

CENTER  
FOR  
COURT  
INNOVATION

# Reentry Court Tool Kit



A Guide for  
Reentry Court  
Practitioners

2012

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## PURPOSE OF THIS TOOL KIT

### INTRODUCTION

This tool kit is designed to provide guidance to justice planners in developing or enhancing a reentry court using specific evidence-based practices and practices that are informed by research. The tool kit is organized around a series of topics that reentry court planners and operators often confront in their work. It is informed by the work of the Center for Court Innovation, which established and operates one of the nation's first reentry courts, the Harlem Parole Reentry Court, and convenes the Manhattan Reentry Task Force.

The Harlem Parole Reentry Court started operations in 2001 as one of the first reentry courts funded under a U.S Department of Justice grant program. The reentry court model borrows from the growing literature about the effectiveness of drug courts and the role judicial monitoring can play to improve offender compliance. The Harlem Parole Reentry Court model combines comprehensive case management, pre-release engagement and judicial monitoring focused on parolees returning to a specific geographic area, Harlem—one of New York State's high impact prisoner reentry communities.

In 2009, the reentry court was awarded a Second Chance Act grant. Grant funds have been used to incorporate several evidence-based program components and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Staff engaged in a 12-month enhancement planning process that included retooling of workflows, hiring and training of new staff, and securing the necessary Institutional Review Board approvals for the evaluation plan. Currently, the program is staffed by four parole officers, a senior parole officer, and an administrative law judge all provided by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision and Parole Board. A program coordinator, four case managers/social workers, and a cognitive behavioral therapy group facilitator are funded under the Second Chance Act grant to provide direct services to 200 high- and moderate-risk parolees returning to Harlem annually.

### DEFINING REENTRY COURTS

The reentry court model emerged in the 1990's as an alternative approach to traditional parole/probation supervision. The United States Department of Justice funded the first nine pilot reentry court projects in 2001 based in part on the success of other alternative court models, particularly drug courts. Jeremy Travis, who first raised the idea of reentry courts,<sup>1</sup> describes reentry courts as “a new way to coordinate available services.... By placing a judge (or

magistrate) in the role of reentry manager, these courts, which draw upon the successes of drug courts and other problem-solving courts, create a different relationship between returning prisoners and the criminal justice system.”<sup>2</sup>

Prison and jail reentry has garnered local and national attention due in part to the rising cost of incarceration and evidence that mass incarceration policies have not produced durable public safety gains. In 2009, when the first round of Second Chance Act grants was awarded, there were over 1.6 million people incarcerated in state and federal prisons—a rate of 502 inmates for every 100,000,<sup>3</sup> the highest level in the developed world. While the United States remains the world leader in incarceration, the tide has begun to shift in the past few years towards evidence-based practices that cost less than incarceration and are more effective at promoting desistance from crime.

The reentry court model uses judicial monitoring with community supervision strategies that focus on reducing recidivism. The involvement of a judge increases accountability among the reentry team and has the potential to improve services and positively impact perceptions of procedural fairness linked to improved compliance.

While dozens of reentry court projects are in planning or operation in the United States, there are few sources of information available to reentry court planners and staff to guide them in developing effective projects.

## GETTING STARTED

### ◆ Evidence-Based Practices

It has become commonplace to hear the term “evidence-based practices” in connection with criminal justice programming. The Center for Effective Public Policy defines evidence-based practices as “the application of empirical research to professional practice.” The research must be based on “rigorous . . . studies that have been replicated numerous times with defined, measurable outcomes about the effectiveness of an intervention.” In the context of prison or jail reentry, evidence-based practices have been developed that seek to improve client outcomes, reduce recidivism, and lower justice system costs.

#### Resource

Implementing Evidence Based Practices,” a Coaching Packet published by the Center for Effective Public Policy can be found online at:

<http://www.cepp.com/documents/Implementing%20Evidence%20Based%20Practices.pdf>

Evidence-based programs use a practice or set of practices in a structured process of delivery that has been validated as consistently able to achieve specific outcomes. While evidence-based programs work, far too few have been implemented effectively and scaled up. Evidence-based practices and programs require a high degree of fidelity to the model and, in some cases, can be expensive to implement. Programs that use evidence-based practices have a greater chance of success, and of attracting funding.

Reentry courts should seek to adopt evidence-based practices whenever possible. However, when adopting an evidence-based practice or program is not possible, reentry courts should use the available evidence to inform and innovate. It is fair to say that reentry courts are still experimental. They borrow heavily from research on drug courts, but have not yet had enough research behind them to indicate that they are consistently effective at achieving reductions in reoffending. Reentry courts do use evidence-informed approaches like judicial monitoring and the use of incentives to motivate behavior change. These strategies may in the future develop more evidence that suggest they are effective with persons returning from prison or jail.

For new or existing reentry court programs, a planning team should explore the literature on evidence-based practices in reentry and determine which practices might enhance programming. A good place to start is considering how the reentry court will measure client risks and needs. Some jurisdictions have created their own validated risk assessment instrument, while others use tools created by third parties. Teams can check with their state’s corrections/community corrections agency to determine if it has a risk assessment instrument currently in use. The state

may also have a license for a third-party assessment tool, like the COMPAS,<sup>4</sup> for use at minimal or no additional costs.

### ◆ Convening Key Stakeholders & Mapping Services

Convening a reentry working group or task force is often a first step towards leveraging resources to start or re-tool a reentry court program. Private and government funders are more likely to fund projects where there is an existing local reentry service coordination effort. There is no need to reinvent the wheel; in some cases a reentry sub-committee can be developed as part of an existing crime strategy or service collaboration.

#### Tips

- Invite the senior leadership from potential partnering agencies and organizations to participate in the task force. It may not be possible to keep a senior executive involved in the day-to-day development of the project beyond the initial stages, so work to make sure surrogates have a direct line to senior decision makers.
- Engage the local prosecutor. Prosecutors can bring attention to effective reentry work locally and can use their offices to help get relevant players to the table.
- When planning a reentry court, determine the target community using crime data, corrections data, and qualitative feedback from key community stakeholders.
- Identify key local resources, especially in the areas of housing, drug treatment, and employment. Consider using AmeriCorps volunteers or student interns to map local services. Service mapping identifies available services in a geographic area and any potential barriers to access. The process can involve both online and on-the-ground research. Faith-based service providers and voluntary groups that are not receiving government funds may not appear on official government web sites or resource guides, so canvassing by foot is often the best way to learn about their existence. This approach is also helpful in identifying community assets like cultural resources and parks and family venues that formerly incarcerated clients might access to support their reentry process.
- Use a planning log to track program development activities. Logs not only track progress but also capture information for grant reporting. The log should record information related to the project's funded goals as well as other program development goals.

#### Example

The Office of New York County District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. serves as a co-chair of the Manhattan Reentry Task Force. It works collaboratively with the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision and the Harlem Community Justice Center to implement effective reentry programs as part of the Office's crime reduction strategy.

### Resources

Google Maps has a free feature to create maps. You can chose to share the maps publically or only with persons to whom you send a link. Learn more about how to use Google Maps here: <http://www.morethanamap.com/>

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Service Locator is a resource that provides information on employment programs by state and zip code: <http://www.servicelocator.org/StateMaps.asp>

**Tool Box:** Sample Planning Log, p. 21

## SCREENING & ASSESSMENT

### ◆ Determining Eligibility

It is critical to develop reentry court eligibility requirements that focus on medium to high-risk persons while limiting enrollment of low-risk persons with low service needs. Research shows that targeting too many interventions at lower risk populations can actually increase their risk of recidivism. A retrospective evaluation of the Harlem Parole Reentry Court suggests that the reentry court approach works best for persons on parole requiring intensive supervision and services, first-time parolees, and people who are drug addicted.<sup>5</sup> Reentry courts should use actuarial risks and needs assessment prior to release to inform community supervision planning. States may develop their own evidence-based assessment tools or use third party assessment tools specifically developed to determine an individual’s risk of re-offending and needs. Assessment tools include COMPAS (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions) and the LSI-R (Level of Service Inventory-Revised).

The Harlem Parole Reentry Court uses two tools to screen each individual’s risk level. First, before accepting a participant into the program the senior parole officer determines if the potential participant is medium to high risk using a validated risk score generated by New York State. This risk score is based on static factors like gender, age of the person at arrest, and criminal background. Once accepted into the program, the COMPAS tool is administered by reentry court staff either pre-release or soon after release to provide a more nuanced assessment of the client.

