive director of the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission pushed for the justice model, advocating for a return to flat time /determinate sentencing and the elimination of parole boards (Petersilia, 2004). Public confidence in ex-offenders ability to successfully reintegrate dropped and the institution of parole lost its sense of mission (Rhine, Smith, & Jackson, 1991).

**Parole in 1980s**

Throughout the U.S., the 1980s was an era marked by President Reagan’s sentiment of “tough on crime” and “the war on drugs.” Prisoner sentencing and re-entry moved from reform to punitive action. During this time, there were many new polices and restructuring of release and sentencing polices that decreased prisoners chances of being released to parole before fulfillment of their entire length of sentence. The truth in sentencing, plea bargaining bans and rules, mandatory sentencing laws, voluntary sentencing guidelines, non-civil service employees on Parole Boards, privatization of prisons, statutory determinate sentencing and strict parole
guidelines redefined the “luxury” of release to parole and access to prisoner re-entry programs (Tonry, 1987). The above alterations to policies changed the nature of how ex-offenders are released. Discretionary release is being released to parole supervision to fulfill the rest of sentence in the community. Mandatory release is, serving the full term of sentence prior to release to parole (Petersilia, 1999). By 1989, seven states had abolished discretionary parole (Hughes, Wilson, & Beck, 2001).

**Parole in 1990s**

Since 1990, the rate of discretionary release plummeted and has remained low. By 1999, 18% of offenders served their full prison sentence before being released to parole, compared to 13% in 1990 (Hughes, Wilson, & Beck, 2001). This is an increase of nearly 100,000 offenders. The change in releasing offenders from discretionary parole to mandatory parole has impacted Michigan prisons in the following ways:

- Longer stays for inmates
- Higher cost to house inmates
- Cost of having many parole board hearings
- Inmates aging
Michigan Prison Dynamics

With a baseline understanding of the national picture of incarceration, trends, and re-entry, the dynamics of Michigan’s prisoner re-entry system can be analyzed. The prison system in Michigan today is a culmination of many factors:

- Michigan has above average national rates of incarceration,
- above national average sentencing times,
- an aging prison population and
- above national average salaries for corrections employees, with the sixth highest corrections salary in the nation, at $58,089 a year (Citizens Research Council, 2011).

There are several contributing factors to the lengthy prison sentences in Michigan. One factor is the removal of good-time credits for prisoners sentenced after April 1, 1987. Good-time credit is an allocation of credit towards days served on a prison sentence, based on good behavior. Inmates are no longer able to earn good-time credits, although disciplinary credits are still implemented. In 1992, the Parole Board changed from civil servants to appointees (Citizens
Civil servants appeared to be more empathetic to the humanity of the prisoners and granted more paroles. The truth-in-sentencing policy of 1998 was accompanied by sentencing guidelines developed and enacted by the Michigan Legislature (Ditton & Wilson, 1999). The public policy of truth-in-sentencing was a back door way of abolishing parole. This policy assumes when people are sentenced to 15 years, they should serve 15 years and not be given parole before that. All of these elements contribute to lengthy incarcerations of Michigan offenders, higher than national averages.

An aging prison population is an expensive and changing dynamic in Michigan. Incarcerated elderly have a greater need for medication, single unit rooms, transportation, doctor office visits and supervision. The prison population is the only group of Americans that are guaranteed free healthcare, which is expensive. Elder offenders are a population that is generally considered a low risk to society, yet this population produces a high expense. The U.S. incarcerated population is aging at a significantly more rapid rate than the overall U.S. population, with the population of senior adults in prison having more than tripled since 1990 (Williams, Goodwin, Baillargeon, Ahalt & Walter, 2012). The senior population of ex-offenders transitioning back into society needs specialized re-entry services. The services needed by this population are referrals to general care practitioners, family reunification to assist with care, transportation, and health insurance.

Having more people incarcerated for longer periods of time in Michigan means there is a greater need for prisoner re-entry programs. It is in every resident’s best interest to have ex-inmates successfully transition back into the general public. In the long run, re-entry programs and services save money, time, and resources.
Research on prisoner re-entry programs, success, and strategy are disproportionate to research done in other areas of correction such as recidivism rates, illness, and behavior sanctions. The first prison in Michigan was known as Michigan State Prison, constructed in 1839, now known as Jackson State Penitentiary, located in Jackson Michigan. In July of 1997, Jackson State Penitentiary opened Copper Street Correctional Facility. This is a level 1 prison, used as a centralized facility established to house offenders prior to release. According to the Michigan Department of Corrections website (www.michigan.gov/corrections), within the facility there is adult basic education, GED preparation and testing, vocational training, religious activities, therapy, and 12 step meetings. This is the earliest information found for a government funded, structured re-entry program in the state of Michigan.

