

Inmate Rehabilitation Committee
League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area
February 18, 2012

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem

With 2.3 million prisoners, the United States leads the world in incarceration. The U.S. represents only 5 percent of the world population yet imprisons 25 percent of the world's inmates, according to a 2012 American Civil Liberties Union report. One in 100 adults in this country is in jail or prison. For African-Americans, the figure is a staggering 1 in 11 behind bars nationwide.

The State of Florida, meanwhile, operates the third largest prison system in the United States. The Department of Corrections oversees just over 104,000 inmates around the state in public or private prisons, in addition to 150,000 individuals under community supervision.

Those inmates or supervisees under the jurisdiction of the state are generally classified as felons. Felons are charged with committing felonies, crimes that warrant a sentence of one year or more, which may be served in a state prison. Individuals who have committed lesser crimes, misdemeanors, are called misdemeanants. Misdemeanants usually fall under the jurisdiction of the city or county in which their crime was committed and serve their time in jail.

Throughout the state, there are 62 prisons, 45 work camps, one treatment facility, 33 work release centers, and five road prisons. Add to those numbers an additional 67 jails which are under local control and house anywhere from a few hundred inmates to several thousand on any given day, according to the Florida Department of State. It should be understood that prisons and jails do not offer holistic treatment but are limited in their offerings. Services are fragmented such that some facilities offer substance abuse treatment, some offer vocational training and some offer mental health services. None provides the full range of services needed by the inmates housed there.

Escambia and Santa Rosa counties are home to three state prisons that fall under the Florida Department of Corrections: Century Correctional

Institution, Santa Rosa Correctional Institution and Annex, and Blackwater River Correctional Facility, which is privatized. (The term Correctional Facility designates a privately run prison, while public prisons are called Correctional Institutions.) Each county also has its own jail, located in the county seats of Pensacola and Milton, respectively. Escambia County also runs a road prison in Cantonment.

The Florida Department of Corrections is the state's largest department with 28,000 employees and a budget of \$2.8 billion. By comparison, the Department of Children and Families, providing health and social services to Florida residents, has a slightly lower budget allocation of \$2.77 billion. The average cost of education for one student per year is up to \$6,000. Meanwhile, the average cost of incarceration yearly for each inmate is just under \$20,000, with the daily cost per inmate at \$53.34, according to the Department of Corrections website. In other words, it costs more than three times as much to incarcerate a person as to educate one. The price tag for incarceration includes the cost of security staff, educational and vocational programs, medical and mental health services, as well as room and board and other expenses associated with detaining and maintaining an inmate.

Interestingly, the state announced in January 2012 that it will close seven prisons and four work camps by July of this year. As part of the subsequent consolidation efforts, prisoners from the closed facilities will be transferred to other locations around the state. State officials attribute the closures to a decline in the prison population and excess bed space. However, it is unclear whether the rehabilitation programs already in place in the prisons slated for closure will be moved elsewhere. As a result, successful rehabilitation programs that have contributed to the decrease in the number of releasees returning to prison may be lost.

As an aside, while prison populations were declining, Florida was building or expanding several prisons. A work camp adjacent to Santa Rosa Correctional Institution, for example, was completed but never opened. During this same period, Blackwater River Correctional Facility was constructed and opened in 2010.

The stereotype of a violent offender serving a life sentence or sitting on death row does not represent the vast majority of inmates around the state and local area. Approximately 88% of inmates will be released from prison

or jail at some time in their lives. Official statistics indicate that one-third of these individuals will be rearrested and return to prison, or recidivate, within 3 years of their release. Rehabilitative programs such as mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, educational and vocational training, and post-release support have been shown to reduce recidivism. There are both moral and economic arguments to be made for the importance of providing rehabilitation opportunities for incarcerated individuals. The RAND Corporation, for example, has estimated that every \$1 spent on treatment for chronic problems faced by prisoners nets a \$7 return.

B. The Study

In March 2010, the League of Women Voters, Pensacola Bay Area, launched a study of rehabilitation programs for inmates in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. This undertaking was a follow-up of the League's position of support for "a criminal justice system that emphasizes rehabilitation and alternatives to incarceration."