The COMPAS assessment results are used to guide case planning and prioritize client needs as well. The COMPAS assessment and pre-release client engagement provides a clear picture of the specific criminogenic needs that have to be addressed to lower clients' risk of recidivism. For instance, participants who score high on the "criminal personality" criminogenic factor may be required to enter a cognitive behavioral change program or engage in one-on-one counseling that focusing on problem solving, identifying and managing emotional responses, and developing coping skills. Interactions with corrections staff, the judge, and case management staff are used to reinforce the new skills the individual learns. Individualized case plans take into account the best strategy for targeting the participant's criminogenic needs.

## Tips

- Depending on crime data, the greatest area of need, and logistics, you might select a group of offenders that are: 1) returning to a single geographic area, 2) being released from one correctional facility, 3) being housed together, 4) who have been convicted of a certain type of crime (i.e. violent felony offense, etc.), and/or 5) who are members of a "special population," such as young adults (ages 18-26).
- Make sure staff is trained to use your assessment tool and that monitoring of the assessment process is a part of ongoing staff supervision. Written protocols should be developed to guide staff on how to use assessment tools.

## ◆ Pre-Release Engagement

Pre-release engagement affords the case manager and parole/probation officer an opportunity to begin establishing the clinical relationship at a moment when the individual may be most receptive to assistance and support. Pre-release engagement should begin 30 to 60 days prior to an inmate's release. It is important to leave enough time to address critical needs prior to release, while avoiding a lot of work early on with a client who might

### What are Criminogenic Needs?

According to the Center for Effective Public Policy, Criminogenic Needs are factors that research has shown to be directly related to re-offending and can be changed. The top 8 needs are referred to as "The Great Eight:" 1) history of anti-social behavior, 2) anti-social personality patterns, 3) antisocial attitudes cognition, 4) anti-social peers, 5) poor family relationships, 6) poor educational/vocation achievement, 7) lack of pro-social/leisure activities, and 8) substance abuse.

### The Need Principle

We can only decrease clients' risks if we understand what their needs are and then target them through interventions. Not all clients' needs equally influence their likelihood to recidivate. High-risk offenders tend to have multiple needs and score high on the most crime-producing needs, such as anti-social behavior and anti-social attitudes. Using a risk assessment tool like the COMPAS helps to identify the specific criminogenic needs of reentry court clients.

have his or her release date extended or canceled due to an infraction. During this time, staff can offer the participant individual attention that capitalizes on the client's hopes and plans for a new beginning. The case worker or parole/probation officer also has the opportunity to listen and empathize with some of participant's anxieties about returning to the community.

For example, many participants are ambivalent about the relationship with the parole/probation officer who will supervise them in the community. Most participants haven't had many positive experiences with law enforcement or parole/probation officers, much less a judge, and instinctually interact with them in a defensive manner, an attitude that can negatively influence their community supervision process. Using pre-release meetings as an opportunity to explore some of these concerns with the individual can reduce defensiveness and support a more trustful and problem-solving relationship that the client can continue to develop once released.

Pre-release engagement also allows the case manager or parole/probation officer to begin connecting the individual with supportive services. Every individual returning to the community under parole supervision in New York must abide by conditions of release, a set of state mandates the participant is required to follow. These may include, for example, substance abuse treatment, educational or vocational programs, or anger management.

An individual returning home after several years of incarceration may feel overwhelmed with the prospect of identifying a treatment provider or enrolling into vocational or educational programs, while also attempting to reunify with their family members and pursuing self-identified goals. Pre-release meetings provide an excellent opportunity to discuss conditions of release, learn about the client's own goals, and set up referrals in advance. Upon release, the individual will immediately be attached to programming that will keep them focused and occupied during this particularly risky transition period.

**Tips:**

- The Harlem Parole Reentry Court uses a strength-based pre-release questionnaire to help guide discharge planning. The tool helps case management and social work staff focus on key information about the participant's strengths and challenges. It is important to address reentry court participant stabilization needs as soon as possible, including obtaining proper identification cards, public assistance, and housing. Without addressing these needs, it's impossible to begin tackling the criminogenic needs of the participant.
- Make sure each client has a copy of his or her release papers. They often can be used to get identification when clients have no other way of securing an ID.

### ◆ Client in the Community

Once released, participants report to the Harlem Parole Reentry Court to make their first report to the parole/probation officer and to schedule an intake meeting with the case manager. At the intake meeting, staff work with the participant to complete a risk and needs assessment and to finalize his/her community supervision plan. The community supervision plan maps out how the individual will accomplish parole mandates with programming while pursuing individual goals.

#### Resource

The Legal Action Center's Advocacy Tool Kit offers advice for helping clients with criminal convictions to secure identification:

<http://www.lac.org/toolkits/ID/ID.htm>

A one size fits all reentry model is not effective. Harlem Parole Reentry Court participants are a diverse set of individuals with varied ages, cultures, levels of cognition, interests, and life experiences. Instead of simply assigning an individual to a program, we ask: When do you feel most happy? What motivates you to get up in the morning? In what type of setting do you feel most comfortable?

For a client who answers that his kids are most motivating, we might suggest a work program that includes parenting training and family outings. For a participant who has experienced a significant amount of trauma, we might recommend a trauma-focused program. For a gang member trying to stay away from former associates, we will make sure to choose programming away from rivals. For someone that has low literacy skills, but has a long-term goal of going to college, we might recommend an educational program that offers everything from pre-GED classes to college prep.

The research literature indicates that services must be tailored to the risk and need levels of each participant and must be delivered in a high-quality manner to support participant success. The Harlem Parole Reentry Court flags high-risk and high-need cases based on the COMPAS or parole officer recommendation for more intensive services and supervision. Staff will reach out to high-risk and high-need clients more frequently, make home visits, hold regular skill building or counseling sessions, or, when appropriate, mandate cognitive behavioral therapy or one-on-one counseling sessions to address criminal thinking.

### ◆ Evidence-Based Interventions

As part of the Harlem Parole Reentry Court's programming a 22-session evidence-based cognitive behavioral intervention program is offered to as many high-risk participants as possible. The program is a structured time-limited intervention that works with clients to identify and change thoughts and attitudes that lead to risky behavior and to practice healthy behaviors

associated with achieving the outcomes clients’ desire. The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision allow the reentry court’s cognitive behavioral therapy curriculum to fulfill the state’s anger management treatment mandate, which is required of many parolees.<sup>6</sup>

Another evidence-based practice used by Harlem Parole Reentry Court staff members is motivational interviewing. It is a client-centered, strength-based counseling approach designed to help clients elicit and strengthen the motivation for change.<sup>7</sup> The motivational interviewing embraces three core elements: collaboration, which fosters a partnership between the client and practitioner; evocation, which brings out the client’s internal motivation, as opposed to telling the client why he should change; and autonomy, which is an acknowledgement that the participant has the ability to determine how he will act. In the Harlem Parole Reentry Court, staff uses motivational interviewing to reinforce positive behavior and promote self-efficacy. In line with motivational interviewing, staff recognizes that resistance is part of the process of change, and understands that confrontation or fighting with participants only serves to build resistance. Instead, clients are engaged with “change-talk” and challenged to address personal discrepancies and distortions, while providing firm and non-judgmental support. Case managers consistently offer encouraging feedback and support in an effort to motivate clients as they adopt more pro-social lifestyles. When clients are successful in their endeavors, staff acknowledge their efforts.

**Resources**

The National Institute of Corrections has online motivational interviewing curricula and resources. See: <http://nicic.gov/>

**Toolbox:** Parole Supervision Plan Template, p. 27

**Toolbox:** Some Key Needs for Persons Released from Prison or Jail, p. 29

While the Harlem Reentry Court team provides many services to our participants, we also depend heavily on our network of community providers. We begin our relationships with outside providers by inviting them to our macro-team meeting where they inform us of their services. If our team believes the organization shares a similar philosophy, provides quality services, and is open to communication, we will follow up this meeting with a site visit. Once we have fully vetted a program and determined that it may fill a need of our clients, we will begin referring clients there. Frequently, we will reach an agreement with a provider that upon reaching a number of referrals, a representative from that organization will attend the monthly macro-team meeting. As clients may be enrolled in multiple treatment programs, participation in regular macro meetings allows for a holistic discussion of the clients engagement and any programmatic conflicts that may be impacting them. In some circumstances, we will invite outsider providers to do intakes on site at the Justice Center during the parolees report day and case conference with members of the team including the judge, the parole officers, and clinical staff.