The majority of Michigan programs to assist prisoners with a successful transition back into society are funded by the state budget, under the Michigan Department of Corrections (2013b). The Transition Accountability Plan (TAP) is the sub-unit of the MDOC which started in 2004. When an offender is eligible for parole, TAP is accountable for case planning to assist with the adjustment of living in the community. Michigan is home to 38 prisons, and of these, only 19 offer re-entry programs (Michigan Department of Corrections, 2013). It’s alarming that only 50% of the state’s prisons have services available. It is important to clarify that this does not mean that 50% of Michigan’s incarcerated population is receiving services. According to the Michigan Department of Corrections Prisoner Re-entry Expenditures and Allocations Report (2014), services that are available are residential stability, employment readiness, social support, health and behavioral health, and operations support. Program descriptions and guidelines for the
re-entry services provided by the Michigan Department of Corrections are not available. The following chart is representative to offender population receiving services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Service Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Prisoners assessed at intake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67%</td>
<td>Employable prisoners participate in work programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(MDOC is capitalizing on their labor)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,222</td>
<td>Participating in GED / HS education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>3% of total prison population</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,888</td>
<td>Participating in Adult Basic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>11% of total prison population</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,960</td>
<td>Participating in Career Technical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>0.6% of total prison population</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288</td>
<td>Participating in Pro-Social Support Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>0.6% of total prison population</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>444</td>
<td>Participating in Cognitive-Behavioral Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>1% of total prison population</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>Positive Substance Abuse Tests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative**

Leading the way in community based re-entry is the Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (MPRI), a community based re-entry program. MPRI was founded in 2003 and implemented in 2004 as a three phase model: phase one is getting ready, phase two is going home, phase three is staying home (Schrantz, 2007). The vision is that every prisoner released from prison will have the tools needed to succeed in the community. Since the implementation of MPRI, Michigan has experienced a 35.6% decrease in returns to prison within three years compared to baseline rate of recidivism over the last decade (Michigan Council on Crime and
Delinquency, 2011). It is believed that if the same person returns to the same community, with the same skills, they will commit the same crimes.

Phase one of the process is a referral based on the prison parole board’s discretion. Once the referral is made, the TAP will assess, classify, and develop a post and pre-release plan for the offender. These services can take place up to twelve months prior to release. Phase two consists of making plans to address housing, employment, and community services to address addiction and mental illness. This is when specific release dates are decided and connections to the community are made. This takes place approximately six months prior to release. In phase three, the case is distributed to community providers, guidelines of supervision are defined, and organizing the ex-offenders time takes place. In this final phase it is the responsibility of the ex-offender, human services providers, and the ex-offenders network of community supports and mentors to assure continued success (Schrantz, 2007).

Community Contribution to Prisoner Re-entry

The longest standing re-entry services in Michigan have been provided by community organizations and religious institutions. Alcoholics Anonymous was first introduced to prisons in 1942. Founder Bill Wilson visited San Quentin and spoke before the offenders about the nature of alcoholism and recovery. As A.A. has expanded into countless other 12 step programs, they have been brought into prisons as well. There are 12 step meetings found in every prison in Michigan, only with the exception of the forensic prisons (criminally insane). As of current day, most Alcoholics Anonymous meetings take collections to supply offenders with the basic 12 step program text. This is a fully complementary and voluntary service (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1966).
As stated earlier the penitentiary was a place where inmates were to demonstrate their penance and remorse for their crimes through prayer and reflection. It is uncertain what religious organizations were the first to provide resources, yet religious organizations have been collaborating with penitentiaries since the 18th century (Smith, 2004). The nature of re-entry service provided by religious organizations include, but are not limited to, organized programs, worship, guidance, post-release support, training to become chaplains, and providing scripture and reading material. Pitts & Pitts (2006) showed that offenders who were most active in prisoner fellowship bible studies were significantly less likely to be rearrested during the one-year follow-up period. On November 3, 2008, the First Congregational Church was formed inside Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility, which is located in Ionia, Michigan. This was the first offender organized, led, and run pilot offender church (Celebration Fellowship, 2015). It is difficult to obtain information specific to funding, history, and available services because of the landscape of the religious programs being fully self-supporting and therefore not bound to document for public access.

