

5-2018

EPOCA House: The Implementation Strategy

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Recommended Citation

Thomas, Courtney; Fain, Yaffa; Teng, Shuxiao; and Xie, Mingjun, "EPOCA House: The Implementation Strategy" (2018). *School of Professional Studies*. 32.

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EPOCA House: The Implementation Strategy

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Capstone Practicum

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Acknowledgements

This project could not be completed without the help and support of everyone at EPOCA. We would like to sincerely thank Yoshada Kwaning, the Community Outreach Director of EPOCA, who graciously allowed this group to bring her vision for EPOCA House to life. Without her support, this study would not be possible. Special regards to Kevin Lynch, the Executive Director of EPOCA, who put the team in contact with Ms. Kwaning and allowed us to be a part of the amazing work being done at this organization. We are also thankful for our advisor, Stephanie Medden, who met with us weekly to hone and develop this report. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the School of Professional Studies at Clark University for allowing us to pursue this capstone project and for providing us with the opportunity to have a lasting impact on the Worcester prisoner population.

Executive Summary

This capstone report provides a written strategic implementation plan for EPOCA House. EPOCA, Ex-Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement, is a non-profit dedicated to creating better resources and opportunities for prisoners and ex-prisoners in Worcester. The organization's most recent initiative, EPOCA House, is a transitional facility that will provide reentry services and temporary housing to ex-offenders in and around the Worcester area.

Recently, Massachusetts passed a comprehensive criminal justice reform bill that will dramatically reduce the number of people being incarcerated; however, little attention is focused on what will happen to individuals after they leave prison. At the same time, funding for halfway houses and reentry programs have decreased across the country and there are very few adequate services offered for ex-offenders in the city. To address this need, Yoshada Kwaning, the Community Outreach Director at EPOCA came up with the idea for EPOCA House Inc. While EPOCA staff members have extensive knowledge about the needs of prison population, they lacked the time and resources to create a strategic action plan to implement their vision.

This report employs a secondary data analysis methodology to compare ex-prisoner reentry programs across four specialization areas: education programming, vocational training, wellness programs, and sustainability initiatives. This report also draws on advice from experts and local practitioners in the field, who provide valuable insight into criminal justice issues in Worcester. Transcripts of these interviews can be found in the appendices.

The research reveals that there is a gap between services being offered when people are in prison and after they leave. The systematic exclusion and lack of guidance and support for ex-offenders lead many to return to crime. The analyses demonstrates that successful educational

models partner with local universities, offer participants multidisciplinary courses, and train ex-prisoners in everyday skills and to prepare them for careers in the professional world.

Vocational training reentry models focus on participants both before and after job placement.

These programs offer skill harnessing workshops, temporary transitional employment, and long-term career counseling. Best practices in wellness include hiring expert clinicians and creating partnerships with universities and local volunteers to provide holistic health and wellbeing services. Top wellness models provide ex-offenders with support ranging from psychological counseling to life coaching. Sustainability models identify the benefits of fresh food, animal therapy, and environmental efforts in increasing the overall wellbeing of ex-offenders.

Successful sustainability initiatives allow ex-offenders to plant gardens, contribute to conservation programs, and build ties with the local community. Expert testimony compliments the analysis by explaining how minimal access to opportunity and services in Worcester lead to high recidivism rates in the city.

Given all of this information, EPOCA should design a reentry program in Worcester that offers dynamic resources focused on health, education, vocational training, and environmental sustainability, to address the holistic concerns of the ex-prisoner. To ensure maximum efficacy, EPOCA should conduct an assessment of the Worcester prison population to determine the specific resources they are lacking. The need for an assessment is underpinned by the fact that the results of this capstone are limited to secondary data analysis. To create a more thorough understanding of the needs of the clients EPOCA House will serve, primary data collection is encouraged. The framework for a study like this is included in the appendices.

General recommendations for creating a transitional facility are noted in the analysis which include: reviewing Massachusetts state laws, considering multiple funding channels, and

finding a centralized location. Specific recommendations related to each programmatic area include: offering temporary transitional programs; incentivizing hiring in green companies; partnering with local job agencies, universities, and hospitals; and finally incorporating sustainability technology into a reentry model.

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Chapter One: Introduction & Historical Context

Problem Statement

Ex-Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement (EPOCA) is a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to fighting for justice for ex-offenders in Worcester, Massachusetts. The mission of the organization is to create resources and opportunities for those who were formerly incarcerated. Some major efforts of the organization include securing driver's licenses for those who were in jail, as well as helping ex-offenders seal their background histories through CORI workshops. In April 2018, Massachusetts passed their most comprehensive criminal justice reform bill to date, eliminating mandatory minimums, preventing the use of solitary confinement in prisons, and reducing unnecessary incarceration (Murphy, 2018). As a result, more individuals will leave prison and reenter society. That being said, one of the main barriers that ex-offenders continue to face after incarceration is access to housing and employment; however, the bill does not address reentry programs or services for offenders released from jail.

Unfortunately the mounting demand coincides with an era of federal bureau of prisons financial contract cuts with various halfway houses throughout the country (Watkins, 2017). Cutting these services will decrease the time that individuals have to get acclimated to post-prison life. As a result, EPOCA's most recent initiative focuses on the creation of EPOCA House, which will function as a temporary transitional facility for ex-offenders and the ex-prisoner homeless population in Worcester. The facility will offer an opportunity for those who were formerly incarcerated to adjust to a new stage in their lives. EPOCA House will provide crucial services to these populations who are disenfranchised and displaced. Some services that have been proposed include emergency and transitional housing, job training programs, case

management services, job and educational placement, development of a food pantry and soup kitchen, Hi-Set training, youth services, prevention outreach and counseling, HIV testing, HIV pre-and post-counseling, referrals, entitlement assistance, and permanent housing assistance and placement (See Appendix E).

While EPOCA has filed the necessary paperwork, created a charter, and determined some location ideas for EPOCA house, they have not yet developed a written strategic action plan to implement the proposed project. In the upcoming months, the organization will be meeting with the board of directors and the steering committee to justify the need for the facility and to further develop a concrete plan for EPOCA house. EPOCA is a non-profit organization functioning with few full-time staff members, and they simply do not have the time or resources to conduct the extensive research that is involved in this endeavor.

Therefore, this capstone project will look to develop a written implementation strategy based on an in-depth analysis of the literature and best practices on reentry programs for ex-offenders. The capstone group will examine the current state of affairs for ex-offenders in Worcester as well as look into existing reentry programs in various cities to determine an informed and tailored plan for programming at EPOCA house. The research conducted in this project will aid EPOCA in determining the best programs for ex-offenders in Worcester, address the necessary steps needed to implement these initiatives, and help tailor EPOCA House to fit the specific needs of their clients. As of now, the organization has a wealth of knowledge and information that is largely anecdotal; this capstone project will gather concrete evidence and case studies to support their strategic model.

The subsequent chapters include relevant background and historical context of mass incarceration in the United States and the local community. Chapter One explores the causes and

consequences of incarceration, examines prevalent issues facing the Worcester ex-prisoner population, and discusses the need for a transitional facility and reentry services in the city. Chapter Two includes an extensive review of the literature pertaining to successful reentry programs in education, vocational training, wellness, and environmental sustainability. By analyzing relevant models in other cities, EPOCA will have the necessary knowledge to implement their own programs and the context to adjust to their own needs. Chapter Three focuses on the methodology employed by the capstone group and provides analysis of the data. Furthermore, Chapter Four of the report summarizes the major trends in the industry as well as significant findings from the research. This section will include overview of interviews with local practitioners and Clark University faculty surrounding the topic of mass incarceration and the prison population in Worcester. Through these discussion, the capstone group sought to provide different perspective to the incarceration discourse and to incorporate relevant policy insight and advice on solving this urgent problem. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the capstone report by compiling all of the data to create a list of recommendations for EPOCA House. The list includes relevant next steps and logistics on how to successfully implement the reentry program to fit the needs of the Worcester ex-prisoner population.

Background on Mass Incarceration

The United States incarcerates more people than any other industrialized nation. In fact, the American criminal justice system houses 2.3 million people in federal, state, and local jails and prisons (Wagner, 2018). This staggering number equates to about 22% of the world's prison population (Wagner, 2018). While most people will agree this is a major problem, scholars cite various factors associated with the rise of the imprisonment movement including systematic changes in sentencing policies, political climate, economic inequality, and poverty.

Prior to the 1980s, jail sentencing policies were indeterminate, meaning they were adjusted on an individual basis. However, the U.S. started imposing fixed sentencing and many states abolished parole, which meant that people stayed in prison for much longer periods of time. During the Reagan administration, Congress passed mandatory minimums for drug related cases. This meant that if a person was caught with drugs, they would automatically serve a minimum of five years without parole. Furthermore, the development of Three Strike Your Out laws enhanced sentencing for second offenders and life sentencing for people who committed a third felony, regardless of the seriousness of the crime (Schlager, 2013). All of these systematic changes led to an increase in the overall prison population.

Social unrest and political rhetoric are also linked to the rise of the mass incarceration movement in the United States (Schlager, 2013). Increased feelings of crime and social instability led to tough on crime stances like as the War on Drugs (Schlager, 2013). This term coined by the Nixon administration, aimed to stop the “illegal drug use, distribution, and trade” of narcotics by increasing and enforcing stricter penalties on offenders (War on Drugs, 2017). The policy specifically targeted large urban cities resulting in disproportionate incarceration rates for men of color.