**Tips:**

- Use motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral approaches to establish an effective working alliance with the participant that is strength-based, goal-oriented and skill-driven.
- If possible, train all reentry court staff on the use of motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy to develop a common understanding on the team of the skills and promote consistent use of these evidence-based practices.
- Parole/probation staff and clinical staff might also consider meeting with participants together during their regular parole/probation check-in meetings. These joint meetings ensure that everyone shares an understanding of the participants' progress or challenges, and that the clinical worker can address issues with the participant that arises during the meeting.

## REENTRY COURT HEARINGS

Reentry court hearings are focused on promoting compliance with court mandates, increasing participant accountability, offering positive reinforcement, and altering the participant's perceptions of the justice system through respectful interactions between the judge and the participant. Hearings can also be used to promote transparency about the community supervision process.

Depending on the type of reentry court, the hearing itself will include the judge, the parole/probation officer, the case manager, the defense attorney, the prosecutor, and the participant. Attendance of all parties is crucial to ensure that the participant receives a consistent message and that all parties understand the agreements communicated during the hearing. It also ensures that the participant feels heard by all of the individuals who have authority in the supervision process. In some circumstances, a family member may also be invited to participate in the hearing.

A relaxed hearing atmosphere encourages the participant to develop a positive relationship with the judge and to practice pro-social behaviors with a person of authority. There is growing evidence that perceptions of procedural fairness and respect by court litigants promotes compliance, even when a decision involves a sanction.<sup>8</sup>

The Harlem Parole Reentry Court staff work to create a therapeutic milieu where clients feel welcomed. After entering the courthouse, staff members warmly greet participants and escort them to the waiting area. In the mornings, a faith-based group staffs a hospitality table with

coffee and food for all participants; coffee, water, and an assortment of chocolates are available throughout the report day. Staff and faith volunteers regularly engage clients in the waiting area, sitting next to them to informally discuss their needs, challenges or successes. After reporting, all clients are escorted out and thanked for coming to report. Fostering a welcoming and positive reporting experience reinforces the act of reporting, an important measure of success for parole staff.

### ◆ Initial Hearing

The first hearing with the judge usually occurs during the first week of a participant’s release and can last 30 to 45 minutes as the judge orients the individual to the program and builds rapport between himself and the participant. It is important for the judge to clearly describe his role, officially welcome the participant into the program, and stress the primary goal of the program: to help the individual stay out of prison or jail.

Inquiring about a participant’s life goals and familial relationships also helps establish a good relationship with the participant. The judge may also attempt to engage the participant in a respectful dialogue about what led the individual to prison, ask how he plans on doing things differently this time, and urge the participant to take advantage of resources that will be offered to him/her by the reentry court.

It is important that the participant also understands the potential consequences of non-compliance. Throughout the hearing process the judge can express confidence in an individual’s self-efficacy and ability to change while establishing the authority of the court and the individual’s responsibility to himself, his family, and community. In some reentry court programs defense counsel, prosecutor, and parole/probation officer are all involved in the reentry hearing.

#### Example

Harlem Parole Reentry Court Judge Terry Saunders often chats informally with participants prior to the hearing. He frequently inquires about a client’s family and requires clients to keep a journal. He also is known for coming off the bench to shake clients’ hands after their hearing. While these actions may seem minor to an outsider, the experience can be powerful to someone who has only spoken to a judge when they were sentenced. As one Harlem Reentry Court participant said about the judge, “He makes me feel like I’m someone who matters.” Throughout the hearing, the judge praises clients for their willingness to share their feelings about anything that is important to their supervision; he also admonishes clients and reminds them of the consequences of noncompliant behaviors.

### ◆ Status Hearings

After the initial hearing, participants should meet regularly with the judge at status hearings. The frequency of hearings should be determined by risk and need levels as well as participant behavior. More frequent (weekly/bi-weekly) hearings should occur during the first three to four months, depending on the length of the participant's reentry court involvement. After the first three to four months, the hearing schedule may be decreased or increased depending on a participant's progress. Other factors such as caseload and staffing may also impact a reentry court's hearing schedule.

In addition to fostering the development of the relationship with the judge and increasing transparency around the community supervision process, the hearings serve as a problem-solving forum around issues that may lead to a parole/probation violation or new arrest, reinforce pro-social behavior, or, in some cases, warn the participant of the consequences of continued non-compliance.

At the beginning of the status update hearing, the parole/probation officer gives the judge his/her perspective on the progress of the participant. The participant then has an opportunity to respond. Following the initial report, an informal dialogue occurs between all parties. Every status update hearing looks different. Some hearings may be *problem solving* in nature, others *reinforce pro-social behavior* or *deter risky behavior*. Most involve components of all of the above.

Hearings that are *problem solving* focus on identifying the underlying reasons for a participants' non-compliance with a parole mandate, addressing the issue, and motivating the individual to make a change. While in some situations, this is a lengthy and complicated process, in others, it can be quite simple. For instance, at one Harlem Parole Reentry Court hearing, a former gang member admitted that he hadn't been attending drug treatment because a former rival was enrolled in the same program. While the judge and parole officer were able to praise the individual for his attempts at avoiding a volatile situation, they also challenged his thinking about the issue ("I can either go to the program or get in a violent situation or I can stop going to the program, avoid the conflict, but risk getting violated on parole."). In doing so, they had the participant come up with an alternate way to have addressed the problem short of skipping the program. The participant was able to suggest that he could have told his case manager or parole officer about the problem and asked if he could go somewhere else. By the end of the hearing, all parties agreed to just that. The participant was given a referral to a drug treatment program outside of the community, which he began attending faithfully.

In another instance, despite the efforts of a parole officer and the case manager, a participant refused to go to a mental health screening. With the additional pressure given by the judge, the participant agreed to go. The case manager escorted the participant for his first two appointments. After that time, the participant began going independently and taking his medication. The judge would check in on his progress during his status hearings and emphasize the importance of continued psychiatric visits. A potential parole violation was averted.

During status hearings, the judge should frequently *reinforce pro-social behavior* by praising participants for personal achievements, whether it is complying with the basic parole conditions or achieving a milestone, such as getting a job or earning a GED. The achievement does not need to be large or meaningful for the general population. For instances for some very high risk clients with a history of absconding, the judge might praise the participant for merely reporting or for staying out of jail for 30 days. In special circumstances, a participant may be rewarded with an incentive, such as a gift card to a local restaurant or a fare card, and a round of applause by everyone in the courtroom. Incentives, even small and non-monetary ones, can go a long way towards encouraging compliance among persons on parole. This approach is different than a traditional community supervision approach where the absence of a sanction may be viewed as a reward.

When a participant is engaging in risky behavior that may lead to a re-arrest or violation, the issue should immediately be addressed in court. At the hearing, the judge’s role is to find out what is happening with the participant. The parole/probation officer and the judge should help the participant identify problematic thinking and express their disapproval for the behavior.

Use of graduated responses is critical. For instance, in the event that a participant is not going to drug treatment, the judge and parole officer may first warn the individual that if he does not go to drug treatment, a more stringent curfew may be imposed. If the individual still refuses to go to treatment and tests positive, the judge may elect to send the individual to a residential stabilization program or a 30-day jail alternative that focuses on sobriety. Attuning sanctions to behavior and risk levels assures that responses to non-compliant behavior are proportional and consistently applied with a focus on public safety and changing the participant’s thinking and specific behaviors.

**Tip**

- To highlight the importance of pro-social behavior and participants positive accomplishments, reentry courts should make “Rewards and Incentives” an agenda item at regular team meetings.
- Use the hearings to address significant events, including to provide public praise for a positive client accomplishment or to address behavior that may lead to a violation.

**Resource**

**Toolbox:** To help guide and encourage the participants, the Harlem Parole Reentry Court developed a reward protocol that suggests appropriate milestones and types of rewards to correspond to those milestones. The protocol can be adapted to include monetary and non-monetary rewards that could be made available. The key is to develop a process for recognizing positive behavior in your reentry court and to consistently apply rewards for progress. Research indicates that positive reinforcement is a powerful way to change behavior. See: p. 31.