Re-entry Services

The nature of services received to build new skillsets and assist in a successful transition into society is categorized by out-reach and in-reach. In-reach services are those that are brought into the incarceration facilities by outside entities. The primary nature of in-reach services that are funded by the MDOC is access to skill trades, assessments and education. Out-reach programs are service provided in the community. Both styles of services have a variety of funding sources, such as, government grants, donations, and sub-contracted government social service agencies.

The available services can consist of, but are not limited to:
• Family reunification,
• transitional housing,
• basic needs (clothing, transportation, etc.),
• obtainment of identification,
• employment services,
• and mental health treatment and screening.

For constructive re-entry into society, it is imperative to have programs and resources in place to assist in the transition. Ex-offenders with felonies face policy barriers when it comes to employment, education, licensure, receiving assistance and getting loans (Uggen, Manza & Thomas, 2006). This is in addition to personal barriers such as cultural shock experienced after years of being incarcerated, communicating only with other offenders, and not being current with social nuances. Distress of perceived social inadequacies can isolate ex-offenders from meaningful interpersonal connections (Waleed, 2010). Being in prison where the philosophy is to not trust others, it is difficult to develop health connections upon release. A person who has been in prison for decades will have to learn how to use a cell phone, computer, credit card, and all the other cultural conveniences that the general population has learned in piecemeal.

The mission of a program must be related to the location and economic resources in that area. For example, an ex-offender released to Detroit Michigan, where the unemployment rate is conservatively estimated at 28.9%, with about 40% of the city living below the poverty level, needs a different focus of re-entry services (Rice & Rice, 2014). Taking geography, socio-economic status and resources into consideration allows programs to have an expansive community context and therefore link ex-offenders with available services and fill in the gaps of available services.
Expense

State spending allocated towards corrections has been among the fastest growing categories in the state of Michigan's budget over the last 15 years. According to Lathrop (2013), in Fiscal Year 1983 5% of the state's General Fund was dedicated to prisons and corrections; by 2013, corrections spending accounted for more than one of every five General Fund dollars, equaling 21.5%. This is a 400% increase in the portion of the state's "financial pie" which is delegated to house and care for those that are incarcerated.

The prisoner Re-entry Expenditures and Allocations Report (Michigan Department of Correction, 2013b) states that $21.6 million was allocated in 2013 for community based prisoner re-entry programs. The same report expresses that all programs that take place in prisons and correctional institutions have been discontinued, with the exception of a few programs for sex offenders and for mandatory supervision. Two community based programs closed (Michigan Department of Correction, 2013b). In 2014 Michigan Governor Rick Snyder reduced funding for re-entry services to $13.8 million; this is a 36% decrease from the previous year (Michigan League for Public Policy, 2014).

In order to have a holistic view of the prison system, it is imperative to recognize that the industry of corrections is profitable. In the 2013-2014 fiscal year the Michigan Department of Corrections (2013a) requested $93.72 per prisoner, per day. According to MDOC's request, in the contracted year Michigan housed 15,761,374 prisoners. The total expense of the Michigan correctional facilities in 2013 was a staggering $1,477,232,330.00. The figures translate to be $102,301 to prisons for every $1 to prison re-entry programs.

It is undoubtable that there is a need for heightened public safety within every state. The problem lies in the fact that we continue to pour resources into a system that is broken. The
resources that are going to offenders could be going to educate Michigan children, lower taxes, increase the employment rates, and invest in our adults having gainful employment. As a state and society we need to invest in preventative measures and re-entry services to produce productive tax payers.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), the mean income for a Michigan citizen is $45,413. Taking into consideration that it costs nearly $35,000 per year to house a single prisoner, it clear something needs to be changed. Allocating money to prisoner re-entry programs significantly lowers recidivism rates. Lower recidivism rates leads to lower crime rates and lower expenses of supervision and housing offenders. Then more taxpayers’ money can be available for education, and economic improvement, so that Michigan can be a more productive state. Since the start of MPRI, Michigan has saved more than $200,000,000 in incarceration costs (Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2011).