Economics and poverty must also be considered when exploring the causes and consequences of the mass incarceration movement. Several schools of thought argue that there is a direct correlation between economic marginalization and crime in urban communities. Specifically, economic inequality targets people of color which leads to decreased economic opportunities, unemployment, and poor wages for lower educated black men (Schlager, 2013). All of these factors drive men to crime. Moreover, the rapid increase and privatization of prison has allowed companies to profit off of the incarceration of individuals. In the 1970s, prison

expansion was pervasive. The government contracted prisons to private companies and the more beds were filled, the more money they made.

Unsurprisingly, state policies mirrored national trends. Similarly, up until the 1980s, Massachusetts prisons had very few inmates and were focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment (Forman, 2016). Responding to the national political climate, Massachusetts legislature increased sentencing policies, reduced rehabilitation services, and created longer incarceration periods. In Worcester, between 2009 and 2015, one out of every ten men between the ages of 25 to 29 served at the House of Corrections (Forman, 2016). These high incarceration rates have dangerous consequences for the city.

Firstly, incarcerating so many people is costly. Worcester spends over 1 million dollars annually incarcerating residents in eight of its neighborhoods (Forman, 2016). To put this in perspective, the cost of incarcerating residents in Main South alone, was more than the city's entire economic development budget. It cost 24 million dollars to incarcerate the Worcester country area, which is twice the State's budget for funding Quinsigamond College (Forman, 2016). Despite these high rates, Worcester spends the least amount of money per inmate. Worcester County Sheriff, Lewis G. Evangelidi, reports that the government spent \$43,553 per prisoner in fiscal year 2016, the second-lowest tally of any county statewide and less than half what the top county spent (Petrishen, 2017). This is significantly less than the state average of \$55,000 per inmate (Petrishen, 2017). Felons who are released from jail in Worcester County, are not offered the same quality of programming as the surrounding towns. Sheriff Lewis continued by stating, "We're essentially half-funded as other similar counties, and yet we're expected to do the same job" (Petrishen, 2017).

Problematically, incarceration rates decrease civic participation and hinder economic development. Beyond the devastating effects of disenfranchisement, which deprives many ex-offenders the right to vote, social scientists have found that incarceration can, “damage perceptions of government and the legitimacy of fairness” (Forman, 2016). Incarceration catalyzes individuals to doubt their own self-worth and to underestimate their value as participants in the electoral process. Moreover, being engaged in government is a mindset that is typically passed down from parents to children. Therefore, incarceration can have generational consequences. This is especially pertinent in cities such as Worcester, that are economically depressed and where resident participation is crucial for local improvements. If residents are not fully engaged, the city cannot expect to develop in a way that is representative of community needs.

Finally, high incarceration rates lead to additional crime in disadvantaged communities. Negative effects associated with high neighborhood incarceration rates snowball to create an environment that is actually less safe (Forman, 2016). With the rise of incarceration, prison becomes normalized and serves as less of a deterrent to people in crime ridden areas. When people are removed from gangs and drug trades through incarceration, it forces these groups to replace and recruit younger members, continuing the cycle and creating more illegal activity. Furthermore, high incarceration rates lead to one parent households. It is especially difficult for low income families to provide support for both children and the incarcerated family member. An absent parent and family hardship is a recipe for juvenile delinquency (Forman, 2016).

Challenges to Reentry in Worcester

In recent years, there has been a substantial decrease in the Massachusetts prison population. From 2008 to 2017, the total prison population dropped 16% in the state (MA DOC Prison

Population Trends 2016). These changes are attributed to new court commitments and large - scale sentencing reform on drug related crimes. However, those who are leaving the Mass court systems and reentering society do so with a high level of need. Some of the challenges and deficits include: “education, employability, homelessness, criminogenic thinking, mental health, and substance abuse problems” (MA DOC Prison Population Trends, 2016). While there is programming offered in most prisons, there is low participation. Due to limited personnel, participation is prioritized based on need. Without the educational, vocational, and mental health support for all prisoners, many are unprepared to deal with challenges when they are released. (Schlager, 2013). As a result, many ex-offenders struggle with basic life necessities, facing barriers to obtain housing, income, and employment due to their criminal background. Such barriers only prolong the cycle of homelessness, arrest and incarceration (Criminal Justice, Homelessness & Health Policy Report, 2012). In 2011, 44% of prisoners who were released from prison in Worcester were incarcerated within 3 years of their release (Brolin, 2017). Dr. Mattfield Castiel, the founder of Hector Reyes House, a rehabilitation center in Worcester pointed out, “If someone can’t get housing or a job when they leave prison, they often have no choice but to resort to crime. (Worcester County Reentry Program, 2017)

In Worcester, mirroring statewide challenges, the greatest obstacles ex-offenders face after leaving prison are attaining employment and housing. Despite attempts to Ban the Box, a practice that forced prospective hires to check a box if they were convicted of a crime, as well as attempts to seal criminal records after five to ten years, the employment rate for individuals with a criminal record has actually decreased (Johnson, 2017). Many employers are simply unwilling to hire ex-offenders. If individuals are able to get jobs, securing housing is extremely difficult. In fact, about 25 to 50% of people experiencing homelessness have a history of incarceration

(Knopf-Amelung, 2013). Furthermore, the rate of homelessness among the ex-prison population is four to six times greater than the general population (Schlager, 2013). Many landlords and multiplex apartments do not accept people with a criminal history. Despite discrimination laws that protect vulnerable populations, in Worcester, landlords have the legal right to turn down any individual they believe poses a threat to their community. While this reasoning is understandable, often times it is difficult for anyone with any criminal record to obtain housing, even if they were convicted of low level or non-violent offenses. If former criminals are able to receive a lucky break, in Worcester tenants must come up with first month rent, last month rent, and a security deposit to secure an apartment, an insurmountable feat for anyone with scarce resources—especially someone recently released from prison. This leaves many people exiting prison with limited options such as couch surfing with a family friend, living in a shelter, or often times taking to the streets. Ultimately, this instability leads to a vicious cycle and many ex-offenders become despondent and return to crime.

As of 2015, there were 1200 inmates in Worcester County Jail; of this figure, 58% were white, 36% Hispanic, and 6% black (Go Local, 2015). Caucasian and Hispanic female inmates had the highest recidivism rates (33%) in Massachusetts. Among males, African Americans (33%) followed by Caucasian (32%), and finally Hispanics (29%) have the highest recidivism rates in the state. Among cities in Massachusetts, Worcester has one of the largest population of ex-offenders returning after incarceration (Forman, 2016). As a result, the city is at high risk for recidivism.

Given all of these pressing concerns, there is an urgent need for community efforts to support ex-prisoners successful transition into society. Reentry programs are cited to reduce the rate of recidivism in the prison population by about 6% and drastically improve public safety for

communities (Schlager, 2013). In particular, a recent pilot reentry program in Worcester, the Worcester Initiative for Supported Reentry (WISR), aims to help men who are leaving custody reduce recidivism rates from 56% to less than 30% (WISR, 2015). Additionally, reentry programs offer educational and vocational training that provide ex-prisoners the necessary skills and knowledge which enable them to compete for new and expanding jobs. Statistics show that ex-prisoners who make more than the state minimum wage are more likely to remain crime free (Williams, 2016). Furthermore, in the long run reentry programs are significantly cheaper than incarceration, and various studies show that program benefits greatly outweigh the costs (Brolin, 2017).

While there are several organizations that specialize in homelessness and drug addiction, there are very few accessible to ex-offenders in Worcester. Successful models like Dismiss House, a reentry program in Worcester, and Hotel Grace, a cold-weather shelter for the homeless, fill up quickly, and those who are unable to secure a spot are left without refuge. Worcester is home to only one year round shelter, the South Middlesex Opportunity Council Triage Center on Queen Street, which has only twenty-five beds and strict occupant criteria. For instance, in order to qualify, the occupant must have a two-year history of living in Worcester. This automatically disqualifies those who were recently homeless. Ex-offenders who were formerly incarcerated at the House of Corrections are ineligible because the facility is technically located in West Boylston. Moreover, the shelter on Main Street is “wet” meaning that it takes anyone regardless of demographics or active substance abuse problems. Unfortunately, for most ex-prisoners, being around individuals with addiction is detrimental to the reentry process. Given the nature of these criteria, many of these options are unrealistic for the ex-prisoner population.

Other government-sponsored programs, although effective, are not readily accessible to the Worcester prison population. For example, the Worcester House of Corrections has a substance Treatment Opportunity program known as (STOP) which puts inmates through a six-month intensive program of counseling and education classes while they are in jail. There are only 36 spots for the program, so often there is not enough space for everyone who needs the services (STOP, 2018). Also, there are strict procedures and a lengthy application process, and many inmates do not fit the criteria. The Worcester Initiative for Successful Reentry Programs (WISR) offered by Advocates provides case assessment, treatment coordination, stable housing options, social services and healthcare to ex-offenders. Currently, the program partners with the Worcester House of Corrections, but it is only available to male inmates who are getting ready to be released from prison. The program is located in Framingham and is not convenient for Worcester residents. Moreover, the program focuses on current prisoners, but does little to address the hundreds of women and men who already left jail with limited resources and opportunities for services. While these programs strive to help, they simply do not have the funding or support to tackle the pressing issue of ex-prisoner societal reentry.