### ◆ Increased Accountability and Transparency

As a member of a reentry team that works closely and relies on each other for information and follow-through, each partner is subject to heightened scrutiny and accountability. For instance, while meetings between a participant and a parole officer usually occur in private, in our model a case manager, and frequently a judge, is privy to the interaction and can ensure that any commitments made by the parole officer and participant are met. Similarly, the case manager will frequently make commitments to the participant, and the parole officer will rely on those commitments to be executed. Should the commitment not be met, a discussion will take place at the micro-team meeting and/or one on one with the team member to ensure follow-through.

Outside providers are subject to the same level of scrutiny as well. At macro-team meetings, reentry team members will address issues that are brought to our attention at hearings. For instance, after the Harlem Parole Reentry Court judge began receiving complaints at hearings about a transitional housing provider that frequently houses homeless clients, he went on a site visit and addressed the problem directly with the program's director and determined how to resolve the issue.

In another instance, a Harlem Parole Reentry Court parole officer let the team know that a few of their clients were reporting false positives for a new drug that had recently entered the market. We followed up with our partner drug treatment provider, who affirmed that they were having issues with their drug tests. They agreed to retest the participants, and apologized one-on-one to those who had received false positives. Ultimately, they decided to switch to a new lab.

## ENGAGING FAMILY MEMBERS

*Research tells us that informal mechanisms of social control, such as families and friends, are often more powerful than formal agents of control (e.g., law enforcement) in helping individuals change their lives and avoid criminal behavior. In general, when people obey the law they do so not because they are afraid of apprehension by government authorities, but rather because they are enmeshed in social networks that implicitly and explicitly encourage law-abiding behavior.<sup>9</sup>*

The implications of this insight for the reentry field are straightforward: the loved ones of formerly-incarcerated individuals can offer critical emotional and financial support during the transition from prison to community life. They can reinforce pro-social behavior by serving as role models. And, they can also provide an early-warning detection system, observing small changes of behavior that may signal larger problems in the lives of parolees. In short, the

families of parolees are an under-tapped resource capable of playing a significant role in achieving the basic goals of any reentry program: helping participants avoid re-arrest and re-incarceration.

Recognizing the potential value of families in the reentry process, Harlem Parole Reentry Court staff frequently reaches out to participant's families through a letter or phone call and invite them to the court to meet with the case manager. Home visits are also used to include the participant's family in their reentry planning process. On some occasions, case managers and family members will attend court hearings or meetings with parole officers to address family related concerns or to enlist their support for a participant.

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Center for Court Innovation released a retrospective evaluation report on the Harlem Parole Reentry Court in 2010 entitled: *Do Reentry Courts Reduce Recidivism?* Leading up to the release of the report, staff began incorporating lessons from the research into the program development planning process. The development of a graduated response protocol and adoption of the COMPAS assessment tool were motivated by the research findings showing that, despite statistically significant improvements on recidivism, more Reentry Court participants returned to prison on technical violations. The researchers suspected that the program's tight partnerships and observations of client behaviors likely led to more violations. Lacking an evidence-based process for addressing violations, parole officers relied exclusively on their experience and instinct to protect the community from harm when confronted with a client's non-compliance. Parole staff and case management staff often did not communicate pro-actively about potential violations. The result: some clients were returned to prison on violations that did not pose an immediate threat to public safety and could have been better addressed in the community setting. While pleased that the program reduced new crimes compared to a control group, the higher violation rate in the Report was tough news for the staff.

Learning from evaluation is critical to the success of any program, and reentry courts are no different. The Harlem Parole Reentry Court revamped the program to incorporate the evidence-based practices outlined in this Toolkit. A current evaluation of the program utilizing a random assignment process will help us to determine if the changes to the Reentry Court have resulted in better outcomes. This evaluation is being supported by U.S. Department of Justice. It involves a randomized control trial in which parolees are randomly assigned to the Harlem Parole Reentry Court or traditional parole supervision. The recidivism outcomes of the Reentry Court participants and traditional supervision parolees will be compared to evaluate whether or not the model is successful at reducing recidivism among its participants. Center for Court Innovation researchers are also working with the New York State Department of Corrections and

Community Supervision to conduct one-year follow up interviews with Harlem Parole Reentry Court clients and control group parolees to gather self-reported data on additional measures related to procedural justice.

**Tips:**

- Consider whether you want to measure results internally or hire an independent evaluator. Your results will help you determine how the program needs to be modified as well as give feedback to your partners, and promote replication/expansion if effective.
- Where possible, the plan should include the “gold standard” of research—utilizing a random assignment strategy to assign individuals to the intervention and to a comparison group receiving “business as usual.” For the most part, “business as usual” in a reentry program will be traditional parole/probation supervision. A randomized control trial of your program will allow you to fully measure the impact of your program on the group of clients receiving the intervention. In the event that a randomized control trial is not feasible or appropriate, you will want to identify an appropriate comparison group to plan for a quasi-experimental evaluation strategy.
- Work with your state or local agencies responsible for managing criminal justice data and evaluation. They may have access to resources that can help you to develop a good evaluation approach. Universities and non-profit research partners can also be a good source of evaluation help.

**Example**

The Harlem Parole Reentry Court has benefitted from hiring professional and para-professional staff and volunteers who are formerly incarcerated. These individuals have improved the quality of client engagement and have also changed the perceptions of other staff, including parole staff. Job descriptions encouraged formerly incarcerated professionals to apply and applicants were given an opportunity to disclose and discuss any past convictions once selected for an interview.

## STAFFING

When planning or improving a reentry court selecting and training staff is critical. Staff must have a fundamental belief in a client’s ability to change, a belief in the power of positive reinforcement, an ability to work constructively with client resistance, and a willingness to hold participants accountable without shaming. Use of motivational interviewing techniques and cognitive behavioral strategies has been shown to improve outcomes for persons returning from prison. Having the requisite training in these approaches can be more important than just time

on the job. As research has indicated, the quality of interpersonal relationships between participant and staff, and the staff mastery of evidenced based skills, can be just as, or more important, than the individual program the client attends.<sup>10</sup>

### **Tips**

- When interviewing clinical or community supervision staff for your reentry court ask candidates to do a role-play with you. This is a great way to have the candidate display skills like reflective listening, open ended questions, a non-judgmental attitude, and ability to roll with resistance associated in the literature with good outcomes. The role play scenario should be brief (no more than 10-15 minutes) and should be used consistently with each finalist for the open position.
- The Harlem Parole Reentry Court utilizes an AmeriCorps national service volunteer position to hire formerly incarcerated persons, in one case a former reentry court client, to work with parolees. AmeriCorps pays a stipend and provides an educational scholarship in exchange for a year of services. This partnership with AmeriCorps ultimately led to the hiring of two persons as full time case managers after they completed their national service term. To view a video of a of one staff member sharing his story see: <http://www.courtinnovation.org/research/prison-program?url=research%2F12%2Fvideo&mode=12&type=video>

## TOOL BOX

**The Tool Box includes sample documents and templates, some of which were referenced earlier.**

- Sample Planning Log
- Pre-Release Questionnaire
- Parole Supervision Plan Template
- List of Key Needs for Persons Released from Prison or Jail
- Client Incentive Protocol
- Intake Flow Chart Example for the Harlem Parole Reentry Court
- Sample Welcome Letter
- Client Evaluation Interview Questions
- Sample Job Descriptions for Key Staff

**SAMPLE PLANNING LOG**

(For Internal Use Only)

**MEETINGS CONVENED**

Date	Venue	Organizers	Summary Completed (Date)

**PROGRESS ON EACH GOAL**

**I. Goal:**

Activity	Date	Next Steps

**II. Goal:**

Activity	Date	Next Steps

**III. Goal:**

Activity	Date	Next Steps

**IV. Goal:**

Activity	Date	Next Steps



**PRE-RELEASE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Client Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Client NYSID** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Client DIN:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Client DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Client Social Security #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Today's Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date of Release:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Release Questionnaire**

**HOUSING**

1. What is the address you have proposed for your release?
2. To your knowledge, has your residence been approved by Parole?
  - a. If no, or if you don't know, what is the name and phone number of the individual living at that address?
  - b. What is your relationship to that person?
  - c. What time is that individual most likely to be at home?
3. If you lived at this address prior to this address, what are you most looking forward to about returning to this residence?
  - a. What positive contribution do you think you will make to the household upon returning here (not just monetary)?
  - b. What aspect of returning there concerns you?
4. If this is not the address you lived prior to release, what will be some of the positive aspects of living there?
  - a. What will be challenging about living there?