According to the State of Michigan’s Budget Report, Michigan is one of the few states that are currently allocating more money to prisons than higher education in Fiscal Year 2013-2014 (State of Michigan, 2012). Comparing the allocation of funds for corrections and for higher education in the state of Michigan gives an opportunity to see the magnitude of the expense of incarceration. The following charts are a visual representation to give value and contrast to the amount of money that is spent on Michigan on the direct cost of incarceration (not the total expense of corrections).
Higher Education 2013 FY Allocations

Total: $1.4 Billion

- University Operations
- University Performance Funding
- Facility for Rare Isotope Beams
- Student Financial Aid
- Satewide Programs
- Retiree Health Care Increase Premium

Department of Corrections FY 3013 Allocations

Total: $2.1

- Prison Operations
- Parole, Probation & Community Serv.
- Administration


High Social Cost

There is a large societal cost associated with the lack of investment into re-entry services (Cnaan, Draine, Frazier & Sinha, 2008). Without re-entry services in place, ex-offenders end up
re-incarcerated due to continuing to commit deviant/illicit acts. By not investing in the successful transition from incarceration to the general population, many areas of the Michigan economy, public safety, and family units are disturbed. An ex-offender’s probability of reoffending increases after going to prison and therefore does not make the public any safer. The current punitive system that is in place is not teaching offenders their lesson.

As defined by the National Institute of Justice (2014), recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in rearrests, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the ex-offender’s release. The rate of recidivism is the primary measurement that is used when evaluating the success of both prisons and re-entry services. In 2001, the state of Michigan had a staggering 45.7% recidivism rate (MDOC, 2011). Improvement has recently been made. In 2011, 31.5% of prisoners released returned back to prison for violation of parole or committing a new crime. The same report states:

“The Michigan’s Prisoner Re-entry program started in 2005. Offender success while on community supervision is a key factor in the program’s success. Lower crime rates, fewer new criminal sentences resulting in prison, and fewer parole violations and new criminal convictions by parolees have resulted in a prisoner population decline of nearly 7,500 prisoners.” (pg.6)

The standard has been set to have low expectations of people’s capacity to improve past their current criminology. Not even 15 years ago, almost half of individuals who went to prison were bound to go back. This is what the literature refers to as the “revolving door” of the prison system (Padfield & Maruna, 2006). The high rate of recidivism costs the Michigan taxpayers gravely and that cost is not only financial. The “revolving door” of the prison system is still swinging. Ex-offenders that return to prison cost the state of Michigan $112,000,000 per year
In addition to the financial cost which has already been analyzed in great detail, the commonly overlooked civil losses create the greatest statewide damage.

**Unemployment/Crime**

The first and most hazardous cost is the rate of unemployment among ex-offenders. National studies show that one in eight adult men of working age have a felony conviction. Male ex-offenders who are undereducated are impacted by as much as a 6.1% to 6.9% increase in unemployment (Schmitt & Warner, 2010). This lost output of goods and services has cost the U.S. economy $57 to $65 billion per year (Beckett & Western, 1999). A leading contributor to the large unemployment rate is the status of communities that ex-offenders return to. Ex-offenders’ education and post-release employment are significantly and statistically correlated with recidivism, regardless of ex-offender’s criminal charge or classification (Nally, Lockwood, Ho & Knutson, 2014). Without gainful employment, chances of ex-offenders reverting back to crime as a means to make money is great; this is an imposition upon public safety.

**High Crime Areas**

As the rate of recidivism increases, so does the rate of crime. A heightened rate of crime increases the premium for all insurance; life, automotive, health, and business. This influx in criminal activity and high insurance premiums sets the stage for redlining. Redlining is defined as geographic discrimination (Black & Schweitzer, 1985). Many times zip codes with high crime rates push businesses and homeowners out and the tax bracket goes with them. As the tax payers move out of an area, all public services depreciate. This is why there is a large concentration of crime in certain areas. With inadequate public services and competitive jobs, businesses are not going to hire a felon if they have an option. This leaves ex-offenders capitalizing on their
skillsets of illicit behavior as means of creating financial security. It may appear that Michigan is cutting costs by not investing into the most disadvantaged of Michigan’s population, but it is costing the taxpayer greatly.

**High Prevalence of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)**

Infectious diseases are disproportionately represented within prison populations. Gough, Kempf, Graham, Manzanero, Hook, Bartolucci & Chamot, (2010) conducted a systematic review of the prevalence of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and found a rate of .02 per 100 residents in the general U.S. population, compared to 0.08 per 100 for people who are continuously incarcerated, and 2.92 per 100 for people who are released and then re-incarcerated. The astronomically high prevalence of infectious diseases is attributed to the high-risk of sexual contact without contraceptives that takes place in prisons. These diseases are brought about by preventable behavior. Contraceptives are not given or available in prison because sexual interaction is not permitted, but it happens. Offenders are tested at intake for diseases, but at no time during their sentence or at release are they tested. HIV screening and treatment should be implemented as re-entry services. This important precaution will give ex-offenders insight into their physical health, increase public safety due to decreased rate of transmission, and save money currently spent on treatment and care.