As part of the study, committee members visited the facilities and agencies in question and interviewed prison, jail and agency staff as well as community volunteers. Committee members attempted to sample a range of rehabilitative services available. However, limited time and space necessitated a focused effort. Juvenile justice issues were not explored; only programs for adult offenders were studied. Furthermore, while Pensacola is also home to a federal prison at Saufley Field, for the purposes of this study, only state, county and community efforts were addressed.

II. REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

A. State Programs

1. *Century Correctional Institution*

Century Correctional Institution was established in 1991 and houses 1,443 male inmates. Adult Basic Education (ABE) and preparation for General Equivalency Diploma (GED) are offered to inmates. However, no vocational training is available. A 100-hour transition program is mandated by the state for all soon-to-be-released inmates. The transition program consists of orientation, adult educational sessions on alcohol and narcotics abuse, smoking cessation information and information on financial literacy.

The Modality Unit is a substance abuse treatment program offered to qualifying inmates at Century C.I. The program addresses basic issues

relating to reentry into the community as well as recidivism. Inmates in this program must be within 18 months of release and are segregated from the general population in the prison for maximum program impact.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Community Drug and Alcohol Council (CDAC) initiated an innovative program for inmates at Century C.I. The inmates receive services for 6 months prior to their release and for 6 months afterwards. A CDAC case manager is assigned to help inmates identify and establish basic resources such as housing, clothing, food, education, transportation and employment.

One of the aims of this program is to enable fathers to assume responsibility for themselves and their children. If the father, upon release, is able to resume custody of or provide financial and emotional support for his children, the children may be spared involvement in the state dependency or foster care system. With costs of up to \$47,407 per year for the state to care for a child who has been removed from the parents, DCF, CDAC and Century C.I. have made a concerted effort to restore former inmates and their families.

The Century C.I. administration oversees other area facilities:

- The *Work Camp* is located a short distance from the prison. It houses 300 inmates who have been convicted of lesser offenses. Under supervision, these individuals work on county roads, along with inmates from the Escambia County Road Prison.
- The *Work Release Program* is located near the Escambia County Jail. These 80 inmates hold jobs in the community but must return to the facility after work. There are some voluntary programs offered to the inmates there, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and job readiness assistance.
- The *Berrydale Forestry Camp* in Santa Rosa County houses approximately 120 inmates who are usually involved in activities related to forestry and work with the Department of Transportation.

2. *Santa Rosa Correctional Institution*

Santa Rosa Correctional Institution was established in 1996 and has a capacity of 1,614 male inmates. The prison primarily serves inmates in

Close Management, which is a housing status for inmates whose behavioral problems make it difficult for them to be housed in close proximity to other inmates. Santa Rosa C.I. also serves prisoners with serious mental illnesses, including psychotic disorders, major depression and bipolar disorder. These prisoners are provided weekly or monthly counseling and psychotropic medication. Additionally, prisoners with serious mental illnesses who are nearing release are assisted in applying for Social Security benefits and are scheduled for an intake mental health appointment in the community to which they will return.

The prison also offers educational programs including Adult Basic Education, Transitions reentry curriculum, Rethinking Personal Choices anger management curriculum, a fathering program, Alcoholics Anonymous, and faith-based programs.

Santa Rosa Annex is located next door to the Correctional Institution. The Annex was established in 2006 and has a capacity of 1,478 male inmates. The Annex includes a psychiatric inpatient unit for severely mentally ill inmates, who may be transferred there from other institutions outside of this area. In addition to a smoking cessation program, Life After Prison class and victim awareness, the Annex opened a veterans' dorm in September 2011. This dorm allows veterans to receive focused treatment as well as help in accessing benefits available to them through the Veterans Administration.

3. Blackwater Correctional Facility

Blackwater River Correctional Facility is located in Santa Rosa County and was completed in 2010. Although constructed with taxpayer funds costing \$40 million, the institution is operated by GEO Corporation, a private prison management corporation, under a three-year contract. The prison currently houses 2,000 male inmates in medium and close custody and receives payment from the state based on the number of inmates and the services they require.

A dozen individual cells were specifically designed for mentally ill inmates, but the plan for that use did not materialize. To date, those cells remain empty, and mentally ill inmates continue to be cared for in other state-run facilities.

