

**The Importance of Community Rehabilitation:  
Evaluating Effectiveness of Tennessee Interventions**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Rehabilitation for offenders has been a topic of discussion for decades. While the system expresses that rehabilitation is the best method of practice, statistics show that these individuals still struggle to reenter society successfully. This study addresses environmental factors and barriers that can make the reentry process difficult and increase chances of recidivism. Additionally, this article takes a look at the state of Tennessee in particular, considering its high crime and recidivism rates. While many states have programs in place, it is apparent that the government needs to focus on creating more stable financial budgets for both community and prison rehabilitation programs and create better supervision methods to ensure that the programs are setting offenders up for a successful reintegration.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Community Resource Center (CRC)

Daily Reporting Center (DRC)

Probation Officer (PO)

Project Return (PR)

Severe mental illness (SMI)

Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR)

Tennessee Department of Corrections (TDOC)

Therapeutic community (TC)

# **CHAPTER ONE: The Importance of Community Rehabilitation: Evaluating Effectiveness of Tennessee Interventions**

## **Introduction**

For decades there have been discussions about rehabilitation in the prison systems. There have long been debates about how the prison system should be structured and how to best handle those who have committed crimes. While the common theme of current times is to practice rehabilitation, there have been many questions about whether the current practices have been effective. One clear sign of ineffectiveness in the structure of the current systems is the high recidivism rates that have been present in the United States for many years. Reports from individuals and professionals involved in the process express that many offenders returning to society after release are not properly prepared to create a successful reentry for themselves. The goal of this article is to observe and review past studies to better understand current issues in the reintegration and rehabilitation process and to determine proper ways to move forward with this knowledge. This study in particular will look at statistics and information on prisons and community services in the state of Tennessee that are intended to prepare offenders for reentry and to evaluate whether these services are being used properly.

## **Relevance of Studying Community Intervention**

In America today, there are nearly 1.5 million inmates incarcerated across the nation's prisons and jails. While some may report that the corrections system is improving when compared to the prison population in past years, this statistic is still one that raises concern. Although rates are not currently as high, the rates of recidivism, referring to when individuals reoffend and are sent back to prison, are rapidly increasing. For example, studies show that nearly 70% of offenders released from state prisons end up reincarcerated within 3 years and

close to 85% will return within 9 years (Edwards, 2021). Due to these concerns, the government and corrections system have made an effort to introduce new re-entry programs and rehabilitation services to prepare offenders for their releases and attempt to keep them out of prisons. The corrections system attempts to do this by creating classes to help inmates improve and build on life skills such as mental health, substance abuse, and cognitive therapy, as well as family and housing classes. While many government employees express that this is their main priority, evidence shows that the system is far from where they need to be when it comes to ensuring that the corrections system is practicing what they preach in every prison nationwide (Edwards, 2021).

Attempts to express these concerns have been seen in recent years. For example, in 2018, there was a national prisoner strike in hopes to address the lack of structure and resources that are truly present in these institutions. While the government and correctional institutions assure society that efforts are being made to practice rehabilitation methods, society has heard very little from those incarcerated in prisons nationwide. Research based on prisoner's thoughts and attitudes towards the efforts being made towards rehabilitation is very scarce. Therefore, most professionals who argue that the system is making strides towards creating a more successful system often neglect to include first person insight on the issues at hand by speaking directly to those who this issue immediately affects (Edwards, 2021).

When taking into account the lack of research which involves inmates' opinions on the correctional structure of prison institutions, the data that most government based programs use to express support of rehabilitation show to be very biased. Without direct feedback from the inmates, it's quite literally impossible to understand whether the current methods are even beneficial. When looking at statistics, such as recidivism rates in the past years, it's apparent that

what the correctional system often views as successful, might be one-sided or not considered successful, when looking at the rates of success for those reentering society (Edwards, 2021).

When looking at reintegration, community supervision involves aiding ex offenders during their reentry to society by observing signs of possible criminal activity and ensuring that they guide offenders away from a life of crime. This also refers to those offenders who are on probation and parole rather than serving their sentence incarcerated. Many offenders are able to get out of prison early based on good behavior and how severe the crime was. When looking at the entire population of those who encompass the correctional population, those who undergo community supervision are currently taking up about 70 percent of this population (Chavira et al., 2016). Therefore, it is extremely important to focus on this aspect of corrections separately because it is playing such a large role in the criminal justice system. It is also important to note that all aspects of the corrections system function separately and cannot be looked at as one issue but rather all different aspects that make up a larger picture. Those who are able to serve part of their sentence on probation or are released, typically struggle in different areas than those who live out their lives in prison. So, once again it is important to address the needs of all offenders individually. While this seems like basic knowledge, due to lack of employees in the community intervention field as well as the extremely large caseloads that probation officers tend to have, many opportunities for research and understanding typically gets overlooked. In a study done in Chicago, results show that when talking to ex offenders about their experiences with POs and community intervention programs, over half of these individuals reported that these programs and their mentors or POs were not very helpful. Many of these individuals argued that their POs did not seem interested or invested in helping to connect them to necessary resources. Rather

they seemed to be disinterested and only did the bare minimum that was required to keep their job (Chavira et al., 2016).

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Community Interventions

#### *Purpose of rehabilitation on reintegration*

When asking people throughout the community, many citizens will claim to support rehabilitation for offenders that have been imprisoned. However, the actions of these communities often do not back up the things that they say. While most claim to support rehabilitation for offenders, many of the same people are those who turn down ex offenders for jobs, housing, etc.. This is due to the continuation of stereotypes that exist within the community about those who have committed crimes, especially those of a violent nature. Many people are not willing to give these offenders a chance due to the fear of past actions as well as the views that the government and other parts of society have portrayed about these individuals (Buen et al., 2019).

The question that remains for many researchers is why certain stereotypes still exist in the community when the government and correction system claim to support rehabilitation? However, researchers have explained a theory in which the constant discussion of criminal justice and crime continue to instill fear into the community. The theory is that the more citizens hear about crimes that occur within, or near their community, the more likely they are to take an authoritarian mindset towards those reentering society. This implies that many people in the community still fear those who have in the past committed crimes, and would prefer them to remain in prison because the citizens believe that is what will keep the community safe. Different news and social media sources have done a large part in creating this ideology. Many studies

show that the more that sources portray what they consider to be extreme and relevant crimes, the more citizens will gravitate towards a punitive correctional system (Buen et al., 2019).