Given the local resource offering context, a program like EPOCA House would serve formerly incarcerated individuals at much cheaper rates than the Worcester House of Corrections and would provide vital services in an area of growing need. EPOCA House will address salient issues in the Worcester prison population through educational and vocational training, classes centered on health and wellness, and various sustainability initiatives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Educational Programming

Lack of educational resources is one of the major disadvantages preventing ex-prisoners from functioning within the community upon release. In fact, the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that approximately 41% of inmates have not completed high school level education (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2012, p.3). One 2013 National Criminal Justice Reference Services study determined that in-prison college education programming lowered recidivism rates and lengthened ex-prisoners “crime-free” periods (Ferner, 2015). The recidivism rate for people who receive a college level education within prisoner, or after they have left prison, is nearly zero. Moreover, correctional and post-correctional education have been deemed “cost-effective” with links to post-release employment (Davis et al., 2014). For every \$1 dollar the public spends on prison education, there is a \$4 to \$5 dollar return on investment in savings (The Editorial Board, 2016). As education is the “basic price of admission” into society and the economy, the ex-prison population cannot afford to lose this ticket into the community.

Unfortunately, during the 2008 recession, prison educational budgets across the nation took a 6% hit with states losing as much as 10-20% of their educational budgets (Davis et al., 2014). This was not the first time prison education spending was cut; during the 1990s, educational programming lost major funding mechanisms as lawmakers wanted to appear tough on crime (The Editorial Board, 2016). Today, appreciation for the significant role education plays to ex-prisoner’s societal re-entry is growing. While tremendous research exists documenting educational programming within prisons, there is less information extending beyond prisons to include data about educational programming for ex-prisoners. Analysts call on experts to extend the existing knowledge of prisoner and ex-prisoner education programs by conducting randomized trials, collecting data on juvenile education campaigns, assessing the use

of technology, and monitoring GED programs (Davis et al., 2014). In relation to the EPOCA House efforts to educate ex-prisoners, three major efforts serve as examples of nonprofit industry best practices: Resilience Education, Project 180, and the Fortune Society.

The Resilience Education program seeks to provide educational programming for “underserved populations” including prisoners, juvenile offenders, and former prisoners (Resilience Education, 2013). The Resilience Education team designs customized educational programs, offers entrepreneurship training courses, and provides instruments to measure results for the target population that other nonprofits or agencies can then implement at their centers. The program serves as educational consultants to partner programs and also offers instructional services. Targeting research, problem solving, and financial literacy skills, Resilience Education provides university-quality curriculum through the University of Virginia. Through the collaboration of University of Virginia professorial faculty and graduate student participation, Resilience Education offers preset curriculums for onsite educational programming. Both ex-prisoner participants and educational instructor volunteers benefit from the experience. This model of university involvement is transferable to the Worcester Consortium of universities and colleges as professors, students, and volunteers could implement a similar partnership program with EPOCA House.

Like EPOCA House, the Fortune Society re-entry program began with advocacy work before developing into transitional housing facilities with onsite services. The organization’s Fortune Academy and Castle Gardens living facilities offer ex-prisoners in New York an array of educational opportunities aimed at empowering participants to “achieve personal and professional goals, such as acquiring basic literacy skills, earning a High School Equivalency diploma, preparation for employment, and encouragement to pursue higher education” (Fortune

Society, 2017). The program seeks to disrupt the “school to prison pipeline” which entraps people in cycles of disadvantage and leads already vulnerable members of the population to recidivate. Fortune Society clients are offered math, reading, writing, and computer skills from enlisted teachers, volunteers, and tutors. The organization pairs educational coursework with career and counseling services to build participants’ confidence in setting goals for the future. The Fortune Society partners with The Animation Project (TAP) to offer software, computer, and film skills as a creative outlet for students. This nontraditional offerings supplement the academic and career-based curriculum.

In addition to traditional educational coursework, many programs recognize the importance of preparing the prisoner population with financial literacy curriculum. A nonprofit program based out of Montgomery, Alabama called Project 180 partners with financial institutions to deliver financial knowledge to people within the correctional system (Project 180, 2017). Through eight hour courses delivered across four sessions, small classes learn about budgeting, credit, loans, saving, and avoiding scams geared at vulnerable ex-prisoners. According to Project 180 (2017), the instructors utilize curriculum from the “FDIC Money Smart Curriculum and Federal Trade Commission and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s ‘Helping Reentrants Become Informed Consumers’ program”. While Project 180 offers its financial literacy classes to current inmates, EPOCA House might employ a similar model curriculum in training ex-prisoners on financial literacy. The Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC) Bank On Worcester Program might be willing to serve as a partner in offering such coursework to ex-prisoners at the EPOCA House facility or on-site at the WCAC. Aside from educational offerings, EPOCA House must consider employment support models.

Vocational Training

Formerly incarcerated individuals face various challenges after leaving prison. Due to the lack of social bonds, support networks, and few effective reentry programs, ex-prisoners are likely to re-offend. The research indicates that ex-prisoners with jobs have a lower rate of recidivism and/or have a greater length of time between re-incarcerations. There are several studies that prove that prisoners and ex-prisoners who receive vocational training are more likely to find employment and less likely to return to jail. The cycle of recidivism costs states more than \$50 billion dollars annually (National Association of State Budget Officers, 2015). However, the average cost of a correctional education program ranges from \$1400 to \$1700 per inmate (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, Miles 2013).When individuals with criminal records experience poor economic outcomes, and they cannot gain society's recognition, they are more likely to engage in criminal activity, which will further influence their lives, families, and even their community.

There are substantial barriers for ex-prisoners to find a permanent job when they are released from prison. Because of the time individuals spend in prison, many lose work skills, forfeit the opportunity to gain work experience, and experience damaged interpersonal connections and social contacts. One study that examines employer preferences on hiring individuals with criminal records reveals that a major concern is that ex-offenders lack the proper "skills to get the job done" (Hunt, 2018). In order for ex-prisoners to excel in their job search and to be effective while employed, they need vocational training which provides specialized knowledge for a career or trade. Several vocational training models epitomize best practices in ex-prisoner employment programming.

A successful vocational training program is evidenced by the Center of Employment Opportunity (CEO) model in New York. CEO is a non-profit organization which offers comprehensive employment services for men and women returning from jail or prison (Ceoworks, 2018). Initially, CEO began as a demonstration project of the Vera Institute of Justice in the 1970s to address employment barriers facing the formerly incarcerated following release; however, in 1996, CEO became an independent organization (Ceoworks, 2018). CEO's overall mission is placing ex-offenders in permanent, unsubsidized, full-time jobs that provide benefits and compensation above minimum wage. The highly structured and tightly supervised programs help participants regain the skills and confidence needed for successful transitions to healthy and productive lives. Similar to EPOCA House, the CEO model focuses on ex-prisoners at their most vulnerable state, when they are first released from incarceration. The program aims to instill hope in its participants from the onset of treatment, working with ex-prisoners as they carry out their goals.

To do this, CEO's program model provides a tailored roadmap for participants who are released from prison and want to create a new life (see Figure 1). CEO divides the process into four parts: life skill education, short-term transitional employment, full-time job placement, and post-placement services. During the first step, CEO provides an in-depth orientation for new enrollees during which time they discuss program requirements and services offered. Next, participants are required to begin a consecutive five-day life skills training class that includes introducing and rehearsing the skills and behaviors needed to successfully function in the workplace. After, clients are placed in short-term transitional employment. CEO operates a large network of work crews. Work crews provide participants with short-term, low-skilled, minimum-wage, day-labor employment, which can give participants more working experiences and

enhance their self-esteem when they re-enter society. The third step is full-time job placement, where participants receive one-on-one job coaching with CEO staff to solve any gaps in the job searching process. The final step is post-placement services; while working full-time jobs, participants receive support from CEO's team of Retention Specialists who offer long-term career planning and counseling.

CEO's model is an effective and valuable re-entry program for ex-prisoners because it not only helps ex-prisoners regain working skills and find a full-time job, but also provides them with post-placement services that track their progress and help them retain employment. Participants who present their pay stubs to confirm that they were working for one year will get a monthly bonus from CEO's incentive-based work retention program called Rapid Reward. This system works to motivate and encourage participants to remain at their jobs. The model has been active in over ten cities across four states and achieved nearly 25,000 job placements for formerly incarcerated men and women into full-time employment. CEO services have done more than provide jobs, participant recidivism rates dropped drastically by 16 to 22% points. (Ceoworks, 2018). Like the CEO model, the EMERGE program exemplifies excellent vocational programming.

EMERGE Connecticut, Inc. provides another effective reentry model for dealing with the ex-offender population. This nonprofit is a self-sufficient social enterprise, which launched in 2010 under the umbrella of a city initiative called Empower New Haven (Sokoloff, 2013). Now an independent organization, the nonprofit offers a holistic approach to helping formerly incarcerated persons and at-risk youth in the city. Through paid and unpaid programs, EMERGE helps participants successfully return to their families and to communities as responsible, law-abiding, contributing citizens (Emergect, 2018). Similar to Worcester, New Haven suffers from a

dearth of resources for former prisoners and a high recidivism rate. To combat this problem, EMERGE offers ex-offenders the Community Offender Reentry Experience (CORE) program. In this program participants are eligible to work up to six months, earning between \$10 and \$12 per hour based on their experience and performance (Emergect, 2018).