The facility offers education programs from elementary level to college, including GED testing. Substance abuse prevention classes are available. Life skills courses include parenting, anger management and a reentry program. The vocational program offers: commercial drivers' license training, computer skills as well as desktop publishing.

B. County Programs

1. *Escambia County Jail*

Escambia County Jail holds, on average, 1,341 inmates with an average stay of 40 days per inmate. Rehabilitation programs offered to inmates include: Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, life skills, parenting, GED instruction, computer classes as well as self-help classes.

The Escambia County Jail offers a program to divert mentally ill inmates from incarceration into a treatment program. These individuals are referred to various community agencies which deal with mental health issues. Halfway houses, a local residential treatment facility and Lakeview Center were among the agencies that accepted inmates under this program. However, as of January 2012, Lakeview Center no longer takes referrals from the jail.

Women's Reentry Assistance Program (WRAP) is designed to assist female inmates at the Escambia County Jail. Female inmates volunteer to enter the program and are housed in designated dormitory at the jail. Services offered through WRAP include positive parenting training, education for survivors of domestic violence, financial planning help, and group counseling in an effort to give these women tools to positively deal with the problems that resulted in their arrest and to transition to life after incarceration.

2. *Escambia Road Prison*

The Escambia County Road Prison holds inmates who will be there for less than 1 year of incarceration. It is unique in the state as the only county-run road prison and is situated on an 80-acre compound in Cantonment. This prison houses non-violent inmates who maintain roads and bridges and provide other manual labor for the county. The prison is operated by the Board of County Commissioners. Until July 2011, educational programs were funded by the School District of Escambia County as part of its adult education program. Thus, local taxpayers provided no additional educational funding.

When members of the League study committee visited the road prison in 2010, road prison Superintendent Jeff Bohannon reported that he had instituted vocational training for inmates there. At that time, inmates were required to a GED in order to qualify for training programs. Inmates who tested at a ninth-grade level were placed in a GED course. Working in partnership with George Stone Vocational Center, inmates were offered programs in carpentry, welding, horticulture and plumbing. They spent between 100 to 150 hours in their programs. They attended three 10-hour classes per week and participated on work crews on the remaining two workdays.

The community reaped the reward of the inmates' skilled manpower. After Hurricane Ivan, inmate horticulture students designed and completed the landscape and revitalization of the M. C. Blanchard Judicial Center property. Trees were cultivated at the road prison to be placed in Jones Swamp, and inmates helped make the signs for trails and walkways for the public at the site.

The tools inmates gained in the classes also benefitted the community in the form of public safety. The recidivism rate was reduced from the state average of 48 percent to 8 percent for the men who went through the road prison training program, according to Bohannon.

In 2011, changes occurred with the elimination of three vocational programs. Beginning in July 2011, the Escambia School District and Escambia County began to share the costs of vocational programs at the road prison. The county now spends \$25,000 annually for its 50% share of the salary and benefits for the instructor from George Stone. The annual cost to the county for operation of the prison is \$5.4 million.

According to road prison staff, inmates were not incarcerated long enough to complete some of the earlier programs offered at the road camp. GED preparation and welding are currently offered, and a culinary arts certification program is planned in the near future, according to the new prison superintendent. These programs are now being offered on Friday, Saturday and Monday in order to maximize the labor resources provided to the county during the week. The work inmates perform for the county provides important on-the-job training and reduces the county's labor requirement. Inmates continue to be taught to grow fish and farm to meet the

dietary needs of the facility.

3. *Santa Rosa County Jail*

The Santa Rosa County Jail has a capacity of 625 inmates, with an average stay of 22 days. Voluntary rehabilitation programs are offered, including AA and GED preparation. Anger management classes are voluntary or can be ordered by a judge when the inmate is sentenced. A faith-based program, The Most Excellent Way, is available to inmates.

C. Community Programs

1. *Pathways For Change*

Pathways For Change was founded in 2005 as a sentencing alternative for justice-involved individuals with substance use disorders. The organization aimed to reach the 80% of inmates who have substance use disorders that result, either directly or indirectly, in their arrest and incarceration. Instead of sending people through the revolving door of jail or prison, judges can order offenders to successfully complete the Men's Residential Treatment and get the help, support and training that they need to be productive citizens.