Rehabilitation in the prison systems is a methodology that has been discussed for decades now. The Criminal Justice and Behavior journal published an article in 1996 discussing the purpose of rehabilitative methods, and how these programs look within a prison institution. At this point in time, professionals argued that these methods had been instilled throughout all prisons within the country. In 2007, Wormith et al. (2007) decided to review this article in order to understand what changes have been made in the prison system since this time, and whether these protocols have been deemed to be successful. In this study, the professionals chose to focus on substance abuse, and sexual offenders in order to make their study more focused and easier to navigate this 40 year period (Wormith et al., 2007).

Considering that drug abuse is one of the most prominent crimes in the United States, it's apparent that this is also the most emphasized rehabilitation program within correctional institutions. This is most often addressed through therapeutic community (TC), which allows groups of inmates to have open communication with a professional about the hardships and mental health issues that they have dealt with in the past. This type of intervention can be very beneficial because it allows each individual to feel like a vital part of the group, and also helps them to feel less alone, unlike your typical one on one therapy. In past years, studies indicate that this has been the most successful intervention for those who struggle with substance abuse. Wormith et al. (2007) reported that those inmates who participated in TC programs while incarcerated and then continued with community intervention programs saw a significant decrease in recidivism rates. However, further research shows that the community intervention aspect was the much more critical role contributing to this decrease. This is because re-entering

society can be a very difficult and intimidating thing in which people need support in order to make this big adjustment. In fact, those who were only able to have access to TC programs within their prison and not have resources after their release were just as likely to return to prison after just three years of being released(Wormith et al., 2007).

When looking at reducing recidivism, it is important to first focus on factors that contribute to offenders to returning to prison. Common factors that contribute to reoffending or breaking one's probation and parole are poverty, negative influences and lifestyles, inability to find a job, mental illness, substance abuse, chronic diseases, etc. Although these are just a few examples, the general idea is that ex offenders often find themselves in situations that can become discouraging or hopeless. Many individuals do not often find themselves in situations in which they feel safe and supported, which tends to leave them feeling hopeless and ultimately leading them back towards the life of crime. In many cases, society tends to look down on these people and shut them out from the community, leaving them without resources. Studies show that many offenders re-enter society without a pre knowledge of institutions or programs in which they can seek help or education on how to manage this very difficult and intimidating situation. Due to the increased number of minority individuals returning from incarceration, these populations experience an even greater hardship when looking for help and understanding in this vulnerable stage of life (Valera et al., 2017).

In their own study Valera et al. (2017) expresses that there are some key components to reintegration that are necessary for offenders to be successful in this process. In this study it is apparent that many of these factors fall on the prisons and corrections system to ensure that things are in place to support this transition. The first key component of successful reintegration is the necessity of trust and respect. This refers to all aspects of rehabilitation, including the staff

and administration of prisons and the corrections system, as well as professionals involved in the community correction process. This component suggests that in order for reintegration to be successful, all key players must trust and respect that all individuals are doing their part and in turn, do their own part in sharing information that will be useful to other departments.

Rehabilitation and reintegration require support and assistance from many different parts of the government, corrections system, and community in order to ensure that ex offenders have a higher chance at a successful reentry and therefore, it is necessary that all components are reliable and trustworthy sources for those around them. This also entails that all employers understand one another's needs and pressures that they face and do their best to respect the time of those other programs around them. Another component that follows closely with trust and respect is that of recognition of strengths. Professionals and organizations that are involved in the lengthy process of reintegration must work together as a unit to make sure that all programs are on the same page and have the same goals for these individuals in order to avoid confusion or miscommunication. Similarly it is also necessary to understand the individual strengths of each employee and program involved and what they bring to the table. When different groups of staff and organizations take the time to learn about each of the other organizations involved, it also opens doors to learn and gain knowledge from each other that can help to improve their own skills (Valera et al., 2017).

This study also recognizes the importance of other key players in an offender's life playing their part. This includes family members, partners, mentors, friends, etc. The stage of reentry can be a very intimidating process, and ex offenders are a lot less likely to be successful if they do not feel like they have support in the outside world. Studies show that when those individuals who are close to the offenders show the desire to help them as much as possible, this

can greatly affect the outcome of reentry in a positive way. It is also necessary for ex offenders to be surrounded by those who are in similar situations. This can be possible through different community therapies and groups as well as peer mentorships. This environment can be another form of encouragement for these people as well as creating a sense of trust and understanding because the other individuals around them can understand their hardships as well as provide other insight on how to handle certain situations or look at a struggle in a different manner. The last key that this study emphasizes is that all key players including professionals, family members, spouses, etc recognize their own purpose in the process as well as understand how all of the members of this process play a role in the offenders' reentry. If all key players are able to communicate with each other and learn who to seek help from in different situations, then this allows everyone to gain more knowledge on how to use their best efforts to create an encouraging environment for the offender at hand. It is important for all individuals that if they wish for an inmate to have a successful release, then it involves help from the community and those around them to play their part (Valera et al., 2017).

### ***Behavioral health intervention***

When it comes to offenders, individuals with mental or behavioral health issues are largely present in this population. This additional barrier can be especially important to prioritize when these offenders re enter society. Unfortunately, people who suffer from mental illness or other behavioral issues are more likely to return to prison shortly after their release. Not only do many communities lack proper health care for mental issues, but research shows that once a person is incarcerated, they are more likely to experience mental health issues even when they have not experienced them prior to imprisonment. Due to the lack of financial stability in the prison systems across the country, many inmates are not offered proper behavioral services while they

are in prison or jail, making it much more difficult to prepare to return to society. It is also common for those who have been treated for mental illness before incarceration deal with pauses or inconsistent medication distribution while in prison or do not receive the continuous treatment to help them manage their illnesses or behavior patterns. When this happens, individuals may experience a wave of different emotions or outbursts that could result in delay of positive progress, prolong offenders incarceration, or send them back to prison once released. It is important to note that many communities do have programs in place that are intended to rehabilitate offenders through behavioral and mental services. However, seeing that recidivism rates remain a serious issue, it is important to evaluate the structure of programs that are currently provided. (“Principles of Community Based Behavioral Health”, 2019).