In addition to working, CORE members must enroll in mandatory activities such as literacy and numeracy classroom training as well as counseling support and anger management therapy throughout the program. These classes are meant to allow employees work three days a week for a total of twenty-five hours per week. The EMERGE Connecticut Executive Director, Dan Jusino, limits the number of work hours to remind participants this should be a stepping-stone, not a permanent job, that gives them the incentive to seek further employment when they get enough working skills and become more confident in their abilities. The program has been extremely successful in reducing recidivism rates. Over the same time period, EMERGE members 14% recidivism rate drastically contracted the Department of Correction 56% rate average (Kuzyk & Lawlor, 2015). Like EMERGE, RecycleForce is striving to aid ex-prisoners in the vocational sector.

Another esteemed reentry model is RecycleForce launched out of Indianapolis in 2003. The 501(c)3 social enterprise delivers comprehensive and innovative recycling services in support of workforce training, development and job placement for formerly incarcerated men and women. The program is regarded as one of the best practices in green reentry programming, and according to Recycle Force President, Gregg Keesling, “RecycleForce recycles electronic waste and other trash, and we recycle lives” (Pence, 2015). The mission of the organization is to make the environment cleaner while also helping ex-prisoners successfully reenter society. RecycleForce combines environmental sustainability with social concerns. Using the revenue

generated from the recycling businesses, RecycleForce helps formerly incarcerated individuals restart their lives through social support and vocational training. RecycleForce has partnered with government agencies, hospitals and other industry employers committed to hiring ex-prisoners. It not only provides ex-prisoners with a steady paycheck (each former inmate make \$9 an hour) but also it offers monitoring and counseling to them.

From its onset, RecycleForce has recycled more than 65 million pounds of electronic waste and has served almost 1200 individuals, with nearly \$7,000,000 dollars in wages earned and nearly \$1,000,000 dollars in taxes paid (Clark, 2018). Over the same time period, the RecycleForce multi-year recidivism rate of 26% was less than half the Indiana Department of Corrections recidivism rate of 54% recidivism rate (Clark, 2018). In 2015, RecycleForce received a \$1.3 million dollar federal grant for helping ex-offenders (Pence, 2015). For ex-offenders, RecycleForce is a prime example of a vocational model which imparts social change and job skills. Although EPOCA House does not have the same amount of funding as RecycleForce, the RecycleForce model highlights how the use of effective partnerships can create meaningful outcomes for both program participants and the community. While meaningful community partnerships and vocational training strategies are crucial, ex-prisoner resource models must also consider the holistic wellness needs of the ex-prisoner population.

Wellness Programming

Poor health conditions have become one of the major factors impacting prisoners and ex-prisoners within the criminal justice system. Nearly 25% of the worldwide prison population resides in the United States and a substantial proportion of these inmates suffer from chronic medical conditions including mental illnesses, substance abuse disorders, and communicable diseases like HIV, sexually transmitted infections, Hepatitis C, and viral infections (American

psychological Association, 2014, p.56; Kinner & Wang, 2014). Health issues are becoming a pervasive phenomenon in both jails and prisons. An estimated 26% of state and federal prisoners suffer from at least one mental illness, compared with 9% or less of people suffering within the general population (Conversation US, 2017). Other estimates suggest that inmates are 5 times more likely to suffer from mental illnesses than the general population (Kerr, 2017). Although the Supreme Court supported the rights of prisoners to receive physical health and mental health care in the 1970s and the Eighth Amendment implements the prohibition of “cruel and unusual” punishment impeding on prisoners’ constitutional right to health care, previous studies show that the health treatment resources provided to prisoners are still deficient (Gonzales, 2012). For instance, a recent Bureau of Justice Statistics (2006) report indicates that only one third of inmates who have mental illness have access to health treatment in the United States.

Prisoner health issues link to recidivism rates which indicates the necessity for attention and wellness resources being offered to the offender and ex-offender communities. A correctional department analysis indicated that 37% of inmates who lose health treatment still show symptoms of mental illnesses after getting released from state prisons and are rearrested again; accordingly, the recidivism rate for prisoners with mental illnesses is higher than the general ex-prisoner recidivism rate (The Spotlight Team, 2016). Nationally, almost 76% of people who have been incarcerated are locked up again within five years, the miserable condition of health care in prison plays a critical role in this high rate (Hatcher, 2017). While inmates and prisoners receive basic health care for physical conditions, treatment for mental health conditions is less broadly provided and the quality of the treatment is often poor. More than 8 in 10 returning inmates have chronic medical conditions according to studies done in Ohio and Texas (Bichell, 2016). Thus, inmates and prisoners released from jails and prisons still have physical

health and chronic mental health problems which place them at risk for rearrests.

Besides the poor quality of health care provisions within prison, another reason for rearrest is that health gains achieved within prison are often rapidly lost when prisoners are released and returned to society (Kinner & Wang, 2014). The influences of drug abuse, communicable diseases, and infections may impact ex-prisoners' lives beyond prison and contribute to subsequent health deterioration. Almost 700,000 ex-prisoners with infections, mental health problems, and substance abuse issues need medical support services such as medications and psychological counseling after being released from prisons and jails to readapt to their families and society (Kinner & Wang, 2014). Additionally, nearly two-thirds of all prisoners are addicted to drugs or alcohol (Scotti, 2017). After being released from prisons, ex-prisoners with substance addictions are susceptible to using or other risky behaviors.

Unfortunately, an estimated 80% of ex-prisoners are poor so the expense of health care makes accessing health support services impossible (Andrews, 2015). Many former prisoners do not qualify for Medicaid or they cannot afford private health insurance because of the high copayment costs. Evidenced by the aforementioned research and the inadequacy of the health care provisions available for ex-prisoners, it is clear that there is a serious need for organized reentry programs working on health support services to help ex-prisoners healthfully rejoin their families and communities. Three exemplary programs, the Sullivan Family Moving Ahead Program, the Health Measures initiative, and the Offender Reentry Program, spearhead health care practices in the ex-prisoner re-entry sector. These efforts aim to expand health treatment and related recovery and reentry services to sentenced adult offenders and ex-prisoners. Like the EPOCA House model, these three organizations strive to offer health recovery resources which enable ex-prisoners to live better, law-abiding lives.

The St. Francis House is a nonprofit organization located in Boston, MA which provides a wide variety of tools and support services for people who have experienced incarceration. The Sullivan Family Moving Ahead Program (MAP) provides a 14 week life-skills training program for individuals who have experienced homelessness, addiction, mental illness, and/or histories of incarceration (St. Francis House, 2016). An important component of the Moving Ahead Program is teaching students to effectively deal with trauma and to reevaluate negative emotions in order to lead a more fulfilling life. MAP also employs case managers who help participants with ex-prisoner needs, housing issues, and mental health care (St. Francis House, 2016). Moreover, the organization maintains a Medical Clinic operated on-site by Boston Health Care which has a professional expert team, including physicians, nurse practitioners, and registered nurses who have the experience and expertise to treat health problems.

The medical professionals come from partnerships with universities, colleges, and nursing schools that offer students the opportunity to enrich their community-health clinical experience by serving as medical staff for MAP. The multilingual, multicultural counselors teach the ex-prisoner participants to develop and keep trusting relationships with others and to identify positive interactions. All the St. Francis House staff meet weekly for training on mental illness, substance abuse, and medical condition updates so that they may maintain their expertise and ensure patients receive topnotch care. The staff offers HIV testing and mental health counseling to clients on a weekly basis. Additionally, there is a department called the Clinical and Recovery Services stationed at St. Francis House; this branch concentrates on helping participants treat their traumas and build their day-to-day self-confidence. This department also provide case management, individual and mental health counseling, and substance abuse assistance in both English and Spanish (St. Francis House, 2016). Like MAP, the Health Measures program

affiliated with the Roots Community Health Center is paving the way for ex-prisoner wellness initiatives.

The Roots Community Health Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing high-quality and sophisticated health treatment, improving health outcomes for uninsured and low-income residents of East Oakland, and “emphasizing self-sufficiency and community empowerment” (Roots Clinic, 2018). The Healthy Measures program supported by the Roots Clinic focuses on helping ex-prisoners effectively recover from chronic illnesses and on ensuring that the formerly incarcerated receive comprehensive healthcare. The program seeks to get to the root causes of ex-prisoners chronic illnesses and suffering. The support and coaching that the Healthy Measures program participants receive is from Roots Health Navigators who have also experienced incarceration. Support services include benefits enrollment, health education and navigation, individualized planning for gaining “whole health,” and housing and job skills training. Since not all ex-prisoners meet the requirements for Medicaid, many cannot apply successfully for such federal services. Accordingly, the Health Measures Program works to provide top-quality healthcare and the program also dedicates resources to ensuring that ex-inmates receive health medication benefits. The final wellness-based ex-prisoner program best practice model, the Offender Reentry Program, focuses more significantly on substance abuse.