Pathways For Change's Men's Residential Treatment program offers intensive inpatient treatment for alcoholism and drug addiction as well as some co-occurring mental health disorders for males who qualify. Men's Residential Treatment can take up to 28 court-ordered men at a time. The men complete 9, 12 or 18 months of treatment that includes 12 Step fellowships, individual and family counseling, job readiness training, communication and relationship skills, anger resolution and conflict resolution training, budgeting and financial literacy classes, access to educational and vocational programs, case management, and assistance with housing placement. An additional community partnership with Catholic Charities' *Bridges to Circles* initiative offers clients the opportunity to build positive relationships with members of the community who offer on-going support during their recovery and reentry process.

Pathways For Change is in the process of opening its Family Center, which will bring some of the same successful efforts from its residential program into the most impoverished neighborhoods in Pensacola. The Family Center will be a place of hope and healing to those trying to improve their lives but who face major challenges in doing so. The center will allow

Pathways For Change to add substance abuse prevention and education initiatives to its long-standing intervention approach.

2. Reentry Task Force of Northwest Florida

The *Reentry Task Force of Northwest Florida* was formed in April 2009 as a coalition of individuals from public, private and faith-based organizations in the two counties. Connie Bookman, executive director of Pathways For Change, was the impetus behind the formation of this group. The task force brought together almost 100 volunteers to collaborate, coordinate and develop services with the goal of reducing recidivism among prison inmates. Members met monthly to share information about their services and activities.

Organizations involved include:

- Federal probation
- Florida Department of Corrections (Santa Rosa C.I., Century C.I. and Blackwater C.F.)
- State probation
- Operation Fresh Start/Pensacola United Methodist Community Ministries
- Workforce Escarosa
- Pathways For Change
- Department of Children & Families
- Interfaith Jail Ministries
- Pensacola State College
- University of West Florida
- Veteran's Administration
- Department of Health
- Escambia Community Clinics
- Lakeview Center & Families First Network
- Escambia County Sheriff's Office (County Jail)
- Area Housing Commission
- Favor House
- Waterfront Rescue Mission
- Escarosa Coalition on the Homeless
- FaithWorks
- A Will & Way
- School District of Escambia County
- Public Defender's Office
- Early Learning Coalition
- Children's Home Society of Florida

The task force divided its focus among sub-committees to address areas of specific concerns. The subcommittees included Employment, Housing, Behavioral Health, Families' and Children's Services, Gang Reduction,

Veterans, and Advocacy. The task force sub-committee members worked to make significant strides to help returning offenders overcome the challenges of joblessness, lack of marketable job skills, issues of homelessness, illiteracy, substance use or mental health problems. Some accomplishments of the Reentry Task Force include:

The *Employment* Subcommittee developed a Job Readiness curriculum that can be conducted with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. It is currently in use at Pathways For Change. This subcommittee also completed an employment survey through a criminal justice class at the University of West Florida. Students conducted 40 surveys on which they asked local employers if they would hire someone with a criminal conviction. Twenty of those potential employers responded positively, and that number increased when they were asked if it would make a difference if the applicant had received job readiness training. A list of those potential employers will enhance the likelihood that some former inmates will be able to find employment in the local area. Another class at UWF currently is involved in a more detailed survey of 300 local employers, but results have not yet been finalized.

The *Behavioral Health* Subcommittee worked with providers of health services for low-income patients to ensure continuity of care from jail to the community. One success has been to coordinate the release of inmates with a supply of necessary medications. (Previously, inmates could be released on the weekend with no insulin or other vital medications. That no longer happens.)

The *Families & Children's Services* Subcommittee held two conferences aimed at educating area service providers on issues faced by families and children affected by the incarceration of a loved one. The *Family Ties* conference was hosted to train 100 law enforcement officers, lawyers, counselors, teachers and other professionals on positive ways to interact with children of incarcerated parents. The impact on children in these situations is of great importance as it weakens ties among family members.

The *Gang Reduction* Subcommittee developed a curriculum for presentation to inmates to inform them of the consequences of their being identified as gang members.

The *Veterans* Subcommittee has been working with UWF and Santa Rosa C.I. to launch a veteran's dorm for inmates at that prison to receive veterans-focused assistance prior to release. The group is promoting efforts to find veterans who are willing to serve as mentors to individual inmates and assist them as they return to our communities.