**COMMUNITY/FAMILY**

5. Who are the important people in your life?
  - a. Are these individuals aware of your release?
    - i. If so, is it okay for me to contact them to let them know about your participation in this program?
    - ii. If not, would you like me to contact them and let them know you will be returning home?
6. Do you have someone in your life who will offer immediate financial support upon release?
7. What are ways you hope to contribute to your family besides financially?

**WORK OR SCHOOL**

8. Have you worked in the past?
  - a. If yes, what was the most satisfying/enjoyable job you ever had?
  - b. If not, what type of work do you imagine yourself most satisfied doing?
  - c. What are your current work goals?
9. Have you ever taken part in a job training program? If so, which one?
  - a. What was the best thing about this program?
  - b. What did you not like about it?
10. Have you made any contact with job training programs while inside that you are interested in attending?

11. How far have you gone in school?

**MEDICAL**

12. Are you being treated for any medical conditions or have medical concerns?

13. Have you been taking any medications that you will need to continue using upon release?

14. Have you ever seen a counselor?

a. If so, what types of things did you talk about with the counselor?

**DRUG TREATMENT**

15. Have you received drug treatment before?

a. If so, where?

b. What did you find helpful about your drug treatment?

c. What was not helpful?

d. Have you made any contact with job training programs while inside that you are interested in attending?

e. Do you prefer to receive drug treatment near in your community in walking distance or do you prefer an alternative setting (i.e. midtown, downtown)?

**PAROLE**

16. (If the individual was on parole before) :

a. What conditions did you find to be least challenging to meet?

b. What about parole was most difficult for you during your last parole term?

17. Which of the conditions do you think you will have the most difficulty with?

**PAROLE SUPERVISION PLAN TEMPLATE**

The following is the Harlem Parole Reentry Court Supervision Plan for

\_\_\_\_\_, NYSID #: \_\_\_\_\_.  
(True Name)

**I. Court Appearances**

Appear before the Administrative Law Judge every two weeks- next appearance is on \_\_\_\_\_ (or in accordance with the schedule established by the Judge or your Parole Officer) at the Harlem Community Justice Center located at 170 East 121st Street, N.Y., NY 10035.

**II. Living Arrangements**

Short-term: Housing located at: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Long-term: Secure and maintain permanent, stable independent housing (if different than the short-term housing arrangement noted above).

**III. Employment**

Short-term: Begin transitional employment on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Long-term: Secure and maintain stable, full-time employment with support from

**IV. Substance Abuse Treatment**

Short-term: Begin outpatient treatment on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (time) located at \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Abstain completely from alcohol, marijuana and all other illegal

controlled substances.

Provide a urine sample for drug testing whenever directed by your parole officer or case manager or treatment program staff.

Long-term: Remain drug and alcohol free

V. Counseling

Attend counseling each week or on an as needed basis beginning on at the **Harlem Community Justice Center** located **170 East 121<sup>st</sup> Street, New York, NY, 10035.**

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: (212) 360-XXXX.

VI. If Assigned-CBT

Attend Cognitive Behavioral Therapy beginning on at **The Harlem Community Justice Center.**

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: (212) 360-XXXX

VII. Additional Mandates or Goals

I certify that I have read and understand the above and I will comply with this plan.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Person on parole

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrative Law Judge

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parole Officer Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\* Be advised that you may be required, subject to an eligibility assessment, to pay Parole Supervision fees in accordance with applicable State Law.

## LIST OF KEY NEEDS FOR PERSONS RELEASED FROM JAIL OR PRISON

### Identification

- What identifying documents does the client have or have access to?
- What can be requested and or obtained for the client prior to his release?
- What identification will be necessary to apply for benefits?
  - o Social security card
  - o Birth certificate
  - o Passport
  - o Legal Alien Registration Card

### Benefits and Finances

- What benefits will the reentrant have or need access to upon release?
- Does the reentrant have any previous history of governmental benefits that can assist in establishing his identity and or opening or reestablishing a case?
  - o Public Assistance/Home Relief
  - o Medicaid or Medicare
  - o Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
  - o Social Security Disability (SSD)
  - o Food stamps
- How and where can the person be screened for multiple benefit eligibility and how quickly can he obtain emergency benefits if eligible?
- What are the mandatory waiting periods for eligibility, if any?
- What financial support is feasible for family members?
- Does the reentrant have an existing child support order and for what amount? Is he in arrears and for how much? Was a modification filed while he was in custody?
- What is the parole supervision fee?
- How will the reentrant pay for car fare to and from reports and appointments?

### Health /Mental Health

- What medications are needed and can a two week to thirty day supply be provided upon release?
- If the person is eligible for disability services or benefits, what is the process for activating these benefits? Are items such as wheelchairs, walkers, or other assisted living devices available immediately upon release?
- For persons requiring on-going mental health or health treatment services, have arrangements been made for them to access these services in the community?
- What information will the person require about their pre-existing conditions and how will

this information be communicated to the field parole/probation officer and treatment providers?

### Housing

- What is the housing plan for the reentrant?
- What is the expectation of the family around providing financial support to the parolee?
- Is there a need to help the family manage expectations around reentrant contributions to the household?
- If no housing is available upon release, have all possible family members been contacted and all family options explored (while considering the needs and best interests of family members)?
- Does the reentrant have a health or other special status that would qualify them for specialized housing (e.g. veteran, HIV positive, etc.)?
- If there is no viable residence, can arrangements be made for the reentrant to access a shelter?

### Personal Care

- Does the reentrant have access to a supply of personal care items like soap, a toothbrush, and grooming kit?
- Does the reentrant have adequate clothing, especially clothing appropriate for job interviews and appointment?
- Will information about resource be made available to reentrants –e.g. resource compendiums and hotline numbers?
- Will transportation be arranged for the reentrant to ensure that he is able to get home and attend his initial appoints immediately upon release?