The Offender Reentry Program (ORP), funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is a long-term substance use treatment program that begins within the institution and follows the ex-offender into the community (SAMHSA). The objective of this program is to “expand substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and related recovery and reentry services to sentenced adult offenders/ex-offenders” so that these people may return to their families, communities, and workforce positions (SAMHSA). The program intends to

relieve the pressure and costs on the community of substance abuse by providing health care treatment and reentry and recovery support services. The program declares the societal benefit to the ORP program, suggesting that healthier ex-prisoners do not participate in “substance use related crime and violence” (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2017). Gradually, with the implementation of this program, more prisoners/ex-prisoners may access substance abuse treatment. In addition to lowering the rates of substance abuse disorders, the Offender Reentry Program has observed positive trends in participant hiring rates, recidivism rates, social productivity, behavior, and social relationships with others. The success of such programming indicates that EPOCA House would reap the many benefits from similar wellness and health programming offered to clientele.

Sustainability Initiatives

With basic needs and survival at the forefront of the ex-prisoner reentry discussion, it is easy to overlook the significant role sustainability plays in ex-prisoner thriving. Environmental injustice often targets disenfranchised communities; the ex-prisoner population epitomizes an environmentally underserved community whose access to the benefits of fresh food, green space, and animal support is diminished (Lipshutz, Stearns, & LaBella, 2013). The greening of United States prisons is a question at the forefront of discourse around improving the prison industrial complex (Jewkes & Moran, 2015). Efforts to make prisons more sustainable are motivated by multiple factors including cost, environmental impact, and prisoner health benefits (Rosenwald, 2015). Gardening, animal tending, and environmental education are linked to positive self-esteem, better health outcomes, and lower recidivism rates (Barclay, 2014). The environmental, health, and monetary benefits of sustainability initiatives apply to both the prisoner and ex-prisoner population.

Sadly, discussion around including ex-prisoners in sustainability efforts that improve both the health of the individual and the planet, is far from common place. While prisoners within facilities may experience the many benefits of community gardens, animal therapy, fresh food, and other sustainability initiatives, ex-prisoners are not typically offered access to such resources when they reenter society. Nonprofit findings and media reports document the success of sustainability efforts associated with ex-prisoner reentry programming, but scholarly articles on the subject are few and far between. Still, experts link gardening and other skill-building sustainability campaigns to professional development and ex-prisoner rehabilitation (Rosenwald, 2015). Three case studies offer insight into effective practices employed by nonprofits who seek to bring sustainability initiatives to the ex-prisoner population.

In Worcester, the Dismas House organization serves as a multifaceted reentry program provider to ex-prisoners. The organization's subsidiary, the Dismas Family Farm, operates out of Oakham, Massachusetts and serves as a complementary program to other Dismas services. The Family Farm program is sustained through partnerships with multiple Massachusetts charitable foundations and provides a rehabilitative and vocational model farm. Dismas residents assist in food cultivation and production while learning food cropping, animal husbandry, woodwork, management, and laboring skills. The self-supporting working farm produces products which are marketed at farmer's markets across the community. Beyond Worcester, the Planting Justice grassroots organization is revolutionizing the relationship between people impacted by incarceration and environmental justice.

Planting Justice is a California-based nonprofit which seeks to empower prisoners, reduce social inequality, and provide skills and resources through sustainable food cultivation (Planting Justice, 2018). To fight the systemic injustice embedded in the food system, the six year old

program has built over 400 food gardens through the labor of formerly incarcerated individuals trained in landscaping and gardening. The 10% recidivism rate of Planting Justice participants is significantly lower than the national average (Barclay, 2014). Planting Justice offers ex-prisoners the opportunity to eat fresh food, train in a vocational skill, and learn about food production. Meanwhile, the nonprofit “reduces recidivism, unemployment, hunger, and violence in disenfranchised urban communities” (Planting Justice, 2018). The organization also encompasses an educational program which teaches high school students, people in prison facilities, and local communities about environmental justice, healthy food preparation, and nutrition. The Sustainability in Prisons Project mirrors Planting Justice’s efforts.

The Sustainability in Prison Project (SPP) is an industry leader in bringing sustainable practices and education to the prison population (Sustainability in Prison Project, 2018). To combat the “crises of ecological degradation and mass incarceration,” the Evergreen State College and Washington State Department of Corrections teamed up to deliver environmental education and sustainability programming at a dozen Washington State prisons. The SPP trains prisoners in an environmental course geared at preparing them for environmental careers and positive community impact through the Roots of Success campaign. The Project also encourages prisons to become LEED Gold Certificated and sustainable through water, energy, and waste limitation programs. SPP offers beekeeping, earthworm growing, butterfly cultivation, and animal training programs to prisoners. While the Sustainability in Prison Project supports prisoners, and the EPOCA House will engage the ex-prisoner population, the SPP model offers multiple exemplary programs which might guide EPOCA House sustainability efforts.

Chapter Three: Design and Methodology

Design

Initially our group planned to conduct a focus group of 10 to 15 EPOCA clients to gather insight for a needs assessment of programs and services EPOCA House should offer. We prepared two applications with the Clark University Institutional Review Board to conduct research with EPOCA staff present during 90 minute focus groups scheduled to take place on-site at EPOCA headquarters. Unfortunately, due the vulnerable nature of our study topic and ex-prisoner participants, we were unable to move forward with this methodology. We adjusted our methodology, choosing to conduct secondary data analysis to compare ex-prisoner re-entry program models across four key areas. We selected the programming service concentrations: education, vocational training, sustainability, and wellness based on our EPOCA client request to focus on these pivotal topics.

Our EPOCA advisers, Yoshada Kwaning and Kevin Lynch endorsed the significance of these programming areas based upon their experience serving clients; the literature on successful ex-prisoner transitional living facilities also supported these four foci. Upon establishing a framework for investigation, we conducted intensive research by filtering data using keyword and Boolean Operator searches, examining re-entry programs across the United States, and consulting local experts in the field. We met with the Library faculty to learn about database tools which strengthened the integrity of our data collection process. To further enhance the rigor of our research, we strategically selected peer reviewed, institutionally-supported, well cited articles produced by universities, government agencies, and established nonprofit organizations.

In addition to a content analysis of existing literature on the background of the ex-prisoner transitional landscape and the categorized program models, we consulted EPOCA staff and notable Clark faculty. Our group met with the EPOCA Executive Director, Community

Outreach Coordinator, and EPOCA volunteers to gain additional resources and insight into the Worcester ex-prisoner climate. We also spoke with current Clark University instructor and former Worcester Mayor, Joe O'Brien for consultation on Worcester's existing ex-prisoner programming and contemporary local challenges. Once our research on background information, best program practices, and diverse Worcester professional perspectives was gathered, we compiled our findings into our Capstone proposal and presentation (See Appendix G).

Materials

To execute our research, we utilized an array of Clark University resources including the JStor, Lexus Nexus, and Digital Commons databases. We examined scholarly journal articles obtained online as well as online newspaper resources from the Worcester Telegram & Gazette and statistical information from the Worcester House of Corrections. We utilized our own computers for website research, project sharing features, and presentation design. Furthermore, we checked out several books from the Clark University Library. EPOCA provided us with literature on their organization, existing programming, and statistics. Although immaterial, Clark University faculty and our EPOCA advisers served as invaluable resources throughout our Capstone preparation and research process.

Ethical Concerns

Our research process was riddled with ethical concerns. From the project's onset, our group considered the ethics of producing research to support the needs of a population that is often psychologically, socioeconomically, and politically disadvantaged. As a group, we sought to be cognizant of the different health and environmental factors that impact the ex-prisoner population including mental illness, drug addiction, and chronic homelessness. In preparing our investigation, we questioned the way our findings might impact individuals' access to services

and EPOCA resources. We examined the vulnerabilities and needs of our stakeholders including the EPOCA staff, clientele, Worcester ex-prisoner population and their families. Before conducting any research, we discussed our role as graduate student researchers and our privileged position as members of a higher educational community.

During ethical reflection, we sought to develop feasible and implementable strategies for EPOCA House in order to provide contextually meaningful recommendations for the organization. We strived to do our due diligence, and ensure we produced ideas that would actually serve EPOCA's clients as opposed to providing un-achievable options that did not match the organization's scale, financial situation, site, or clientele. We prepared a risk assessment of both positive and negative risks associated with our project proposal while outlining our Project Charter (See Appendix A). In terms of negative ethical risks, we asserted that our lack of expertise on the topic of ex-prisoner programming could serve as a detriment to producing appropriate resolutions. Furthermore, we recognized the fact that our group might discover undesirable or unexpected findings which might be costly or challenging in regards to EPOCA House's implementation. In terms of positive ethical risks, we noted the fact that our project would hopefully serve EPOCA in designing its program model and would ideally prove beneficial to EPOCA staff, clients, and the Worcester community at large (See Appendix B).

Data Analysis

To analyze the extensive amount of secondary data we collected, we were critical about sources, categorization, statistics, and stakeholders. In sorting the data, we selected rigorous peer-reviewed journal articles which included local, state, and national statistics. Additionally, we chose literature from popular media sources including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and local Worcester Telegram and Gazette as socio-cultural literature references. We

sought articles which were frequently cited by experts in the field, which reflected comparable examples of nonprofit programs, and which showcased exemplary program models which might serve as aspirational approaches for EPOCA House. For our faculty and local expert perspectives, we analyzed their feedback by examining their responses to several questions about Worcester's ex-prisoner resources, challenges, and opportunities.