The *Advocacy* Subcommittee has embarked on a project to develop a positive image with youngsters in communities where there is a high level of incarceration.

The Reentry Task Force has discontinued its monthly meetings; however some members meet informally to discuss unresolved issues and look for innovative ways to provide rehabilitation assistance.

3. Pensacola United Methodist Community Ministries (PUMCM)

Pensacola United Methodist Community Ministries (PUMCM) is a faith-based community outreach program housed at the former site of Richards Memorial Methodist Church. The ministry is designed to meet the physical, psychological and spiritual needs of the homeless and poor in the community.

Operation Fresh Start is one of the programs sponsored by local United Methodist churches. This program is available to men, women and juveniles recently released from incarceration. Volunteers assist the recently released in their efforts to find housing. An adult basic education program, mental health help, hot lunches, clothes and health-related items are also provided. Furthermore, releasees who are required to complete community service can perform their community service hours at the Operation Fresh Start outreach facility or at the ministry's thrift store on Michigan Avenue.

Volunteers in this ministry see firsthand the complications associated with prison inmate releases. The immediate need for Social Security cards and photo identification and for temporary housing are barriers which often doom some released inmates to almost-certain failure.

4. New Life Ministries

New Life Ministries is located in Brownsville and provides transitional housing for individuals recently released from incarceration. It serves as a halfway house for 18 individuals who volunteer to participate. There is no formal funding source for this group. However, residents are asked to pay

\$35 weekly and complete jobs such as yard work and home repairs in the community for income in exchange for room and board. This group works closely with the court system and probation officers to accept individuals who cannot find housing elsewhere.

5. A Will and Way, Inc.

A Will & Way, Inc. provides volunteers who visit Escambia County Jail to host classes for male and female inmates and to identify specific needs of the inmates. Volunteers serve as a support group in efforts to reduce violence and substance abuse among this population. These volunteers provide emergency assistance to recently released inmates and to their extended families during the inmates' incarceration. Resources provided also include back-to-school clothes for children of inmates, toys, household items, a food pantry and pastoral counseling.

4. M & A Community Outreach Center

A single individual operates M & A Community Outreach Center, which works with former inmates as they make the transition into the community. Substance abuse issues, mental health evaluations and counseling, employment networking, housing assistance, food stamp assistance and anger management/conflict resolution are the focus of this program.

III. CONCLUSION

The Florida League's justice program "supports a criminal justice system that emphasizes rehabilitation and alternatives to incarceration." As a follow-up to this position, our local committee has completed its review of the expansion of rehabilitation programs for inmates in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.

Taxpayers spend 3 times more per year to house an inmate than to educate a student. Rehabilitation has been shown to be an efficient use of resources. Strictly from a financial viewpoint, it makes sense to provide rehabilitation programs because the vast majority of inmates will return to our communities at some time.

This committee's research found that, while there are good programs available in the two-county area, they are inadequate to meet the existing need. For example, state figures show that, of the 80% of inmates who meet eligibility criteria for substance abuse treatment, only 25% of those actually receive such treatment during their incarceration. There is a shortage of both

beds and funding available for staffing required to conduct these programs. Closure of some prisons and the state and county budget shortfalls mean that the programs that do exist are at risk of being cut as well.

Meanwhile, the community programs explored here are small and lack steady sources of dedicated, recurrent and sufficient funding. While they provide needed services, they are unable to fill the gap left by the public programs.

As long as the responsibility for running prisons and jails falls to the government, there is an incentive to spend taxpayers' money wisely and reduce expenditures by reducing the inmate population. With recent moves to privatize more state prisons, however, this committee questions whether the private sector will be motivated toward rehabilitation which would decrease the number of inmates they receive and, hence, their profits.

This committee has identified a number of critical issues of relevance that need to be explored further. In addition to the funding issues mentioned above, these include complications that released inmates face in getting sufficient state-issued identification. Without a valid form of identification, inmates cannot obtain employment, even at day labor sites, nor can they rent a room or receive services from a social service agency. Another issue of concern is access to temporary housing for people recently released. Former inmates need safe, affordable housing where they can stay while they are getting back on their feet.

Education with an emphasis on vocational programs will make our communities safer and save taxpayer dollars by reducing recidivism.