It is important that community programs are fully equipped and prepared to train and counsel ex offenders during their transition. In order to do this they need to have in-depth knowledge not only on methods for behavioral health intervention, but also on everything that comes before this step. In order to fully understand how to best help these individuals reentering society, staff members must know what these offenders have experienced before their release. The process of rehabilitation starts the minute that an offender is sent to prison. Therefore, community programs need to start here. Employees and programs need to know what prison life looks like and understand what difficulties and barriers these individuals experience after their arrests in order to understand how to best help them adjust to societal norms. Additionally, not only should these programs know about the steps that come before reentry, but they should also collaborate with other professionals in the corrections system. If community providers seek to share information and gain knowledge from employees in the criminal justice program, this helps to ensure a smoother transition into society. This is not only beneficial to the individual being

released from prison with their mental health but can also help with public safety as a whole. It's important that these professionals in the community understand the risks that individual offenders could possess and help to address them to prevent recidivism ("Principles of Community Based Behavioral Health", 2019).

Behavioral health interventions can be extremely beneficial to individuals in a variety of different ways. These types of interventions typically include a caseworker assigned to each ex offender enlisted in the program. When offenders have the opportunity to not only work in group sessions, but are also able to work one on one with a caseworker, this opens up the chance for a more trusting relationship with their mentor. This setup also allows the caseworker to focus on the offender at hand and their individual risks and needs. People who have the opportunity to get involved in behavioral community interventions will meet with their mentors several times a week in order to discuss any issues that they are struggling with during the reentry process or even discuss past issues that they find still affect them today. Keeping a continuous contact with a mentor allows the offender to feel supported as well as learn techniques and methods that can ultimately help this process become easier. These professionals can offer an offender multiple different resources that they may need most. Depending on how severe the needs of an offender may be, caseworkers may refer these individuals to a higher source of help such as a psychologist or psychiatrist to help assist these people with things such as therapy or medication ("Principles of Community Based Behavioral Health", 2019).

### ***Peer mentoring interventions***

While many programs offer different types of mental health and behavioral support groups and counseling, there has been one type of intervention that has been heavily focused on over the past few decades. The ideology of peer mentoring or interventions have been an idea

that has been commonly used in many different areas of society. These ideas can be seen in different mental health and counseling services, schools, and correction services. The ideology behind these types of interventions is to provide individuals with a sense of understanding and empowerment. In the corrections aspect, these types of services allow ex offenders to work with mentors who had also previously been incarcerated. This process helps to provide a sense of optimism for the individual who is being mentored (Hodgson et al., 2018).

These programs hire former offenders who they feel are at a stable stage in their reintegration to help guide others who are new to the process and just starting the stage of reentry. Mentors involved in this program will receive training from professionals in the criminal justice system that help them to best support others in a similar situation while also teaching them how to remain unbiased and professional in these situations. Researchers express the importance of creating a social support network for offenders and this type of intervention has shown to be a benefit for this type of support. This type of intervention has been practiced more in recent years because of the positive effects that it can have on both individuals in the process. This can help the newly released offender by allowing them an environment in which they feel better understood and encouraged to continue on a good path. As more studies have been done on these types of programs, the criminal justice department has shifted the discussion to how important these interventions can be for the mentor themselves. While mentors provide free employment for the corrections department, it can help them shape their self identity and can encourage them to remain on a healthy and positive path to set an example for those they are mentoring. Another benefit for mentors involved in this role is that these individuals can often end up receiving a job in the criminal justice department after a certain amount of time in this position (Nixon, 2020).

The purpose of peer mentorship is to help offenders build skills in areas such as employment, mental health, relationships, etc. Receiving help from those who have personally experienced the same situation opens up opportunities for those who are newly reintegrated to gain access to new resources that they may have not been initially aware of. While this dynamic can be very beneficial in some ways to both parties in the program, there is still a need for the research on this intervention to be expanded. There has been research that shows that in some cases, peer mentoring has shown to have some negative effects, especially for the individual who has the role of mentor. In their own study, other researchers express that with a job like this, it entails mentors to have excellent communication skills and empathy. Considering that this occupation can be one that is very mentally draining, these researchers express that it is highly important these employees also have an outlet in which they can talk about stressors of their jobs and their own mental health. This is severely important because this sort of occupation can take a toll on one's mental state due to how stressful the job can be and difficulty understanding and maintaining boundaries. Confidentiality has been another thing that has shown to be a troublesome thing to maintain for peer mentors (Hodgson et al., 2018).

The issues that derive from lack of boundaries in this occupation come from many different things such as lack of supervision and training for mentors, as well as lack of support from higher ups and the community to ensure that these programs are fully equipped to handle the task at hand. Therefore, it is important that these peer mentors are provided with proper training and guidance throughout this process. If these interventions are closely supervised, they can be an extremely important asset to one's reintegration journey (Hodgson et al., 2018).

## **Environmental Factors**

### ***Employment***

When it comes to returning to society, it is apparent that offenders face many difficulties that regular citizens of the area do not face. Due to their label as an offender, there are many negative assumptions made about these individuals by others within the community. One issue that most offenders face returning to society is attempting to find employment. A key part to successful reintegration is having access to the resources that they need. Obviously, many of these resources cost money, implying that a job is necessary. While research has shown a positive connection between decreased criminal activity and participation in employment programs, the issues do not stop at the offender's willingness to obtain a job. With technology today, it is easy for any employer to see the background histories of those who wish to apply to their organization and most places of work require a background check before receiving employment. Statistics show that ex offenders are nearly 20 percent less likely to receive a job if their criminal history is reviewed. While it is important for organizations to hire people that will create a safe and positive work environment, it is also necessary to allow ex offenders opportunities to receive employment if society wishes to see any decrease in recidivism rates. Holloway & Wiener (2021) shared in their study that of their research population they interviewed, many employers were willing to hire people with questionable backgrounds. This included those applicants on welfare, those without further education, and even those who had a poor employment history. However, of these respondents, less than 40 percent of people were willing to even consider an individual who had a criminal history. In saying this, it is true that offenders who participate in community employment programs have a better chance at finding an occupation and learning the

skills needed to maintain a job. However, it is clear that the biggest concern is that of those employers who are unwilling to hire ex offenders (Holloway & Wiener, 2021).