**CLIENT INCENTIVE PROTOCOL**

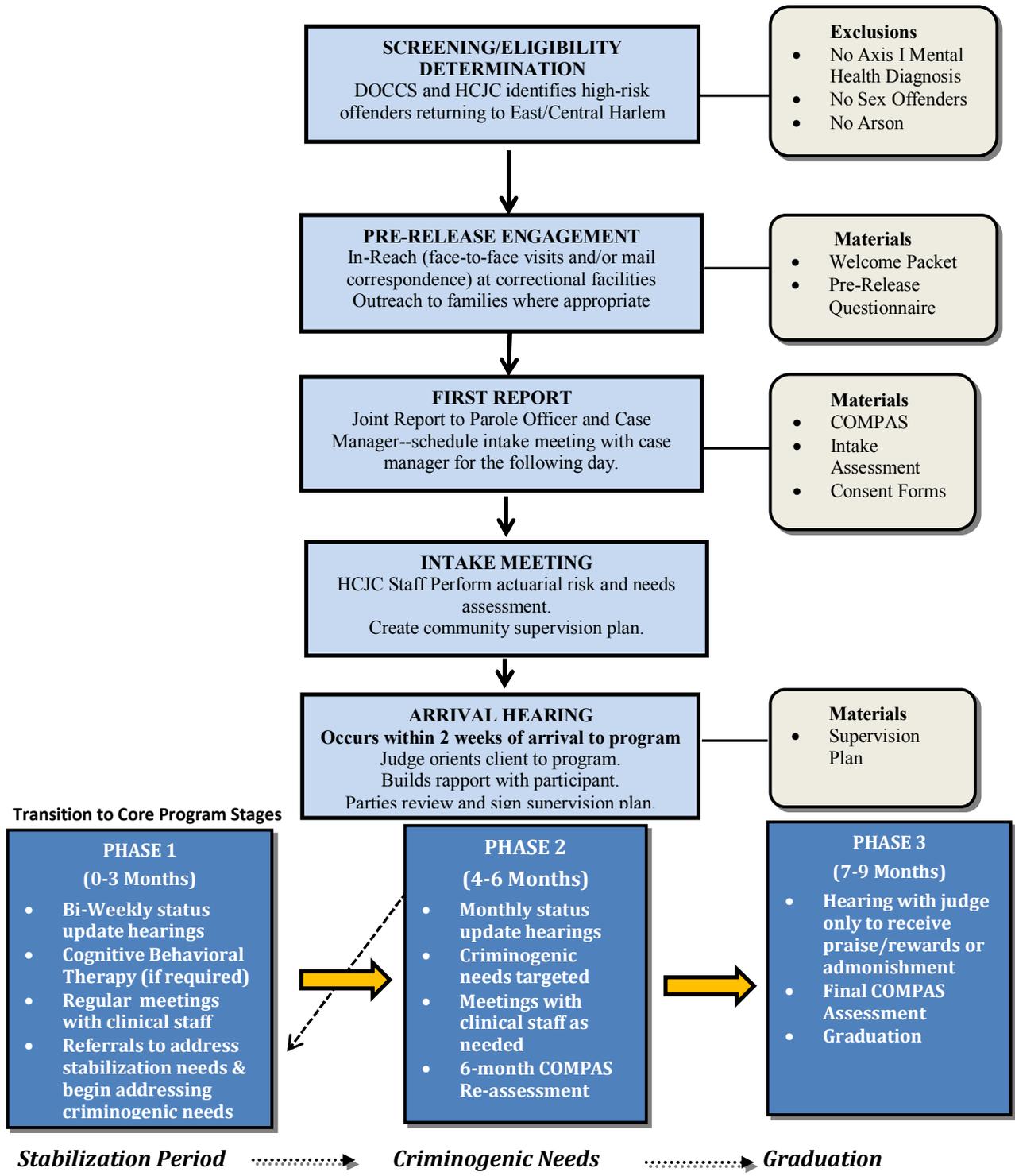


1. Prior to each report day, the parolee’s case manager reviews his achievements for the reporting period (see “Achievement Chart” below).
2. Based on the level of achievement, the case manager creates a reward recommendation and presents the recommendation to the Micro-team.
3. During the Micro-Team Meeting or Case Management Team Meeting, the team discusses the recommendation and confirms the reward to be delivered. The parole officer reserves the right to override any recommendation.
4. When possible, the judge will deliver the reward during the Parolee’s hearing. In all other cases, the parole officer will deliver the reward.

<b>ACHIEVEMENT CHART</b>				
<b>Reporting</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Treatment &amp; Programming</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Pro-social Act.</b>
No unexcused or missed reporting	Enrollment in Employment Program Compiling a Resume Getting an Interview Obtaining Employment Remaining Steadily Employed	Enrollment in Treatment Program Active Participation in Treatment Negative Drug Tests	Enrollment in Education Program Active Participation In Program Attaining GED/other degree Graduation from Program	Enrollment in Pro-social activity (i.e. parenting class, volunteer program) Active Participation in Pro-social Program

<b><u>INCENTIVES CHART</u></b>		
<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal congratulations or acknowledgement</li> <li>• Certificate of achievement</li> <li>• Letter of Recognition from PO &amp; CM</li> <li>• Letter of Recognition from SPO</li> <li>• Letter of Recognition by AS</li> <li>• Use of computer for job search</li> <li>• Long distance phone call from office</li> <li>• One time reduced curfew by one hour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overnight travel pass</li> <li>• Client may select week to report in via phone</li> <li>• Letter from Judge (with a copy in the parolee’s file) documenting perfect or near perfect attendance</li> <li>• Metro card/Phone Card/Grocery Gift Certificate</li> <li>• Gift certificate manicure or haircut</li> <li>• One time reduced curfew by two hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekend travel pass</li> <li>• Permanent Reduction of Curfew</li> <li>• Decrease Frequency of Reporting</li> <li>• Letter to Judge or Parole Board requesting removal of a Special Condition</li> <li>• Two movie tickets</li> <li>• Event honoring participant</li> </ul>

## HARLEM PAROLE REENTRY COURT FLOW CHART



**SAMPLE WELCOME LETTER**

Dear Mr. Holmes,

You have been selected to participate in the Harlem Reentry Initiative at the Harlem Community Justice Center. I am writing to welcome you to our project and to tell you what to expect as a participant. This initiative is collaboration between DOCCS and the Harlem Community Justice Center designed to ease your transition from prison back into your community. Your participation in the Harlem Reentry Initiative is mandatory, and has been assigned to you by DOCCS. Your participation will last nine months. Although you will be regularly reporting to Parole at the Justice Center, you may have your first report at 40<sup>th</sup> Street. Please follow any directions given to you by DOCCS when you are released.

The Harlem Community Justice Center, which will be your reporting site for parole, is a community-based court and resource center that works to solve neighborhood problems in East and Central Harlem. The Justice Center is located on 170 East 121<sup>st</sup> Street, close to the community where you will live. The closeness to your home is no coincidence; we want to make it easy for you to meet with your parole officer and case manager.

Our project is an alternative to parole. Our goal is to help you comply with your parole conditions while addressing the underlying issues that may lead to technical violations or reoffending. While you will receive community supervision from your parole officer, a judge will help oversee your reentry process, offering support and making sure that you are treated fairly during your time on parole. You will also receive case management services from me, your case manager. I will help connect you with any services you need such as training, employment, education, substance abuse treatment and medical services.

With your permission, I'd also like to send a letter to someone important to you in the community (i.e., parent, sibling, partner, pastor, and friends), telling them about our initiative and inviting them to communicate with me if they have questions about parole or any issue surrounding your release. If you'd like me to send such a letter, you can let me know by writing me now, or when we speak via phone or in person. I will not send a letter without your permission.

If you have any questions about the initiative, please feel free to write me at the address listed at the bottom of this letter or call me at 212.360.8747.

I look forward to your return to the community and to working with you.

Sincerely,

## SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR KEY STAFF

### **HARLEM COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER Reentry Court Director**

The Center for Court Innovation, a project of the Fund for the City of New York, is a unique public-private partnership that promotes new thinking about how courts and criminal justice agencies can aid victims, change the behavior of offenders and strengthen communities. The Center's problem-solving courts include the nation's first community court as well as drug courts, mental health courts, youth courts and others. The Harlem Community Justice Center is a project of the Center for Court Innovation in collaboration with the New York State Office of Court Administration.

Located in an old magistrate's courthouse in the heart of East Harlem, the Harlem Community Justice Center ("the Justice Center") is a community-based court and resource center that works to solve neighborhood problems in East and Central Harlem, including juvenile delinquency, deteriorating housing, substance abuse, and the challenges presented by ex-offenders returning from incarceration. The Director of Reentry Services will provide leadership and management of all prisoner reentry programming at the Justice Center including the Upper Manhattan Reentry Task Force and Harlem Parole Reentry Court. We are seeking a highly skilled, assertive, and independent professional who is a leader and able to produce results.

#### **Duties**

- Supervise a team of professional and paraprofessional staff, interns and volunteers including: hiring, evaluations of performance, staff/volunteer training, and performance improvement.
- Provide regular monthly, quarterly and annual reports required to manage program outcomes and respond to grant reporting requirements.
- Lead strategic planning activities to enhance the operational success of reentry programs and their long term sustainability including: the provision of technical assistance, development of program enhancements targeting families of parolees, the enhancement of data collection and reporting processes, and program evaluation.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive administrative management process that accurately records grant deliverables and enables the measuring of results and program trends.
- Maintain the Justice Center's blog, including the development of original content, daily blog post, and tracking of blog activity.
- Interface with partner agency representatives, including the Mayor's Office, NYPD, NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services and New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.
- Make presentations at local, regional and national conferences and provide expert assistance to jurisdictions seeking to develop reentry programs.
- Work with the Research Associate to conduct analysis of data and produce reports.
- Develop whitepapers, fact sheets, and other materials for dissemination.
- Assist in fundraising and grant management activities, including pre-proposal brainstorm meetings, drafting/organizing of proposals and progress reports, and tracking of deliverables for each funding stream.
- Prepare quarterly progress reports

**Requirements:**

- Bachelor's degree required, master's degree in social work, public management, or a law degree preferred;
- Minimum of two year's experience working with a criminal justice population;
- Supervisory experience required;
- Experience working with evidence-based programming –COMPAS, CBT, Graduated Responses;
- Exceptional analytical and writing skills required;
- Excellent presentation skills, including knowledge of Power Point required;
- Must be familiar with blogs and online publishing technology;
- Experience in the areas of prisoner reentry or community corrections desired;
- Experience in grant writing;
- Bi-lingual (English/Spanish) desired;
- Must be available for occasional weekend and evening work.