Chapter 4: Results and Reflection

Findings Based On Our Research

To identify effective implementation strategies for an ex-prisoner reentry program, we examined deficits in existing ex-prisoner programming and best practices across the country. Our research indicated negative trends specifically affecting the ex-prisoner population and increasing their likelihood to recidivate. Poor health and mental wellness, lack of education and vocational training, and minimal access to opportunity, contribute to high recidivism rates and other issues for ex-prisoners. Trends across multiple sectors suggest that access to resources and funding for reentry transitional programming does not meet the growing demand for these services. Considering the fact that a disproportionate number of American people are, or have formerly been incarcerated, it is worthwhile to emphasize the scale and scope of the problem around ex-prisoner reentry models. As the ex-offender population reenters the community, they need dynamic resources to enable their basic survival and ultimate flourishing.

Statistics on the National Ex-prisoner Population.

The United States total population only accounts for 5% of the worldwide population however the country accounts for 25% of the worldwide prisoner population, or approximately 2.2 million incarcerated people (APA, 2014). The number of inmates in the United States has fluctuated over the last 30 years (James, 2015). Since the early 2000s, the population has

continuously grown reaching its highest point of 2.4 million incarcerated people in 2008. More recently, the prison population has declined in both jails and prisons. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2018) reported that the state prison population decreased by almost 2% (21,400 inmates) from 2014 to 2015. While the number of individuals incarcerated in the United States has declined to some degree since 2008, the country still has over 2 million people incarcerated in the jail and prison system (See Figure 2). Over the coming years, a huge number of these prisoners will be released into the community. The data from Bureau of Justice Statistics (2018) states that an average of 590,400 inmates have been released annually from state and federal prisons since 1990 and approximately 5 million ex-inmates are under some form of community-based supervision (See Figure 3). As millions of prisoners are released in the coming decade, the demand for reentry programming will continue to increase. Without expansion, the already straining reentry services, may not meet the needs of these new ex-prisoners. Even today, many of Worcester's ex-prisoners struggle to obtain assistance, training, and a spot in other transitional systems.

Worcester Ex-Prisoner Demands.

In Worcester, the lack of reentry program resources and offerings trap ex-prisoners in challenging cycles of chronic homelessness, underemployment, and unhealthy behaviors. The Worcester ex-prisoner population cannot effectively reintegrate into law-abiding society without better access to health, education, and vocational resources. The financial development and public safety of the city suffers from the disenfranchisement of Worcester ex-prisoners. For the community, reducing recidivism is essential to building public perceptions around safety and communal thriving. Thus, there is a local demand to increase the availability of reentry programs both in and out of prisons. Unfortunately, Worcester does not have enough organizations and

institutions that focus on offering reentry programs for prisoners and ex-prisoners. In striving to meet this demand for services, EPOCA House should anticipate several obstacles. Funding, management, leadership, and day-to-day implementation will likely pose as challenges to the EPOCA House operation. Fortunately, based on the literature, there are ample solutions to these barriers, and there are program models which showcase educational, vocational, wellness and environmental sustainability approaches.

Educational Findings.

Achieving high school and college education credentials are crucial to ex-prisoner employment and self-confidence outcomes. However, many ex-prisoners have low levels of educational achievement which make it difficult to find a job and become productive after incarceration. Nearly half of all United States inmates have yet to receive a high school level education (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2012, p.3). Educational attainment directly correlates with recidivism. In fact, people who receive a college level education within prison, or after getting released, show low rates of recidivism. While the significance of education is undisputed, funding for educational programming is lacking. Ex-prisoner educational programming leaders like the Resilience Education program, Project 180, and Fortune Society have successfully improved participant outcomes despite such obstacles. These programs partner with university volunteers, offer dynamic multidisciplinary courses, and train students in skills that may be applied to daily life (e.g. finance and computing) as well as the professional world.

Vocational and Job Training Findings.

Ex-prisoners' incarceration history is a major impediment to finding a job, securing a steady income, and transiting back to productive society. Long-term disconnect from society, causes many inmates to lose work skills, employment opportunities, enriching work experiences,

and sustainable relationships with families and communities. Studies suggest that ex-offenders without jobs experience higher rates of recidivism and shorter periods of time between re-incarceration periods than the general ex-offender population. On the contrary, employed ex-prisoners may contribute to society through useful work and may enjoy the fruits of their labor through economic growth, improved self-confidence, and stronger sense of purpose.

The Center of Employment Opportunities, EMERGE, and RecycleForce exemplify unique entrepreneurial ex-prisoner vocational program models. These inspirations for best practices in the ex-offender training and vocational preparation sector, offer job-placement, career counseling, and skill harnessing workshops. By offering ex-prisoners work experience, job training, and new skills, these models empower the formerly incarcerated to participate in the working world.

Wellness Findings.

The prisoner and ex-prisoner populations experience high rates of chronic medical ailments, mental illnesses, substance abuse disorders, and communicable diseases. Although there is legal and constitutional support for insuring prisoners receive health care treatment, there are not enough financial resources to cover such benefits. Only a fraction of inmates have access to proper health treatment during incarceration. Resultantly, many inmates released from jails and prisons continue to suffer from physical health issues, substance abuse disorders, and chronic mental health problems which place them at risk for rearrests. Like educational attainment and vocational success, health outcomes are linked to recidivism rates. Beyond the health resources provided during incarceration, the health options for ex-prisoners are slim as some ex-offenders do not qualify for Medicaid and others cannot afford alternate insurance plans. The St. Francis House, Roots Community Health Center, and Offender Reentry Program,

recognize the holistic health factors which impact ex-prisoners. These programs strive to offer substance abuse, mental health, and physical health treatments. By employing expert clinicians and partnering with university and medical institution volunteers, these models provide participants with holistic health and wellbeing services from psychological counseling to life coaching.

Sustainability Findings.

While educational, vocational, and wellness factors are deemed essential to ex-prisoner thriving, sustainability efforts often go overlooked as nonessential. However, ex-prisoner sustainability efforts can combat socio-environmental inequities which plague marginalized communities like the ex-prisoner population. As a result of economic and societal exclusion, ex-prisoners do not typically gain access to the benefits of fresh food, green space, and animal therapy. Enabling ex-prisoners to participate in environmental sustainability efforts like community gardens and conservation programs, offers ex-offenders the opportunity to grow their roots in the community and benefit from better wellbeing outcomes. The notion of greening the prison industrial complex arises in academic and corporate literature as correctional institutions strive to save money; yet, the benefits of sustainability go well beyond financial incentives. Ex-prisoners gain emotional, psychological, and vocational rewards from enriching their environment. The Dismas House, Planting Justice, and Sustainability in Prison Project each center on encouraging ex-prisoners to flourish through environmental outlets. Participants gain practical skills, new perspective, and personal strength through partaking in sustainability initiatives established by these programs. Measures to be LEED certified, offer community gardens, and conserve resources inspire ex-prisoners to reflect on their role in the world.

Expert Insights.

Dialogue with EPOCA's executive director, Kevin Lynch, and Community Outreach Director, Yoshada Kwaning, as well as discussion with former Worcester Mayor and City Councilor, Joseph O'Brien, yielded powerful insight into the scope of the ex-prisoner reentry problem in Worcester and opportunities for progress (See Appendix D). In terms of salient issues impacting the ex-prisoner population, these local practitioners identified challenges in finding jobs, housing, educational opportunities, emergency care, and treatment for mental health and substance abuse issues. Mr. O'Brien explained that ex-prisoners can turn to the New Leaf program run through Workforce Central or to Dismas House for some available resources; Ms. Kwaning and Mr. Lynch stated that there is a major deficit in local resources as the Worcester County Sheriff's Office is not adequately distributing wrap-around services funded through state channels. Mr. Lynch stated that alternative reentry programs were "really restrictive" and that many ex-prisoners "don't qualify because of their sentence structure."

All three local practitioners indicated a need for health, education, and professional resources. Ms. Kwaning highlighted the basic needs ex-prisoners require straight out of prison including clothing, food, shelter, employment, and removal from negative influences like former criminal associates. Mr. Lynch emphasized the fact that ex-prisoners need dry shelters as opposed to wet shelters where formerly incarcerated people can successfully stay sober. In terms of effectively solving some of the major issues plaguing the Worcester ex-prisoner population, the community experts identified multiple socioeconomic strategies. Mr. O'Brien suggested partnership with "anchor institutions" or "major groups within the city who have a stake in the community," since these institutions (e.g. universities, churches, local businesses, etc.) want to build the community, they are often more "progressive thinking, and based in liberal and moral

traditions which serve as a framework for their organizational activities.” Mr. O’Brien explained that such institutions could commit to offering employment opportunities to ex-prisoners and they have the incentive to include ex-prisoners into the community. Ms. Kwaning recommended wrap-around services to aid ex-prisoners; she indicated that ex-cons may benefit from TAMP assistance, a stable environment, CORI form guidance, and follow-up services. Mr. Lynch approached the topic of solutions through a societal lens declaring that “criminal justice reform” is long overdue to establish “stronger support networks.” Mr. Lynch calls for funding, mainstream support from the community, and sustainable reentry program models.

Salient Issues

The topic of ex-prisoner transitional living facilities relates to an array of social, economic, and justice-based issues. While the majority of resources offered to this population are provided in prison, there is a gap in the services being offered at such institutions and to prisoners upon completing their sentences. For many ex-prisoners, systematic exclusion from professional and financial opportunities leads to the comitance of additional crimes. Ex-prisoners are frequently treated as a socially disenfranchised group who lose educational and vocational opportunities which affect their financial status and role in the community. Unfortunately, discriminatory hiring practices make it exceptionally difficult for ex-offenders to reenter society. Countless studies indicate the need for transitional living facilities and services to reduce recidivism rates.