**Incarcerated Parents**

Many incarcerated men and women are fathers and mothers. The incarceration of a parent takes a great economic, psychological, and emotional toll on a child. National survey data reveal that paternal imprisonment decreases the educational attainment of children (Foster & Hagan, 2009). A child’s grades drop, which limits future opportunities. The findings of the survey are representative across race and ethnicity.
Minorities (primarily African Americans) are incarcerated at disproportionate rates; in return this affects geographic areas with high concentrations of African Americans. Approximately one-third (34%) of prisoners released to parole in 2003 returned to Wayne County—a county that already faces greater economic and social disadvantage than many other counties throughout the state of Michigan (Solomon, Thomson & Keegan, 2004). For example, the percentage of families living below the federal poverty level in Wayne County is 72% higher than the statewide average (Solomon, Thomson & Keegan, 2004). African American children are more likely to have a parent in prison at 7.5%, followed by Hispanic children at 2.3%, and White children at 1% (Pattillo, Western & Weiman, 2004).

When parents are incarcerated they are unable to contribute to their child’s financial, emotional, and physical wellbeing. Given the prevalence of incarceration, findings suggest that a large population of children suffers unmet material needs, residential instability, and behavior problems (Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper & Mincy, 2009). These risks may be best addressed by using the point of incarceration as an opportunity for intervention and the administration of age-appropriate social services. An incarcerated parent is unable to be a living example and mentor to the future generations. It is easy to state, better to have no example, then a bad example, but this statement may not ring true in the eyes of offenders’ families. Through appropriate re-entry services like parenting classes, family reunification, money management, and community involvement, ex-offenders have an opportunity to lead by example. Removing barriers for ex-offenders or the currently incarcerated population gives them an opportunity to contribute to the state’s system instead of being the primary financial liability.
Political Advocacy

Michigan Act 116 of 1954 (Michigan Election Law, 1954) prohibits people who have been convicted in state and federal court, from voting while incarcerated. This right is prohibited if the crime is a misdemeanor or felony. The right to vote is automatically restored upon release. Once a person is incarcerated, whether they go to prison or jail, their civil liberty to vote is forfeited/revoked (Bauman, 1999). This makes the Michigan voting polls exclusionary to the 0.61% of the Michigan population that is incarcerated (Manza & Uggen, 2006). This primarily effects those who are serving long periods of time incarcerated and do not have the basic individual power to advocate for themselves politically. Research on the effects of long term incarceration on ex-offenders’ political involvement has not been conducted.

Michigan is more liberal on the restrictions of disenfranchised voters than other states. There are states like Maine and Vermont that allow all citizens to vote, regardless of whether they are incarcerated or not. In addition several states like Florida, Kentucky and Missouri prohibit ex-offenders from voting indefinitely, and the only restorative action is a pardon from the governor (Procon.org, 2014). It is important as a voter and citizen to know who is disenfranchised from making political choices. There is a need for people to advocate for bills and laws that will do justice for ex-offenders. This will serve the greater good of all Michigan citizens by being the best representation of the collective body of citizens.

Evidence Based Practice

The research on evidence-based prisoner re-entry programs practice is slim. There was a national and state push for more resources for the ex-offender population at the beginning of the twentieth century (Roots, 2008) and programs like MPRI were implemented. Since 2010, funding and political support for re-entry services has decreased. Seiter and Kadela (2003)
researched program evaluations of prison re-entry programs from 1975 to 2001. They found only 19 programs in which evaluations contained any control or comparison group; 10 were solely drug treatment programs. This means that during a 25-year period, when hundreds of work release programs, halfway houses, job training, education programs, pre-release classes, and more were implemented in the U.S., the literature contains only 9 credible evaluations (Petersilia, 2004).

Bouffard, MacKenzie, & Hickman (2000), identified 184 correctional evaluations conducted in Canada between 1978 and 1998 on prisoner re-entry which used a methodology that employed a control or comparison group. They identified the implementation of the following programs as working to reduce offender recidivism:

1) in-prison therapeutic communities, with follow-up community treatment
2) cognitive behavioral therapy
3) non-prison based sex offender treatment programs
4) vocational education programs
5) multi-component correctional industry programs
6) community employment programs

They also identified promising correlations between the following programs and reduced recidivism (meaning there were one or two evaluations showing effectiveness): 1) Prison-Based Sex Offender Treatment, 2) Adult Basic Education, and 3) Transitional Programs Providing Individualized Employment Preparation and Services for High-Risk Offenders (Bouffard, MacKenzie, and Hickman, 2000).