**Salary:** Commensurate with experience -- excellent benefits.

The Harlem Community Justice Center is operated by the Center for Court Innovation,  
a project of the Fund for the City of New York.

See our website at [www.courtinnovation.org](http://www.courtinnovation.org).

The Fund for the City of New York is an equal opportunity employer.

**HARLEM COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER**  
**Reentry Case Manager**

The Center for Court Innovation, a project of the Fund for the City of New York, is a unique public-private partnership that promotes new thinking about how courts and criminal justice agencies can aid victims, change the behavior of offenders and strengthen communities. The Center's problem-solving courts include the nation's first community court as well as drug courts, mental health courts, youth courts and others. The Harlem Community Justice Center is a project of the Center for Court Innovation in collaboration with the New York State Office of Court Administration.

Reporting to the Deputy Project Director of Reentry, the Harlem Community Justice Center seeks a Case Manager who will work with individuals who have been imprisoned for violent and non-violent offenses and are making the transition from life in prison to responsible citizenship. The Case Manager would be part of a team of Reentry Specialists including Parole Officers and a Clinical Staff to provide assessments, counseling, service referrals and linkages, compliance monitoring, computer-based recordings with the goal of reducing recidivism and assisting clients succeed in the community.

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Reporting to the Deputy Project Director of Reentry at the Justice Center, the Reentry Case Manager:

- Conduct in-reach and assessments with clients incarcerated in New York State Correctional Facilities;
- In consultation with parole officers and clients, create a supervision plan that addresses the conditions of the client's release;
- In ongoing counseling sessions, assist clients identify and address the barriers to a community reintegration;
- Provide crisis intervention as needed;
- Participate in case management team meetings;
- Maintain records of all case management meetings and regularly update reentry database;
- Provide reports and recommendations to the Reentry Team regarding clients' progress in all treatment and service areas;
- Participate in the preparation of progress reports and grant proposals as necessary;
- Lead the organization of educational, family, and graduation events;

**Qualifications:**

This position requires a creative, aggressive self-starter who can thrive in a diverse workforce and get things done in a high-paced environment. The ideal candidate will have a High School Diploma, GED or a Bachelor's degree. Excellent written and oral communication and computer literacy skills a must. Additional qualifications include:

- A minimum of two year's experience working with formerly incarcerated persons;
- A proven ability to engage formerly incarcerated clients towards achieving the goals of a supervision/treatment plan;
- Must be an energetic team player who can work with multiple stakeholders including parole staff, corrections counselors, case managers and service providers;
- Training in Motivational Interviewing highly desired;
- Familiarity with the COMPAS assessment tool highly desired;
- Familiarity with the greater Harlem community highly desired;
- Available some evenings and weekends.

**Position Type:** Full-time

**Compensation:**

Competitive salary commensurate with experience and excellent benefits package.

**How to apply:**

Send cover letter and resume to:

Ms. Debbie Boar  
Deputy Project Director  
Harlem Community Justice Center  
170 East 121<sup>st</sup> Street  
New York, N.Y. 10035  
Fax: (212) 828-7416 or [dboar@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:dboar@courts.state.ny.us)

**No phone calls please.**

**Deadline to apply:** September 1, 2012

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## **HARLEM COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER**

### **Reentry Family Social Worker**

The Center for Court Innovation, a project of the Fund for the City of New York, is a unique public-private partnership that promotes new thinking about how courts and criminal justice agencies can aid victims, change the behavior of offenders and strengthen communities. The Center's problem-solving courts include the nation's first community court as well as drug courts, mental health courts, youth courts and others. The Harlem Community Justice Center is a project of the Center for Court Innovation in collaboration with the New York State Office of Court Administration.

Reporting to the Deputy Project Director, the Harlem Community Justice Center seeks a Reentry Family Social Worker who will work with parolees who have been imprisoned for violent and non-violent offenses and are making the transition from life in prison to responsible citizenship and their families. The Family Social Worker will be part of a team of Reentry specialists including Parole Officers and case managers to provide assessments, service planning, service referrals and linkages, compliance monitoring, and ongoing collaboration with staff from the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (formerly Parole) and community partners. The success of the Reentry program relies in part on family engagement and the program participant's family involvement and support. Often, family members are grappling with not only the circumstances surrounding the return of the family member, but also with a multitude of psychosocial and environmental stressors. Supporting family members become essential to ensuring a parolee's continued participation and compliance in the program. As a member of the Reentry team, the Family Social Worker will provide clinical expertise, conduct assessments and make recommendations and referrals to enhance family support.

#### **Responsibilities include but are not limited to:**

- Conduct in-reach and assessments with clients, aged 18-26, incarcerated in New York State Correctional Facilities;
- Maintain a case load of between 25-30 clients;
- Outreach clients' family members pre-release to assist them prepare for their loved one's return to the community;
- In consultation with parole officers and clients, assist in the creation of a supervision plan that addresses the conditions of the client's release and family unification;
- In ongoing counseling sessions with clients and their families, address family dynamics with the goal of supporting the client's successful community reintegration;
- Make referrals to social service agencies for family members;
- Provide crisis intervention as needed;
- Participate in case management team meetings;
- Attend Reentry Court sessions;
- Maintain records of all case management meetings and regularly update the reentry database;

- Provide reports and recommendations to the Reentry Team regarding clients' progress in all treatment and service areas;
- Participate in the preparation of progress reports and grant proposals as necessary.

**Qualifications:**

The ideal candidate will have a Master's degree in social work or psychology and a minimum of 2 year's experience working with individuals and their families with drug/alcohol problems and/or a history of incarceration. Excellent written and oral communication skills a must. Fluency in Spanish preferred. Additional qualifications include:

- LCSW required
- Expertise in providing diagnostic, clinical and therapeutic services to youth and families – particularly those involved in the criminal justice system;
- Knowledge and experience working with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision;
- Ability to conduct home visits;
- Additional hours for family sessions to be determined
- A strength based, client-centered philosophy;
- Training in Motivational Interviewing highly desired;
- Familiarity with the COMPAS assessment tool highly desired;
- Must be available some evenings and weekends.

**Position Type:** Full-time

**Compensation:**

Competitive salary commensurate with experience and excellent benefits package.

**How to apply:**

Send cover letter and resume to:

Ms. Debbie Boar  
Deputy Project Director  
Harlem Community Justice Center  
170 East 121<sup>st</sup> Street  
New York, N.Y. 10035  
Fax: (212) 828-7416 or [DBoar@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:DBoar@courts.state.ny.us)

**No phone calls please.**

**Deadline to apply:** October 7, 2011

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The Fund for the City of New York is an equal opportunity employer.

## **HARLEM COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER**

### **Group Work Specialist**

#### **Overview**

The Center for Court Innovation, a project of the Fund for the City of New York, is a unique public-private partnership that promotes new thinking about how courts and criminal justice agencies can aid victims, change the behavior of offenders, and strengthen communities. The Center creates demonstration projects that test new approaches to problems that have resisted conventional solutions. The Harlem Community Justice Center, a project of the Center for Court Innovation, is a community-based court and resource center focused on solving neighborhood problems in upper Manhattan, including juvenile delinquency, deteriorating housing, substance abuse, and the challenges presented by ex-offenders returning from incarceration.

The Group Work Specialist at the Harlem Community Justice Center is part of the clinical team providing a variety of comprehensive case management services to Justice Center clients. The Group Work Specialist's primary role is to provide assessment, group treatment and referral services to the Justice Center's family court, youth programs, and reentry programs. The Group Work Specialist reports to the Deputy Director.

#### **Responsibilities include but are not limited to:**

##### **Assessment, Referral and Case Work**

- Maintain a small caseload and provide ongoing case management services.
- Conduct initial comprehensive assessments for referred adolescents and adults.
- Link clients to on-site services and provide off-site referrals to community-based programs for individuals who need mental health, substance abuse treatment or other services.
- Follow up on and track all referrals to community based partners.
- Provide ongoing outreach to family members; Engage family members in service planning as appropriate; Offer services and assistance.
- Provide crisis intervention and individual counseling sessions as needed.
- Maintain regular communication with referral agencies regarding compliance information
- Conduct home and/or school visits as necessary.
- Maintain up-to-date information in the program's on site computer system.