### *Housing*

One of the common difficulties that offenders face when returning to society is the issue of housing. While many offenders may end up returning to their family homes if permitted, many offenders are not given this opportunity and left to try to find housing for themselves. Research shows that finding a stable environment in terms of housing is a very crucial part of a successful reintegration. Those offenders who are not able to find housing and end up homeless are far more likely to end up returning to a life of crime or ultimately be imprisoned once again shortly after their release. It is important to note that having a stable home not only keeps these individuals off the streets but also helps contribute to a more positive mental health and all around stability within the community. While the government has made attempts to ensure that there are some programs within the states that offer housing for ex offenders, the matter of fact is that there is not near enough room in these programs for all individuals that are justice involved, leaving many to fend for their own. It is apparent that there are many barriers that these people face when looking for a place to live. Many apartments or housing options require background checks and will not accept those with criminal records. These offenders also face a financial barrier when trying to find somewhere to live and can often not afford most places in their communities. One of the most crucial barriers when finding housing is the community opinions on living amongst people who have been involved in criminal activity in the past. Many complexes will not allow offenders to reside in their housing due to the fear and opinions of others around them

and fear that having these individuals here will decrease their property value (Bowman & Ely, 2020).

### ***Family relations***

Like most research revolving around rehabilitation, most studies focusing on the familial aspect of rehabilitation focuses solely on the prison environment. This is referring to family members who decide to stay in contact and make efforts to visit their loved ones while they are in prison. This helps to create a more supportive environment for the prisoner and persuades them to try to make changes in order to be better for those they care about. However, there is very little research revolving around family cooperation when it comes to community intervention and the reintegration stage. While it is important to notice that results of effectiveness of family relationships during prison does not correlate to the success during reintegration, this information can still be important when learning how to make the transition smoother for inmates. In their study, Shanahan & Agudelo (2012) interviewed inmates at 3 different institutions who would have the opportunity to return to society pending they have no mishaps while incarcerated. The authors studied one jail, one prison, and one pre-release center in order to avoid any possible biases that would come with only observing one type of institution. Information was gathered through surveys and interviews given to the inmates. Not only were they asked about family and friend relationships while they are incarcerated but their projected thoughts on the topic when they are to be released pending good behavior. Results showed that 84% of inmates depended on their families for support in comfort while they were incarcerated. Additionally, 82% of participants expressed that they will also seek high levels of support from their families once they return to society. Prison can be a very lonely place and those who have gone through the reintegration process say the same about returning to the

community. Therefore, these individuals believe that if they wish to succeed, it is vital that they have those closest to them surrounding them and showing them love and compassion along the way (Shanahan & Agudelo, 2012).

In this study, family members of the inmates were also interviewed regarding their support and commitment during this process. 85% of these family members shared that they visit their loved ones in jail approximately one time a week. While these are high statistics amongst interviewees, they also expressed that there are several barriers in place that make it difficult to be involved while their family members are incarcerated. These barriers include costs of travel and tolls and institutional rules and regulations. On average, family members found themselves having to drive around a total of 60 miles to get to and from the institutions. The cost of phone calls was reported to be another barrier during incarceration. On top of the financial and travel barriers, families also reported concerns with the communication and attitudes of the staff members running the institutions. Far over half of the interviewees reported that staff members did not keep them informed when there was new information or concerns about those who were incarcerated. Similarly, while many staff members reported in their interviews that they believe family connection and participation is important for rehabilitation, a little over 60% reported to actually include said family members in their planning for the inmate's reentry. While this statistic may seem high to some, it is concerning to see how many officers do not prioritize family cooperation in their case management, while at the same time expressing that family involvement is important (Shanahan & Agudelo, 2012).

According to the minimal research on family cooperation during reentry, studies show that family support is one of the most important components of a successful reintegration.

Studies in the United States show that not only does support from family members help to

decrease recidivism but can also increase chances of gaining job employment and seeing mental health improvement. This component is considered vital due to the increased social support and the benefits of having emotional support. Results of this study showed that there are particular distinctions in the factors of family support that are important to acknowledge. While there was not much insight on how emotional or interactional support decreased chances of recidivism, this experiment showed that instrumental support does in fact increase an offender's chance at success for reintegration. Examples of instrumental support in this situation could be assistance for housing, financial necessities, food, etc. In other words, when a family member takes initiative to help offenders get settled and take steps to move forward in society, these offenders have seen positive results. While emotional support is something that is important to the process of reintegration, reports show that with emotional support sometimes comes conflict. When family members are not fully accepting or create a negative environment, this can lead to an increased amount of stress for the offender. These findings strongly urge that professionals take a deeper look into complexities that come with family relationships and search for solutions that can help create a more comfortable and positive environment for the offenders when they return home (Mowen et al., 2018).

### ***Community opinions***

For decades, there has been heavy debate about whether rehabilitation works. Professionals and the media have long argued what does and does not work in the criminal justice system. In 1974, there was a study that severely impacted the thoughts and opinions of citizens all across the country. The "Nothing Works" campaign, arguing that rehabilitation was irrelevant, seriously affected opportunities for offenders and their access to rehabilitation services. During this time period, society saw a decrease in crime activity due to the increase of

imprisonment rates. Professionals expressed that this was the safest option for everyone and would keep communities safer. On the contrary, this resulted in a rapid increase in costs to house offenders in prison institutions as well as overcrowding in institutions nationally. With overcrowding and higher financial need, prisons and correctional institutions were forced to neglect many of the programs offered in these prisons that were intended to help offenders make positive steps towards a new life. These opinions as well as many other punitive thoughts can be placed in the “get tough” ideology. Focusing on the nature of criminal activity and reinforcing fear into citizens has greatly altered their opinions over the years, causing them to neglect the health of those incarcerated in hopes to keep themselves safe. It is important to note that while this may seem like a good option to some, this is a temporary fix, that is only making it less possible for inmates to have opportunities to do better for themselves and those who surround them. Regardless of how many people want to keep offenders locked up, the reality is around 650,000 inmates return to society after incarceration each year in the United States. This is why it is important to prepare offenders to be ready for reentry and give them opportunities to be an asset for their communities rather than shut them out due to fear and stereotypes (Holler, 2019).

### **Additional barriers**

#### ***Knowledge/preparedness***

As previously discussed, obtaining employment is one of the most vital factors that play into an offender's success during the reintegration process. Although this is true, this also serves to be one of the most difficult aspects of reentry. While there has not been much research on the effects of vocational training in prison institutions, there has been undeniable research that shows how much ex offenders benefit from finding consistent employment. There have been many

researchers and professionals who have created program models for the prison institutions to follow to help improve offenders' success rates in gaining employment after prison. One program that strives to offer these resources to inmates is OPTIONS intervention program. This program in particular was created to help inmates develop independent skills that will increase their chances of getting and maintaining a job. This intervention program also aims to help individual offenders learn what behaviors that they have or had in the past that have led them to incarceration and how to stray away from these patterns and create positive characteristics that can help them to be successful. Within these programs, offenders would have the opportunity to explore what interests they have in the work field and in what areas they would be able to make the greatest impact (Fitzgerald et al., 2012).

