THE VILLAGE INITIATIVE

An Analysis of the Reinventing Reentry Simulation

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
ABOUT THE VILLAGE INITIATIVE

Our mission is helping returning citizens (ex-offenders) and their families rebuild their lives as they endeavor to reintegrate back into society to become productive citizens. Just keeping one person out of jail for six months saves the County tax-payers $14,333.15, in housing costs alone. The opportunity to obtain and keep a good job, and live in a safe environment enhances the chances of staying out of jail. In 2018, we served 566 individuals coming out of incarceration. This equates to a savings of $235,545. The clients at The Village Initiative work diligently to apply what they learn to their daily lives, building for themselves a positive past and an encouraging future.

OUR MISSION, VISION, & GOALS

The Village Initiative is committed to helping “Returning Citizens” and their families rebuild their lives as they endeavor to reintegrate into society to become productive citizens.

The Village Initiative further commits, to proactively working to prevent the incarceration of At-Risk-Youth and non-violent offenders through intervention and networking with other faith-based organizations, community leaders, business leaders, judicial authorities, state and local agencies, mentors, and volunteers.

With all stakeholders, jointly working together, The Village Initiative goals are attainable.
The Reinventing Reentry Simulation was a mock exercise that asked participants to act as if they were recently released from prison. They were then provided an individual scenario and asked to navigate stations around the room that represented various services and resources. The purpose of the Simulation was to raise awareness in our community about the barriers and challenges that a returning citizen faces when coming out of incarceration.

The Village Initiative provides services that help to reduce the barriers that cause recidivism. The Village Initiative hosted the Simulation to begin a dialogue in our community that can generate ideas and solutions towards reducing the barriers that contribute to recidivism. Data collected during the Simulation from participating community leaders and returning citizens shows how we can address these issues by working together.

**WHAT WE OBSERVED**

Participants in the Simulation became frustrated and overwhelmed during the process. Some felt it was simply easier to be incarcerated than to look for services. Many struggled to navigate the system to meet their obligations or find adequate resources. Throughout the Simulation process, participants identified gaps in essential services that would have otherwise helped them to navigate through the system upon their ‘release’. A common experience felt by the participants in the Simulation was that there was a lack of support.
WHAT WE LEARNED

Without adequate support from agencies or family, we know that the risk of recidivism increases.

The responses received from participants after the Simulation offers a snapshot view of the barriers that returning citizens face. It is these issues that The Village Initiative works to address.

After the Simulation concluded, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed about how easy it was for them to access services and resources. A second question asked participants to rank the importance of various related issues.

The responses received from participants in the Simulation reaffirms the wraparound services that The Village Initiative provides for those who are coming out of incarceration.

The collected data will help support existing services and programs, as well as support the implementation of new programs. The Village Initiative will utilize these results to demonstrate impact and measure progress as part of their upcoming strategic plan.

When asked overall whether or not they found it easy to access services and find resources, 64% of all participants found it either hard or very hard to do.

This indicates that there is a greater need for assisting returning citizens to prevent recidivism.
WHAT WE HEARD

The responses below reflect just a few of the questions that Simulation participants answered. Overall, the results speak to an awareness that there is the need for greater support services and programs to ensure that returning citizens have access to the resources they need to be successful.

TO THE LEFT

Accessing essential services and finding a job can be extremely difficult for our returning citizens. This is why The Village Initiative offers programs that help address these experiences.

TO THE RIGHT

The Village Initiative provides not only access to resources and services, but also supports returning citizens by listening to their needs and helping to empower them on their journey.
OVERCOMING BARRIERS

We focus on a holistic approach to offering wraparound services to returning citizens (ex-offenders), addicts, and their families to be productive members of the community.

The Village Initiative is committed to helping returning citizens (ex-offenders) and their families rebuild their lives as they endeavor to reintegrate into society as productive citizens.

Every day, approximately 2,000 men and women are released from prison. Studies show that without meaningful intervention, 2 out of 3 ex-offenders will return to prison within three years of their release.

In order to break this cycle of recidivism, meaningful reentry programs must address the holistic needs of the returning citizens (ex-offenders) and their families.

This problem is not going away, and requires innovative solutions. Many Wyandotte County neighborhoods and families depend on The Village Initiative to rally around those touched by incarceration and addiction with solutions that bring about lasting change.

Below

The list below represents the issues ranked by Simulation participants in order of importance to address:

1. Housing
2. Transportation
3. Food
4. Family
5. Employment
6. Clothing
7. Peer Support
8. Counseling
9. Mental Health
10. Community
11. Child Support
12. Technology
The Village Initiative values collaboration and the sharing of resources and expertise in tackling the complex issues facing our community. Through collaboration, The Village Initiative has over 12 agencies serving reentry individuals and their families as they reintegrate back into society to become productive citizens. Village Initiative is also a member of the Impact KCK collaborative at Avenue of Life, offering recovery and addiction counseling to families referred. Village Initiative provides referrals to local agencies throughout town and receives referrals from the Wyandotte Court system.