The lack of such offerings lead to poverty, poor mental and physical health, and inability to thrive after prison. Though the prison industrial complex is well-funded, tough on crime policies have reduced funding for nonprofit ex-prisoner programming. As American perceptions on the criminal justice system evolve to accommodate a more understanding view of ex-

offenders and the systemic inequities they face, more transitional programs and resources are opening. Contemporary transitional living facilities and ex-prisoner programs recognize the need to treat the holistic aspects of the ex-prisoners lives. Programs like the proposed EPOCA House strive to incorporate educational, vocational, health, environmental, and other social needs.

As a small-sized nonprofit with only two full-time staff members and a small number of dedicated volunteers, EPOCA faces challenges in promoting its efforts. EPOCA has successfully promoted CORI-reform policies in Worcester and at the Massachusetts state level. Nonetheless, the organization continues to struggle to meet the growing housing and job support demand of the Worcester ex-prisoner population. In planning the EPOCA House project, the organization is faced with funding, implementation, and logistical challenges. Opening such an important transitional living facility requires substantial research into the proper facility selection, professional staffing policies, and resource offerings. EPOCA is equipped to assist the ex-prisoner population through the inauguration of EPOCA House as a result of its years of advocacy work; nonetheless, such a facility will require continued planning, monitoring, and funding.

Reflection

Our group worked on our EPOCA House Implementation strategy for three months; over the course of the research, writing, and collaboration process, there were many highs and lows. Before we started our in-depth capstone project research, we brainstormed several project limitations to consider including: time constraints, funding, language barriers, and available educational and data resources. From the onset, we recognized that communication and scheduling complications would be the biggest challenges for our group in terms of collaborating as a team, coordinating meetings with our Clark faculty, and working with our EPOCA liaisons.

To overcome these challenges, we remained highly organized and learned to proactively prepare our assignments and plans according to a communal schedule. We practiced patience, understanding, and careful listening as we encouraged each other throughout the project process.

We learned to creatively face setbacks and to be flexible to changing plans through our Clark Institutional Review Board denial. When our initial plan to conduct focus groups and interviews with EPOCA clientele was denied twice by the IRB, we recognized that we had to shift our project plans to accommodate a new timeline and set of project objectives. Although it was frustrating to pour our time, energy, and hard work into IRB materials we could no longer use, we rallied our positive spirits to put our efforts toward our alternate project plan. We realized that the IRB process can take months and that working with a vulnerable population requires extreme sensitivity and care. The process of redrawing our project, enabled our team to harness personal resilience and untapped creative reserves.

Besides developing personal and professional skills, we learned a tremendous deal about the social justice issues underlying the American criminal justice system. Although we had a working understanding of the American criminal justice system and some of the challenges facing the ex-prisoner population, we never realized the depth and significance of these topics. Through our research we grew to better understand the ex-prisoner population's needs and the structural dynamics relating to their hardships. Through discussion with our EPOCA liaisons, we experienced the funding, logistical, and political challenges nonprofits encounter in serving disenfranchised community members. We studied other successful organizations and learned about best practices from amazing organizations across the nation. We acknowledged the obstacles linked with program development, implementation, and evaluation. Aside from this technical knowledge, we learned a great deal from working with our project partners.

Through the Capstone process, we developed meaningful professional, academic, and personal relationships. We enjoyed working with our EPOCA liaisons, Kevin and Yoshada, who taught us about the nonprofit sector and the many socioeconomic issues ex-prisoners face. Our capstone adviser, Stephanie, offered great patience, advice, and support as she enlightened us with her academic research expertise. As a team, we helped and encouraged one another. We learned from one another's cultural experiences and from each of our different academic backgrounds. The Capstone process was both academically informative and personally enriching.

Chapter 5: Recommendations for EPOCA House

General Summary

Based on an in depth review of the literature, an analysis of salient issues and trends within the prison population in Worcester, and overall findings throughout this project, this capstone group suggests that EPOCA incorporate the following list of recommendations when developing an implementation plan for EPOCA House. The subsequent list ranges from general considerations for creating a transitional facility to specific needs and design plans related to education, vocational, wellness, and sustainability initiatives for a reentry program in Worcester.

General considerations for creating a transitional facility:

1. Create a Standardized Assessment

Research proves that a standard assessment of inmates can help create a specialized and informed plan for programming (Serin, 2005). While there are several best practice models, there is no one size fits all approach. EPOCA should tailor training programs to the specific needs and learning styles of the individual to ensure maximum growth. By understanding the specific needs of the Worcester prison population, EPOCA will be able to create an effective strategy for each

inmate's reentry into the community. The capstone team has provided a framework for this type of assessment, including a detailed list of questions that EPOCA can incorporate into one on one interviews with ex-offenders or a focus group study (See Appendix C).

2. Review State Laws Related to Staffing in Rehabilitation Facilities

To maintain accountability, support, and peace of mind, transitional living facilities require a twenty four hour staff presence. In Massachusetts, there are specific laws related to staffing in adult service programs. Staffing is dependent on services being offered and population being served (Regulatory Review of Adult Day Services, 2017). Given the legal ramifications of these decisions, EPOCA should review all Massachusetts laws related to staffing prior to hiring personnel. These policies can be found on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Commonwealth Department of Public Health websites.

Furthermore EPOCA should hire a sizable staff that includes employment counselors, Parole officers, licensed clinicians, and social workers. For drug testing, any licensed clinician (registered nurse, nurse practitioner, or phlebotomist) can draw samples to be tested by a lab technician. Entry level positions for these jobs range from \$20,000 to \$65,000 in Massachusetts respectively (See Table 2 for a detailed list of staff salaries). Given the demographics of Worcester, the staff should be diverse including multiple people of color and Spanish-Speaking individuals. Since the facility will be servicing a vulnerable population, EPOCA House should also prepare conflict and crisis protocol and review all procedures with staff members.

3. Centralize Location and Offer Access to Public Transportation

Worcester is the second largest city in Massachusetts with limited public transportation. Many ex-prisoners have lost their driving privileges, or do not have access to a vehicle. At times, staff or residents may need to access various services or job opportunities. They will need a way

to get around quickly and affordably. The WRTA is the easiest mode of transportation in Worcester so ideally the location of the facility should fall along major bus routes (See Figure 4). Moreover, while there are many non-profits doing great work in the greater Boston area, the research shows that many ex-offenders are unable to access services because of location.

4. Consider Multiple Potential Funding Resources

Inherently, creating a transitional living facility will require a large sum of money. EPOCA should look into various funding sources to finance this endeavor. Some areas to research are private grants and donations, county service contracts, utility grants, stimulus funding, low-income housing affordable tax credits, client fees for food and rent, and grants from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (for housing released veterans). To find more specific grants, the Foundation Directory online offers information related to funder profiles, application deadlines, and requirements (The Foundation Center, 2018).

Vocational Training

5. Offer Temporary Transitional Jobs through Partnerships with Local Industries

Successful reentry models incorporate vocational training that not only prepares participants for real world jobs through classroom instruction, but also allows individuals to work during or immediately after their program. For example, the CORE program offers participants paid part time training in construction, landscaping, and property management after completion of their program. CORE members work for 24 hours a week in a work environment where they can apply their newly acquired skills under a site supervisor.

EPOCA should partner with government agencies, nonprofits, and local businesses where ex-offenders may work or volunteer their services. The part time jobs assignments would be temporary, which would give participants the incentive and confidence to apply for a permanent

job in the future. Employers would be free to let go of participants if they were not performing to a satisfactory level. This would not only keep participants busy during their transition, but still allow companies to have autonomy over their own hiring decisions. This model was extremely effective in New Haven, reducing the recidivism rate drastically. Currently, Worcester Roots, a local organization that works to create opportunities for economic, social, and environmental justice, is operating an apprenticeship program which helps individuals over age 18 to find jobs. This program has over 23 trades to choose from and connects job seekers with 32 apprenticeship programs across Massachusetts. EPOCA should reach out to this organization to establish a potential partnership.

6. Incentivize Hiring of Ex-Offenders in Green Companies

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is a federal tax credit available to private and non-profit employers who hire veterans and other individuals from targeted groups including ex-felons. EPOCA should encourage local business partners to hire ex-felons who have graduated from the program to help build permanent jobs, especially in green industries. A useful model to reference is RecycleForce, in Indianapolis which uses the revenue generated from their recycling business to help formerly incarcerated individuals rebuild their lives through vocational training, social support, and job placement. This model addresses environmental concerns and has a positive social impact on their city. In Worcester, green jobs are on the rise, and there are various green initiatives to which ex-offenders can contribute their time. The majority of entry-level jobs in these industries require a high school education and some postsecondary training rather than a college degree (Best Practices in Green Reentry Strategies, 2013).

For example, Keep Worcester Clean Program, a city-wide effort operated by the Department of Public Works needs residents to participate in year-round cleaning, picking up

litter and other debris such as abandoned vehicles, graffiti and more from the streets and sidewalks (Worcester, M C, n.d.). EPOCA should request that the City of Worcester hire EPOCA House participants to work on community projects. Other private companies such as S&M Green Construction or True Green in Worcester offer felon friendly jobs. EPOCA House should reach out to these organizations as well as well as other private and nonprofit entities throughout Worcester to see if they would be interested in placing program graduates into entry level positions.