Within this model, the authors goal was to include more cognitive based approaches to therapy. In other words, the program seeks to identify what cognitive skills the offenders show to be lacking in and then uses this type of behavioral therapy to help build these skills in particular. Cognitive therapy practices prioritize the offenders' attitudes on their rehabilitation. Professionals report that if offenders do not approach rehabilitation with a positive attitude, then the chances of them being successful in reintegration is not near as high. However, this is not something these individuals can do on their own. Many prisoners have reported they believe that the idea of gaining occupation in the workforce is unrealistic or even impossible. The attitudes of these offenders tend to be that of no hope due to the negative experiences they have experienced while being incarcerated and in society prior to their arrest. In this case, it is vital that they are given resources to mental health professionals or mentors that can give them the encouragement and skills that are needed. Therefore it is up to the corrections system to ensure that they are

doing what they can do to ensure that offenders have proper knowledge and skills needed to reenter society (Fitzgerald et al., 2012).

### ***Substance abuse***

While in this study you will see that there are many factors that contribute to reoffending, there is one tribute that often plays a large role in criminal activity and recidivism. In the United States, substance abuse occurs at a much higher rate in the prison population than in the general population. In the past few decades, research shows that on average, over three quarters of the offender population have struggled or are currently struggling with substance abuse. This can make it extremely difficult for these ex offenders to return to society due to the extreme pressure and hardships that they face during this process. When looking at the science behind it, drug abuse is a chronic brain disease that ultimately affects how one's brain functions, making things more difficult when it comes to decision making and determining the consequences of one's actions. Due to how serious this disease can be, it is vital that ex offenders who suffer with substance abuse are able to seek out mental health and medical help. For decades, research has shown that there has been a correlation between community based programs and successful reintegration for offenders that struggle with substance abuse. Studies show that those who do participate in these types of interventions are less likely to relapse or use substances. However, many ex offenders have reported that they have difficulty getting immersed into programs that meet their individual needs (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2017).

Another issue that contributes to offenders' drug usage is the lack of assistance while they are incarcerated. While much of this comes from lack of participation, reports show that around two thirds of prisons in the United States do not offer professional treatment for substance abuse.

This issue can come from several different things such as lack of finances or staff population in the correctional system. Some offenders even say that although they were able to access some of these programs, the training and counseling that they received were often poor quality with trainers or professionals that were not prepared or trained to properly teach those in attendance. Offenders have explained that there have been many times where programs have been shut down or discontinued due to a variety of reasons. There are also instances in which correctional officers fail to get offenders to their scheduled meetings (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2017).

It is important to understand that substance abuse is not solely an issue that is being seen in the United States, but rather globally. Reports in the past decade show that in southeast Africa, drug usage in offenders is a very prominent issue as well. Studies show that in Malaysia nearly 56 percent of offenders who are incarcerated are in prison in part due to substance abuse. These statistics are very similar to those in the United States as well as Europe who also see numbers in this area ranging around the 50 percent mark. Unfortunately, many other countries severely lack research on these issues. Cheah et al., (2019) sought to expand on this research by reaching out to those in the corrections system to learn more about incarceration and substance abuse in southeast Africa. Similar to other countries, their studies showed that those offenders who participated in therapeutic programs such as substance abuse counseling and cognitive therapies showed much lower rates of recidivism than those who either declined treatment or did not have access to programs while incarcerated or after their reentry. Many factors deem to be important for success when offenders receive treatment and to what extremity their individual treatment is. Studies also showed that those programs that also involved group treatment and more personal interaction seemed to be very beneficial for inmates. These types of programs allow prisoners to feel comfortable in sharing their issues and also allows them to feel a part of a community rather

than feeling isolated. Substance abuse can be a very lonely disease in which individuals tend to think less of themselves and incapable of improving. Therefore, having others around who are also struggling with similar issues can allow them to feel empowered and encouraged to take the necessary steps needed to step away from drug usage and make decisions that ultimately can lead to a successful reintegration (Cheah et al., 2019).

In their study, Cheah et al., (2019) attempted to focus on the point of view of those who experience these programs firsthand. This study looks at 80 individuals who are active drug users in the corrections system. In Malaysia as well as many other countries across the world, many inmates or ex offenders report that in their opinion, the attitude and energy that is put into the programs are more beneficial than the criteria itself. These offenders believe that if the trainers or professionals running the program are encouraging and help to create a positive environment, then this persuades these individuals to try much harder to take the steps needed to become clean and stay clean. On the other hand, if these professionals are not passionate about what they are doing, this can result in offenders feeling hopeless in their recovery. Individuals being unhappy with the leadership and staff assisting them in these programs is the biggest complaint that this study as well as others note (Cheah et al., 2019).

### ***Mental Illness***

When discussing individuals with severe mental illnesses (SMI), this refers to people who possess “... a clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual and that is associated with present distress (e.g. a painful symptom) or disability” (Hamilton, 2016). While there are many different measures to diagnose serious mental illness, it is also important to notice that in this particular study, this also affects those

who show symptoms but have never been diagnosed. In the general public, those individuals with SMI have much more difficulty obtaining a job when compared to individuals who are considered to be mentally stable. One example of this can be seen in England, where of those citizens who have an SMI, only about 7.3% of these people have current employment. When focusing on the United States, researchers have seen a drop in the numbers of employed individuals with a SMI. From the years 2003-2012 there has been a 5.2% decrease in the population of these employees (Hamilton, 2016).

It is apparent that those with a SMI struggle more than most with job employment, however, this becomes far worse when these individuals have previously been involved in the Criminal Justice System. In the United States, studies show that prisoners firmly believe that if they are able to find a job occupation, it will heavily encourage them to refrain from criminal behavior. However, research shows how incredibly difficult it has been in the past decades for ex offenders to find any sort of employment. Statistics show that in many countries around the world, nearly 70 percent of ex offenders who are eligible to work are currently unemployed. Additionally, studies show that those who are incarcerated or have been in the past present symptoms of a SMI at a much higher rate than those in the general population. In the United States alone, around 64% of the prison population have reported having symptoms of a SMI. It is also common knowledge that individuals are more likely to develop these symptoms while incarcerated due to the high stress levels and negative environment (Hamilton, 2016).