**PARTNERS OF THE VILLAGE INITIATIVE**

- Economic Opportunity Foundation
- Roswell Church
- Church of the Resurrection
- Westside Family Church
- Avenue of Life
- Wyandotte County Courts
- KDOC
- Wholesale Sheet Metal
- KC Faithworks
- Local 533 Pipefitters
- Sherwin Williams
- Rew Material
- Lowes
- Carpenters District Council of Greater Kansas City
- Chas Ball Sunfish Market
- Overhead Door
- KC Mechanical
- Electrical Enterprises
- Chic-Fil-A
- Bright Ideas Signs and More
- Brooks Brothers
- Churches of Christ Prison Ministries

**PROJECT EXPENSES**

- **Staff Salaries:** $183,200
- **Transitional Housing:** $79,200
- **Kids’ Kitchen:** $62,500
- **Special Assistance:** $50,000
- **Occupancy:** $12,200
- **Equipment and Supplies:** $4,000
FOCUS GROUPS

The "THINK TANK SESSIONS"

Through the focus group discussion barriers and challenges were identified as some of the contributions to the recidivism rate.

April Focus Group Discussion Question

Direction of the Village Initiative: With the recidivism rate in Wyandotte 44–45% how do the Village Initiative improve their role in the community in providing services?

Results: Building Capacity, Stronger Community Awareness, and Partnership with Community Stakeholders Creating a Navigation of Services (Reentry Roadmap).

May Focus Group Discussion Question

What does the community stakeholders want to see from TVI in developing relationships?

Results: Tell our story in how we add value to the community, Impact once fully operational, Being an expert at what we do.
FOCUS GROUPS

The "THINK TANK SESSIONS"

JUNE WAS THE EMPLOYERS FOCUS GROUP.

TOPIC: REGARDING THE NEEDS OF EX-FELONS (RETURNING CITIZENS) BEING PREPARED FOR EMPLOYMENT, EMPLOYERS FEEDBACK ON HOW THE VILLAGE INITIATIVE CAN ASSIST ON GETTING RETURNING CITIZENS HIRED THROUGH COMPANIES THAT THE VILLAGE INITIATIVE INC. CAN NETWORK AND PARTNER WITH TO ENSURE A GREATER POSSIBILITY OF THE EX-FELONS RETURNING CITIZENS OBTAINING EMPLOYMENT.

Base Line Information
1 in 3 adults have criminal records.
34% in men, non-working prime age.
Crime record – 50% reduction in call back chance, 60% are black males.
US Economy $ 78-87 billion loss in gross, domestic output .

What is the issue?
Employers stated: Applicants being honest regarding criminal record

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What is the rule?
Employers stated: Non-negotiable is financial crimes, drug offense, time off since offense this information have to be given to the employer no exceptions.

What is needed from TVI (The Village Initiative Inc.) to help Returning Citizens to become employment ready?
Mock Interviews
Resume Building
Communication Skills
FOCUS GROUPS

cont'd Employer's Focus Group

JUNE WAS THE EMPLOYERS FOCUS GROUP.

- **DRESS CODE**
- **TRANSPORTATION – ACCESS RESTRICTIONS**
- **SOBRIETY – DRUGS, ALCOHOL**
- **ACCESSIBLE – PHONE NUMBER/CONTACT**
- **PROMPTNESS/ATTENDANCE**
- **CDL TRAINING**
- **EDUCATION ASSISTANCE - GED ETC**
- **EXPECTATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

TVI HAS IDENTIFIED THAT GAPS IN ASSISTING RETURNING CITIZENS WITH EMPLOYMENT IS BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EMPLOYERS TO KNOW WHEN HIRING OPPORTUNITIES ARISES.

CONCENTRATION ON BUILDING PARTNERSHIP/RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS FOR INFORMATION SHARING IN VETTING A RETURNING CITIZEN FOR EMPLOYMENT AND KNOW WHEN AN EMPLOYER IS SCOUTING FOR EMPLOYEES. THE VILLAGE HAVE STARTED IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SEVERAL LOCAL BUSINESSES TO WORK IN PARTNERSHIP IN PREPARING RETURNING CITIZENS FOR EMPLOYMENT.
VILLAGE FACTS

- 2,958 Returning Citizens have received services from 2016 to present.

- 100% of returning citizens have obtained employment that resides in the Village Initiative’s Transitional Housing.

- 14,333.15 saved tax payers in Wyandotte County semi-annually in total; this number does not include paid back restitutions from criminal damages.

- 204 returning citizens received peer to peer support services from 2016 to present.

- Approximately 400 ex-felons a month are being released back into Wyandotte County.

- 85% of individuals that received substance and mental health counseling have completed the program.

- Recidivism rate of participants in programs are less than 1%.
In working with ex-felons (returning citizens) the Village Initiative has discovered majority of those coming out of incarceration, are in need of supportive services in mental health and substance abuse which affects family reunification and the rebuilding of lives.

This need has been a major contributor to the recidivism rate in Wyandotte County. Out of the 566 for 2018, 208 participants at the Village Initiative have received services of substance abuse, mental health and self-support groups.

The Village Initiative Re-entry services help reduce the rate of recidivism in Wyandotte County that is averaging 44%.
SUPPORT THE VILLAGE

Whether you're looking to donate, volunteer, or get connected, you can reach us at (913) 291-1600 or on our website.

The Village Initiative's Family Life Resource Center is focused on a holistic, wraparound approach.

Services offered include: Job-placement, Transportation, ID & birth certificates, Mentoring, Parenting classes, Food pantry, Clothing, Licensed counselors (addiction, domestic violence, anger management, & grief), Support groups (gambling, mothers, anti-crime, anti-violence, substance abuse, & grief) State-approved addiction treatment, Transitional housing, Computer lab. And more.....

The Village Initiative is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. All donations are tax deductible.