The momentum of the prisoner re-entry support is dwindling. This loss is evident by the massive reduction of funding by both the Federal government and the Michigan Fiscal Budget.
More research is needed in the field of prisoner re-entry to insure the success and cost effectiveness of continues funding. Lack of evidence is reasoning for the national and state decline in supporting re-entry programs. Taking into consideration that lack of evidence based practice; it is fair to assume research is not driving policy.

Applying evidence-based practice to the lack of reintegration services poses a difficult challenge. Nationwide there is a lack of research and implementation of services of this nature, and the same rings true for Michigan. Funding for prisoner re-entry programs has been consistently cut; therefore few programs exist or continue to get funded. Without research to provide the necessary information, appropriate service delivery is difficult. With better information, voters and elected officials may be persuaded to shift from punitive to productive approaches.

**Proposed Plan for Action**

Prisoner re-entry is a national and state problem for several reasons. First, counterproductive policies and procedures have changed incarceration and re-entry considerably over the last four decades and needs to be reevaluated. Second, the corrections system has grown exponentially and is the largest expense to each tax payer. Citizens are paying for corrections directly through tax dollars, some of which could be more productively redirected towards re-entry services. Third, there are fewer available resources and funding to meet offenders’ re-entry needs. Fourth, there are many indirect social costs associated with the current correction system’s including high crime rates, loss of revenue, under education, generational consequences, high rate of recidivism and high unemployment rates. Fifth, the prison population is aging which presents a high expense for a low risk population. Although many problems have
been noted, there are several categories of programs that can be expanded significantly with only a small portion of funding that is currently used for incarcerating offenders.

A multifaceted program needs to start at the entry gates of the prison. Intake assessments of risks to public safety, current or obtainable skillsets, willingness to change, chemical dependency history, and mental health screenings need to be a mandatory part of incarceration. Participation in prison education, job training, and placement programs is associated with improved post release outcomes, including reduced recidivism (Gaes, Flanagan, Motiuk & Stewart, 1999). Mears and Cochran (2014) present five strategies for change.

1. Make successful re-entry a policy priority and mandatory process
2. Institutionalize personalized effective re-entry plans
3. Rely on diverse policies, programs, and practices to meet ex-offenders needs
4. Prioritize quality supervision, assistance, treatment and services
5. Institutionalize research into policy, program, and practice decisions

Each year the state of Michigan invests millions of dollars to incarcerate offenders. As a result, we have created a revolving door of offenders failing in the community and going back to prison. This is not only a frivolous expenditure it is a failure to the offenders and the citizens. It is evident that the system we have now is not working and needs to be reevaluated. Instead of focusing on solely on detainment, the focus must shift to a successful transition into the community if something is to improve. There is potential to remove barriers, so ex-offenders may be productive taxpaying citizens. Being sentenced to prison changes people’s lives. We as a state can chose if this is going to be a constructive or destructive change.
The need for prisoner re-entry services has just started to be addressed in the last century. Many of the re-entry programs that are implemented are based in criminal justice or faith-based organizations, rather than in social work services.

"While criminal justice and faith communities have experience and an investment in working with these communities, we must begin to more thoroughly integrate social work into reentry programs. The social work person-in-environment perspective is extremely well-suited to addressing the complex and challenging needs of the returning population."

(Stoesen, 2006, p.2)

The social workers code of ethics, education, and community connections prepares to provide services for ex-offenders. From the sentencing, to transitioning into the community, there is a great need for assessing needs and providing direct service to ex-offenders. Offenders/ex-offenders are a disenfranchised, disadvantage and disempowered population, that if given the right resources have potential to be contributing members of society.
Data

**Pie charts** - [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/budget/EB1_376247_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/budget/EB1_376247_7.pdf). This publication was produced and printed by The Department of Technology, Management and Budget. The purpose of the publication is to inform state and local officials and citizens about Governor Snyder’s recommended budget for fiscal year 2012 and projections for fiscal year 2013. This document is required by law MCLA 18.1363 and by the Michigan Constitution, Article V, Section 18.

**Bar graph** - Source: National Prisoner Statistics (NPS-1) series, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from [http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/ascii/tsp00.txt](http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/ascii/tsp00.txt)

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