##### **Group Work**

- Organize and co-facilitate the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy group for adult parolees.
- Organize and co-facilitate the HYPE Anger Management group for adolescents
- Participate in all case conferences - provide clinical insight and recommendations regarding particular individuals.
- Develop, modify, fine tune, and maintain all group curriculum materials; develop one page overviews of group content for public distribution
- Lead planning efforts to enhance group content, improve group facilitation and improve group impact and outcomes

##### **Community Collaboration**

- Develop and maintain linkages with partner agencies including criminal justice and community based youth-serving agencies.
- Make public presentations and assist in organizing community outreach events.
- Organize and convene regular meetings with partner agency staffs.

### **Student Supervision**

- Provide overall direct supervision of a graduate social work intern(s).
- Assist student(s) to engage in process of exploration, assessment, intervention and practice evaluation.
- Coordinate student assignments and provide weekly one-on-one supervision.

### **Administrative and Planning**

- Draft, program descriptions, updates, case studies and any other materials or content necessary for grant management and progress reports.
- Ensure all data is routinely entered into the programs' on line case management system
- Track and report on attendance and compliance related information
- Complete regular reports.
- Maintain confidential client records.
- Work with management staff to develop new initiatives, spot trends and unmet service needs, identify potential interventions and improve service delivery.
- Assist technical and research staff when necessary to develop and plan changes, improvement or modifications to work flow and data entry that may be necessary for service improvement, service expansion and grant management

### **Qualifications:**

- LMSW Preferred, Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) certification preferred.
- Minimum of 3 year's experience providing individual and/or group work required.
- Exceptional written and oral communication skills required
- Experience working with juvenile/adult correctional populations preferred.
- Experience facilitating groups required.  
Experience providing cognitive behavioral therapies desired.
- Experience working with court involved clients desired.
- Bi-lingual (English/Spanish) desired.
- Non-profit experience a plus.

### **Compensation:**

Competitive salary, commensurate with experience. Excellent benefits.

### **How to Apply:**

Send cover letter and resume to:

Ms. Debbie Boar, Deputy Project Director  
Harlem Community Justice Center  
170 East 121<sup>st</sup> Street, New York, N.Y. 10035  
Fax: (212) 828-7416 or [DBoar@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:DBoar@courts.state.ny.us)

### **No Phone Calls Please.**

The Harlem Community Justice Center is operated by the Center for Court Innovation,  
a project of the Fund for the City of New York.

See our website at [www.courtinnovation.org](http://www.courtinnovation.org).

The Fund for the City of New York is an equal opportunity employer.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTIONS

### CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION

The winner of the Peter F. Drucker Award for Non-Profit Innovation, the Center for Court Innovation is a unique public-private partnership that promotes new thinking about how the justice system can solve difficult problems like addiction, quality-of-life crime, domestic violence, and child neglect. The Center functions as the New York State court system's independent research and development arm, creating demonstration projects that test new approaches to problems that have resisted conventional solutions. The Center's demonstration projects include the nation's first community court (Midtown Community Court), as well as drug courts, domestic violence courts, youth courts, mental health courts, reentry courts and others.

Beyond New York, the Center disseminates the lessons learned from its experiments in New York, helping court reformers around the world test new solutions to local problems. The Center contributes to the international conversation about justice through original research, books, monographs, and roundtable conversations that bring together leading academics and practitioners. The Center also provides hands-on technical assistance, advising innovators about program design, technology and performance measures.

Center for Court Innovation  
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[www.courtinnovation.org](http://www.courtinnovation.org)  
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### HARLEM PAROLE REENTRY COURT

Begun in 2001, the Harlem Parole Reentry Court provides 200 moderate- and high-risk parolees returning to Manhattan with on-going judicial monitoring before an administrative law judge. The initiative takes a holistic approach, combining evidence-based assessments, case management, linkages to critical services, and cognitive-behavioral group therapy. The Reentry Court also relies on graduated sanctions and incentives to respond to participants' setbacks and achievements. A 2010 study found that the Reentry Court reduced recidivism by 19 percent% compared to comparison group of parolees.<sup>xi</sup>

The Harlem Parole Reentry Court is made possible through a grant from the United States Department of Justice to the New York City Mayor's Office under the Second Chance Act and the generous support of J.C Flowers Foundation. Additional support for the Reentry Court is provided by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services and the New York State Office of Court Administration. The Reentry Court is a project of the Center for Court Innovation hosted at the Harlem Community Justice Center.

## HARLEM COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER

Founded in 2000, the Harlem Community Justice Center is a multi-jurisdictional civil and family court project that houses a number of non-traditional services including: prisoner reentry services, programs to help landlords and tenants solve conflicts and access financial support, case management services for families and litigants, a youth court, and employment assistance programs. The Justice Center also convenes justice agencies, community organizations, and faith-based groups to develop new responses to youth violence, prisoner reentry, and substance abuse.

In addition to the Harlem Parole Reentry Court, the Justice Center houses the Manhattan Reentry Task Force and the Harlem Parole Reentry Court. Both programs utilize evidence-based strategies to address the risks and needs of parolees returning to Manhattan, a high impact reentry county in New York State. Justice Center staffs provide technical assistance to local, national and international jurisdictions around prisoner reentry. As a project of the Center for Court Innovation, the Harlem Community Justice Center is part of a larger problem-solving justice movement that is working with justice agencies and communities to reduce crime, aid victims, and strengthen neighborhoods.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Travis (2000) “But They All Come Back: Rethinking Prisoner Reentry.” Sentencing and Corrections Issues for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Papers from the Executive Sessions on Sentencing and Corrections, Number 7. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, (National Institute of Justice, May 2000). Accessed September 1, 2012. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/181413.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Testimony of Jeremy Travis, President of John Jay College of Criminal Justice before the U.S House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations Sub Committee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies on “What Works” for Successful Prisoner Reentry. March 12, 2009, Washington, D.C. Accessed July 1, 2012. [http://www.ijay.cuny.edu/Travis\\_Congressional\\_Testimony.pdf](http://www.ijay.cuny.edu/Travis_Congressional_Testimony.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> West, Sabol, Greenman (2009) “Prisoners in 2009.” U.S Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, December, 2010 (revised 10/27/2011). Accessed May 8, 2012. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/p09.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> The Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS) is a product of Northpointe, Inc. See: <http://www.northpointeinc.com/>

<sup>5</sup> Zachary Hamilton “Do Reentry Courts Reduce Recidivism.” (Center for Court Innovation, March 2012). Accessed June 14, 2012. [http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/Reentry\\_Evaluation.pdf](http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/Reentry_Evaluation.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> “Thinking for a Change” was developed by the National Institute of Corrections: <http://nicic.gov/T4C>

<sup>7</sup> Miller, W. & Rollnick, S. “Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change.” (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> See a short video presentation by Tom Tyler, professor of law and psychology at Yale Law School, on Procedural Justice: <http://www.courtinnovation.org/research/why-procedural-justice-matters-tom-r-tyler-community-justice-2012-0> ; You can read professor Tyler’s book: Why People Obey the Law, Princeton University Press, 2006; The national Multi-Site Drug Court Evaluation also included information on the importance of the judge’s role in drug courts: [http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/MADCE\\_ES.pdf](http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/MADCE_ES.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Meares, Tracey L. and Fagan, Jeffrey, "Punishment, Deterrence and Social Control: The Paradox of Punishment in Minority Communities" (2008). Faculty Scholarship Series. Paper 527. [http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss\\_papers/527](http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/527)

<sup>10</sup> Domorad, Frank and Mark Carey. “Implementing Evidence Based Practices.” (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2009). <http://www.cepp.com/documents/Implementing%20Evidence%20Based%20Practices.pdf> Citing Andrews, 2007; Andrews, 1980; Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Andrews & Carvell, 1998; Dowden & Andrews, 2004.

<sup>xi</sup> Zachary Hamilton “Do Reentry Courts Reduce Recidivism.” (Center for Court Innovation, March 2012). Accessed June 14, 2012. [http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/Reentry\\_Evaluation.pdf](http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/Reentry_Evaluation.pdf)