### ***Violent offenders***

According to the United States judicial system, violent crimes have been steadily increasing over the past several years. Amongst the inmates that are serving sentences in state prisons, more than half of these individuals have a record of violent offenses. Violent crimes

refer to those acts of crime that have intentional threat to others and typically always have more severe consequences. This also means that things can be much more difficult for said offenders who are reentering society. Some of these barriers can be seen when attempting to apply for a job or housing. In their study, Sabzi Khoshnami et al., (2021) focused on analyzing barriers that are present in the reentry process, specifically for violent offenders. In this research, offenders reported that the biggest barrier they faced during reintegration was gaining a clearance when trying to obtain employment. Getting a clearance for a job requires background checks and many other tests and evaluations to help determine if it is safe to hire these individuals. In their interviews, gaining clearance was a common answer for the main barrier that violent offenders face. One offender explained, “Not having a clearance is a big problem. Even private companies ask for clearance. In Khuzestan, I applied for a job installing thermal facilities. I was able to pass all the tests, but couldn’t get the job because I didn’t have a clearance. Job security, it’s very important! (Sabzi Khoshnami et al., 2021)” Similarly another participant argued, “Everything is different now. It’s so difficult to make money. Money has lost its value, and you need a lot of money for starting a business in thermal services. I passed all the tests successfully, but couldn’t get the job because I didn’t have a clearance” (Sabzi Khoshnami et al., 2021).

This barrier is very concerning, because it affects these offenders in a large way. Offenders are told that you can still receive clearance even having a criminal record, however, studies show that most occupations will not give these individuals clearance, regardless of the type of job they are applying for. This is especially true for those who have a violent crime history, due to fear of offenders having the inability to control their actions. This can be traced back to different stereotypes that have been spread amongst the communities. Sabzi Khoshnami et al. (2021) explained that many of these offenders struggle to control their emotions which can

result in irrational behavior, which is a large risk factor for businesses looking to hire these individuals. Researchers express the importance of ensuring that violent offenders have access to psychological assistance that can help them to better control these urges or inappropriate behavior. However, regardless of the help they are receiving, many workplaces will still hesitate to hire these people (Sabzi Khoshnami et al., 2021).

Another large barrier to successful reintegration deals with the lack of organization within many community programs. The main issues seen here were services that did not meet the standards of a professional resource, lack of support from staff, and lack of coordination amongst key players. When asked about the community services that they have used or are attending, many participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the programs. Many report that although they have attended these courses and programs for an extended period of time, they still believe that they do not have the skills needed for a successful reintegration. They have also shared that there are often long delays within the services they are attempting to obtain, which often leads to them giving up on services altogether. These delays can be a result of lack of employment or lack of communication between the community services and the prison institutions from which the offenders are coming from (Sabzi Khoshnami et al., 2021).

### ***Sexual offenders***

Having the label as a sex offender is most definitely one of the most debilitating labels to have as an individual returning to society after being imprisoned. This is a label that the community has deemed to be unforgivable and many citizens and businesses act accordingly. While these types of offenders are typically those who society is most fearful of, it is extremely important to note that sexual offenders have one of the lowest recidivism rates out of all types of offenders. In other words, those who have committed criminal acts of a sexual nature are some of

the least likely to reoffend once they return from prison. Regardless, these individuals still face more barriers than most when it comes to finding housing, jobs, and all around acceptance into the community. In their study Sandbukt (2021), interviewed many men that had previously had a sexual conviction and returned to society. This study showed that these individuals often experience much more anxiety and fear on a daily basis because of the way their communities view them. These offenders were often scared for people to find out that they had a sexual offense because of the backlash they would more than likely receive (Sandbukt, 2021).

When researching the effects of having a sexual offender label, there is little research on how this title can affect a person's chance at a successful reentry. However, from the little research that is present there is a common theme when it comes to essential needs of these offenders. Studies showed that offenders who had returned to society expressed that while things such as finances, housing, and employment were very difficult issues during the process, there was one thing that severely affected how difficult this process was. Most offenders that responded to the researcher's study expressed that the amount of support that they had from family, spouses, and even POs greatly affected their mental health and outlook on the process. Those who expressed that they had a great amount of support from their families and community agencies felt much more encouraged and hopeful for a successful reintegration. While this may seem like a small factor to some, having more support can also mean having more resources. Having a helpful PO allows these individuals to find groups that best fit their needs and connect them to more people in similar situations or professionals that can help them work through this difficult process. Additionally, when ex offenders also had a family or spouses that were willing to help and support them, they found it easier to create healthy routines for this new stage in life.

While there are many more restrictions that come with this type of crime, having community support and resources are vital to help these offenders (Kras, 2019).

## **CHAPTER THREE: TENNESSEE RESEARCH**

### **Why Tennessee?**

For the past several years, the Tennessee prison population has continued to see some of the highest rates it has ever seen. When compared to other states across the country, the state exceeds many others with these imprisonment percentages. Studies show that many factors play into this including the state's intense sentencing regulations as well as a spike in arrests across the smaller, rural counties ("The State of Prisons in Tennessee", 2023). As of the recent years, reports also show that Tennessee has one of the highest violent crime rates in the nation. Additionally, the state has a very concerning recidivism rate. Between the years of 2008 and 2017, reports showed that 34 states in the country have statistics showing a decrease in incarceration rates as well as crime rates as a whole. Being that Tennessee did not make this list and continues to see immense crime rates, it is important to acknowledge what factors play into struggles in this state (Reutter, 2020). While some may point out that there was a drop in rates in the year 2018, it is apparent that the increase in residents in Tennessee over the last 5 years has played a large role in this statistic. These high prison rates not only affect those who are currently residing in these institutions but also all citizens who encompass this southern state. For example, the more the prison population continues to increase, the more dollars come out of taxpayers' pockets. In other words, the more people that come into the state prison system, the more the state must financially provide to keep the prison afloat in order to provide for those who encompass it ("The State of Prisons in Tennessee", 2023)

### **Methods**

In order to better understand the current structure and condition of Tennessee's correction system and community intervention programs, researchers looked into previous studies relating to the topic. One specific study (TACIR) was reviewed to better understand particular statistics and data revolving around rehabilitation and recidivism in the state of Tennessee (Thurman, 2007). Researchers then looked deeper into programs offered specifically in the state of Tennessee that are intended to help reduce recidivism rates and help promote healthy lifestyles for newly released offenders. Reviewing programs offered as well as common issues found throughout the Tennessee corrections system, helped researchers to form a better understanding of gaps that can be seen in the system that could be ultimately contributing to the high recidivism rates in this state (Thurman, 2007).

### ***TACIR Study***

In 2006, the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) did a study observing Tennessee's state jails to better understand the needs of revision for the state as well as to get a better understanding of why Tennessee has long been a state that struggles with high imprisonment rates, violent crime, and recidivism rates. TACIR did an intense study on many aspects of the corrections system in Tennessee which involved talking to sheriffs and jail officials in all 95 counties in this state. While the response rate to this study was not as high as the researchers had hoped, there was a diverse study group in which there were multiple representatives all throughout East, Middle, and West Tennessee. After reviewing responses from government officials in these counties, researchers found many areas in the structure of Tennessee's jails and correction system that could play a large role in the lack of success in rehabilitation of the state's offenders (Thurman, 2007).

## ***TDOC***

As part of the current study, researchers take time to dive deeper into research on current programs in rehabilitation, specifically in community intervention programs, that are provided in the state of Tennessee. The Tennessee Department of Corrections explains that the goal of their system is to provide an environment in prisons that are intended to rehabilitate and educate those who come through the system. This branch strives to make sure that their prisons are structured in a manner that keeps its inhabitants safe and encourages them to take steps to bettering their life when their sentence ends. Staff members express that they want their offenders to be prepared to reenter society and give them resources that give them the biggest chance to be successful. The corrections system in Tennessee prioritizes evaluating the risk and needs of every inmate in order to better understand how likely each person is to reoffend or return to prison. Once this is determined, they can better address the individual needs of these people. From there, the system is able to model programs that will be the most relevant in the current prison population (“Reentry Services”, nd).

When looking at reintegration in particular, the TDOC expresses the importance of addressing all parts of rehabilitation. This can include many things such as mental health treatment, substance abuse, medical help, vocational services, etc. While they believe it is necessary, the system is aware that this is easier said than done (“Reentry Services”, nd).

When it comes to reentry, it is also vital for the government to ensure that programs are enforced and structured for the community. If ex offenders are provided proper resources and given the help and treatment needed, then this will result in a safer community for everyone who encompasses it. Stereotypes and the media tend to shed a very negative light on offenders and

their crimes. News broadcasts always show violent crimes and talk about the cruel and harsh things that people do, which ultimately causes society to fear these individuals. When fear becomes the main issue, citizens tend to lean towards punitive punishment, in which they wish for these criminals to stay in prison. However, this ultimately leads to overpopulation and ineffective treatment in prisons. When offenders are not able to receive the proper treatment they need, they are unable to adjust after reintegration, and ultimately end up offending again (“Reentry Services”, nd).

### ***DRC and CRC***

In 2016, TDOC created the Public Safety Act of 2016, in order to help provide proper resources to those offenders reentering the community in hopes to assist these individuals in shaping them into efficient citizens in their community. With the act, Tennessee implemented Daily Reporting Centers (DRC) around the state to serve as a proper resource for offenders in hope to create more functional and successful citizens of the community. DRC is a program that involves three phases and lasts for a total of a year. In order to be enrolled into this program, offenders must be on probation or parole and have at least 18 months left of this sentence. The purpose of the DRC is to provide a multitude of services that may best fit the needs of parolees (“Day Reporting/Community Resource Centers”, nd).

The DRC is also closely connected to the Community Resource Center (CRC) in their community. While DRC is a program that only those on parole or probation can participate in, the CRC can be helpful and used by any ex offender that lives in the community and has been released from their sentences. So, even if offenders are not assigned to participate in these programs, individuals have the opportunity to contact the CRC themselves and join in any classes

or programs that they see fit to their personal needs. This on site service can be very beneficial to ex offenders because they are able to work with or beside other individuals who have been in similar situations. Offenders are able to try out any of the programs available, making it easier for them to evaluate what it is they truly struggle with and in what area they need help and support the most (“Day Reporting/Community Resource Centers”, nd).

### ***Project Return***

While Tennessee continues to have the highest incarceration rates that they have seen in state history, there have been programs that have noticed the need for change and are making efforts to help improve this statistic. Project Return is a nonprofit organization based in Nashville, TN. This program was created in order to help improve the success rate for reentry in inmates in this highly populated city. The goal of PR is to help connect ex offenders with resources and employment opportunities to help create a more stable environment for these individuals. PR offers services both prior to release and post release in order to get a head start on the reentry process and help offenders gain connections and feel more prepared for their release. Programs such as these can be extremely helpful in helping reduce the recidivism and crime rates present in the state of Tennessee (“Project Inc. Seeks to Improve Employment Services”, nd).

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### TACIR Results

#### *Overcrowding*

As stated throughout the TACIR study that was observed as well as many current studies, overcrowding is an issue, not only in Tennessee, but across the nation. Therefore, it is not surprising that this study expresses how overcrowding is severely affecting the potential for successful reentry. TACIR shares that the state has struggled to provide enough space in the prisons which has now played a part in overcrowding in most of the local jails. While the state typically evaluates the population of the state penitentiaries, research shows that the same efforts are not shown towards the local jails. This becomes a problem for all of the correctional facilities because while most institutions are overpopulated, this creates poor conditions for the quality of safety and health for all inmates that are currently incarcerated. While the state does offer funding to attempt to improve the state of its facilities, many of the sheriffs and professionals in this particular study expressed that the funding they are given is not near adequate. Many respondents expressed that they have made efforts to receive more sufficient funding, however, they have been denied or ignored by the county officials in their area. It is important to note that this lack of financial needs not only affects the capability to expand the institutions to fit a larger population, but it also affects the treatment services that are provided in the jails and prisons. Many prisons and jails across the nation have shared that the reason they are unable to provide proper and continuous rehabilitation services such as mental health services, substance abuse services, etc is because they simply don't have enough money to maintain the resources they

need to do so. Similarly, many of these places don't have the money to hire or maintain staff that are properly trained to run these types of programs (Thurman, 2007).

### ***Employment Training***

Another common issue that has not only been seen in Tennessee, but worldwide, is lack of education and training. Researchers reported in the TACIR study that the training given to correctional employees is too vague. Professionals reported that many jails and prisons lack training surrounding topics such as supervision, financial budgeting and organization, and health care and medical issues. When employees are not adequately trained, this not only affects decisions being made by higher ups in the institutions, but also hinders rehabilitation efforts for prisoners. This is especially important when addressing educational needs of administration within the jails and prisons. The government heavily depends on prison administration to control where the institutions place their time and money. Like stated previously, the government has been lacking supervision over local institutions, leaving decisions up to those of the administrative legislature in each individual location. If these individuals are not properly trained, this could create chaos and instability within correctional walls for not only the corrections system as a whole, but those they hope to rehabilitate. If the corrections systems wish to see improvement in overcrowding in prisons and decreased reintegration rates, this all starts with the methods used during imprisonment. For example, if courses for rehabilitation are not properly funded, then prisoners are not able to receive helpful counsel and courses to prepare them or connect them to resources once they are released and return to society (Thurman, 2007).

### ***Mental Illness in Prisons***

Within the TACIR study, researchers also address the difficulties present in offenders with mental illnesses. Within the prisons and jails of Tennessee a large percentage of inmates have been diagnosed or show symptoms of mental illnesses. Many of these offenders have experienced reincarceration due to the fact that they did not receive proper treatment while originally imprisoned or during their reintegration process. Due to this, mentally ill individuals take up a large population within prison walls. This can become difficult for the corrections system. Not only are they experiencing overcrowding within the institutions, but now they are having to pay additional costs for psychiatric medications. The study shared in 2003 that around 22% of individuals incarcerated in the local jails in Tennessee are being prescribed psychiatric medication, and the numbers only continue to increase (Thurman, 2007). This causes additional strains on the state's financial planning, taking away money from other areas within the institutions and community interventions. The TACIR study stated that in their study, nearly 23% of mentally ill individuals that were imprisoned at the time had at least 3 prior sentences, some having more than seven sentences (Thurman, 2007). These statistics raise big concerns about the reintegration process for offenders who suffer from psychological disorders. Ex offenders ultimately are not being prepared to reenter society and create a successful life for themselves and deal with their illnesses outside of prison walls. If offenders are not offered proper resources to assist them during the reintegration process, they are far more likely to reoffend compared to individuals who do not present any of these symptoms or illnesses.

### **Cost Effectiveness of Current Programs**

It is important to know that realistically, it would be much easier to address the needs of ex offenders of society, rather than trying to keep them in prison. Leadership in the corrections

system reports that on average, it costs nearly \$85 per day for an incarcerated offender to be supervised. On the other hand, the average cost of supervising offenders in the community is only about \$4. This statistic clearly shows that while community intervention may require teamwork and strong communication, it is much more feasible for the corrections system to attempt to make this work rather than keeping inmates in prison. Not only can this be helpful for the offender at hand, but it can also help to decrease the overcrowding problem that is occurring worldwide. While some citizens in the community fear this idea due to stereotypes that have infected society's thinking, it is important for them to understand that as taxpayers, this is something that citizens should acknowledge considering that the money for these offenders are coming out of the pockets of those within the community ("Reentry Services", nd).

The current programs provided in Tennessee are helpful for preventing recidivism, but they also help to lessen the issue of overpopulation. The more that offenders can be released into programs such as the DRC, the less inmates that the prisons will hold. As stated previously, it is important to keep in mind that participating in community programs versus incarceration costs the state much less money. Community programs overall can help the individual, the community, and the state as a whole ("Day Reporting/Community Resource Centers", nd). While the state government provides different programs, ultimately there is only so much that they can afford to provide. That is why programs such as Project Return have taken steps forward to help assist the state and provide more access to those who may otherwise never be able to receive it and then end up back in prison. While these programs can be very beneficial if they continue to grow, it is necessary that the government puts effort into finding answers to how to better help their community ("Project Inc. Seeks to Improve Employment Services", nd)

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

### **Limitations**

When looking at this study, it is important to note that there are barriers present. Firstly, this study specifically focused on one state's statistics and programs in place. Therefore, while the state is one that experiences high crime and recidivism rates, much more research is needed from other states to understand where improvement is needed for the nation as a whole. However, while this needs to be addressed nationally, it is necessary that each individual state takes the time to evaluate the current state of their community programs in order to help the federal government understand their needs in particular and allow the state to make changes that they are able to. While this study does not answer all of the questions needed to best understand the topic, the goal is to bring light to an issue that not only affects offenders, but the community as a whole.

### **Recommendations**

When looking at the issue of recidivism and rehabilitation as a whole, this can be a very complex and overwhelming situation. This is an issue that will take years and years of action and improvement from the government, offenders, and community as a whole. However, it is important that steps are taken to target this problem now before the nation continues to see an increase in crime rates. After reviewing the research this article makes three recommendations that need to be made in order to start improving the corrections system. Firstly, the government and corrections professionals need to prioritize supervision. In the TACIR study, researchers state that there are many parts of the rehabilitation and reintegration process that are not being

supervised as they should (Thurman, 2007). This could be due to lack of staff or funds, however, the reality is that the government is allowing institutions to not follow the regulations that they are supposedly required to follow. If there is no accountability to the large organizations that play a role in these offenders' lives, then society will continue to see an increase in crime and recidivism rates.

Secondly, financial planning and distribution needs to be studied and altered by the corrections system. Many prisons and community programs have reported that they do not have enough money to create consistent programs that can assist offenders to change their way of life. Similarly, the same observations need to be done in prisons when it comes to overcrowding. Offenders are more likely to reoffend if they are not provided a proper place to stay or services that can address and benefit their personal needs (Thurman, 2007).

The last recommendation that this article makes is to start shifting some focus to the community. Reintegration is a process that is very overwhelming and intimidating. Oftentimes, other individuals and groups in the community are only making it harder for those individuals who are trying to move away from a life of crime. The negative thoughts and opinions of society not only cause offenders to feel scared and discouraged, but it also takes away many resources that these people could potentially have if society was more open minded and empathetic (Holler, 2019). If the corrections system took time to do things such as hold classes or speak on being more accepting of those in the reintegration process, this may help to cancel some of the biased fear that is so deeply engraved into the community. In conclusion, reentry and rehabilitation is not a process that involves one human individual that committed a crime. Rather this is a process that takes a lot of time and effort from this individual, their loved ones, the

corrections system, and the community. If all groups are more willing to work to help this issue, the nation will more than likely be able to see a decrease in crime and a safer and happier community.

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