7. Partner with Local Job Agencies to Track Placement and Post-Placement Progress

EPOCA House should partner with local career counseling companies to offer placement and post-placement services for ex-prisoners. While the EPOCA House Charter states they will provide participants with various job training programs in an array of industries including custodial maintenance, culinary arts, entry level plumbing, and basic computer skills, an effective vocational training program must help clients both before and after they are able to secure employment (See Appendix E). In New York City, the Center of Employment Opportunity program tracks their participants through a four stage process that tracks participants from beginning of their job search to well after they have secured a placement. After a participant receives a job, the employment specialist works with the employer to confirm the placement of the ex-prisoner and to maintain consistent contact with ex-prisoners throughout the experience. Since EPOCA House is a small non-profit with limited resources, the capstone team recommends EPOCA train and track participants by partnering with employment agencies throughout Worcester. Several employment agencies such as Job Finders, Complete Labor and Staffing, and Expert Staffing provide professional employment guidance, placement, and

counseling to vulnerable populations. EPOCA can work with these organizations and their own case managers to monitor the development of their clients.

Education

8. Partner with University Professors and Students to Offer GED and College Level

Coursework to Program Participants

Ex-prisoners are an educationally underachieving population, so it is crucial that EPOCA House incorporates educational programming, which may prepare clientele to participate culturally, financially, and professionally in their communities. Since many ex-prisoners have not completed high school level education, EPOCA House educational offerings should prepare participants to complete their GED or High School Equivalency Certificate in addition to coursework advancing ex-prisoners computer literacy skills. The Fortune Society program successfully prepares its ex-prisoner participants to complete their GED's through offering math, reading, writing, and introductory computer skill courses (Fortune Society, 2017). The program functions with volunteer assistance which resonates with our second educational recommendation to capitalize upon a partnership among Worcester university and college consortium members.

Based on the Resilience Education model, it is recommended that EPOCA House partner with university professors and students to offer GED and college level coursework to program participants (Resilience Education, 2013). The Resilience Education model is effective because it provides all participants with benefits: faculty and student volunteers gain powerful experience while ex-prisoner learners gain valuable course knowledge. EPOCA House should reach out to community engagement faculty across the 11 Worcester consortium higher education institutions to develop a network of professor collaborators. Selected professors can teach introductory

courses and encourage their students to serve as tutors or teacher's assistants. EPOCA House must designate a room and weekly schedule for classroom lessons. While teachers would volunteer to instruct courses, university students may be encouraged to participate in the program to receive college credit and/or professional experience. In addition to traditional academic coursework, it is recommended that EPOCA House offer life skill and creative classes.

Project 180 nonprofit demonstrates the demand the ex-prisoner population has for nontraditional educational opportunities (Project 180, 2017). Modeled after Project 180's financial literacy curriculum, which utilizes the FDIC Money Smart Curriculum and Federal Trade Commission and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's 'Helping Reentrants Become Informed Consumers' program, EPOCA House should offer financial literacy courses. The Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC) offers both a Bank On Worcester County and Free Tax Council service (Worcester Community Action Council, 2018). Members of these free financial service programs might be willing to offer a financial literacy training course to EPOCA House clients on-site at the WCAC Headquarters or on-site at EPOCA House. EPOCA House should also contact the Worcester Center for Crafts (WCC) to determine if any WCC instructors would be willing to instruct a weekly creative class to offer EPOCA House participants an artistic outlet (Worcester Center for Crafts, 2014).

Wellness

9. Develop a Community Partnership between EPOCA House and Local Hospitals and

Universities

Health and wellness are important aspects of rehabilitation and a successful transition into society. Many inmates struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, and low self-esteem after they leave prison. A successful reentry model must find a way to combat and resolve all of

these issues. Many hospitals and non-profit organizations in the Greater Boston Area have existing programs with promising results. We suggest that EPOCA develop a partnership with UMASS Memorial Medical Center, the city's trusted medical facility, by hiring UMass Medical students to serve on the EPOCA wellness staff. This idea is based off of a cooperative model at St Francis House, a nonprofit organization that operates an onsite clinic at Boston Health Care. The medical professionals at St. Francis come from partnerships with universities, colleges, and nursing schools that offer students the opportunity to gain meaningful real world experience by serving as medical staff. (St. Francis House, 2016). Students at UMass Medical Center have expertise working with individuals who suffer from substance abuse and various mental health related problems. By developing this partnership, medical students will have the opportunity to enrich their community health clinical experience, and EPOCA House can provide ex-prisoners with quality care at affordable rates.

Sustainability

10. Incorporate a Community Garden, an Environmental Vocational and Educational Program Model, and Several Facility-Based Sustainability Technologies.

Although sustainability initiatives are often overlooked in ex-prisoner support efforts, their benefits are indisputable in reducing socio-environmental injustices that plague disenfranchised communities (Lipshutz et al., 2013). Inspired by Dismas House's successful farm-based transitional living facility, which encourages ex-prisoners to learn food cultivation and horticulture job skills, this capstone group recommends that EPOCA House plant a community garden. Dependent on the site selected as the location for EPOCA House, such a community garden might be accommodated on the property lot, on an outdoor terrace, or atop the building's roof space. The Worcester Local Root nonprofit organization is experienced in

building aquaponic greenhouses to provide fresh food to food dessert regions; they could serve as an excellent partner in planning and implementing EPOCA House's community garden space (Worcester Roots, 2018). Members of the Worcester Local Root conduct workshops and their volunteers could educate prisoners in planting and maintaining a garden space. The Planting Justice nonprofit encourages ex-prisoners to learn sustainable food cultivation (Planting Justice, 2018).

Aside from the skills ex-prisoners learn while tending to gardening and landscape projects, Planting Justice participants receive environmental education which encourages them to consider inspiring social justice causes. Through partnership with the Worcester Local Root and the Regional Environmental Council (REC), another nonprofit centered on food justice, EPOCA House should offer environmental workshops (Regional Environmental Council, 2018).

Education on environmental topics is linked to lower recidivism rates and often inspires ex-prisoners to participate in their communities. Volunteers from the Worcester Local Root, REC, or Worcester consortium universities might offer a monthly course on environmental ethics to encourage ex-prisoners to consider their agency as environmental actors.

In conjunction with such enrichment programs, EPOCA House should strive to install modern sustainability technologies. The Sustainability in Prison Project (SPP) sets an impressive precedent for ecological technologies and programming (Sustainability in Prison Project, 2018). The project encourages prisons to be LEED Gold Certified and maintain sustainable practices in water, energy, and waste limitation programming. In addition to community garden initiatives, SPP offers beekeeping, earthworm growing, butterfly cultivation, and horticulture programs for the prisoner population. EPOCA House could consult environmental specialists on the implementability of such technologies on-site at the EPOCA House facility. Not only do these

environmental technologies improve EPOCA House's environmental impact, but they offer valuable educational and vocational opportunities to ex-prisoner clients.

Evaluation Metrics

To evaluate the success of EPOCA House's implementation process, EPOCA employees should monitor multiple metrics. Major milestones in the inauguration of the EPOCA House program will include purchase of an EPOCA House site facility, procurement of sustained funding, recruitment of full time staff, admittance of ex-prisoner clientele, implementation of enrichment programming, and marketing of EPOCA House within the community. While each of these objectives will be associated with unique funding and timing constraints, EPOCA staff can assess the progress of the implementation process by carefully reviewing the completion of these steps. EPOCA leadership should also consider the following statistics and indicators in tracking the program's success.

A log of EPOCA House clientele, supplemented by a database with some of their basic demographic information, will help EPOCA employees assess the number of ex-prisoners being served. Such a database including gender, age, native language, educational and vocational background information would enable EPOCA House employees to determine trends in the client population. In addition to tracking who EPOCA House is aiding, EPOCA House coordinators should log participation rates in EPOCA House educational, vocational, wellness, and sustainability programming to determine how clients are utilizing EPOCA House services. Program offerings may be evaluated based on the number of times they are offered, the qualifications of their instructors, and on the continued attendance rates they sustain. The flourishing of EPOCA clientele should be formally tracked with an exit survey ex-prisoner participants can complete upon leaving EPOCA House. If participants leave EPOCA House

early, fail drug testing, or do not abide by EPOCA House rules and regulations, such infractions should be tracked and monitored to quantify program violations. Although these participant issues do not directly reflect EPOCA House implementation shortcomings, they do suggest participant personal problems EPOCA House staff should plan and train for.

To assess the quality of the EPOCA House staff, evaluation may be based on their professional expertise. EPOCA should seek to employ and retain multiple professional staff members with knowledge of the ex-prisoner population. Furthermore, EPOCA House leadership should oversee the number of communal events EPOCA House participates in as well as the number of community partners EPOCA House collaborates with. Identifying nonprofit, government, and private corporate partners will enable EPOCA leadership to expand the program's influence and public network. By tracking communal activity, EPOCA House can evaluate how the program is received and how it may grow across Worcester.

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Tables

Table 1. Department of Justice Statistics

Country	United States of America
Ministry responsible	Department of Justice
Prison administration	Federal Bureau of Prisons, state and local correctional authorities
Contact address	320 First Street N.W, Washington DC 20534
Website	http://www.bop.gov (link is external)
Head of prison administration (and title)	(General) Mark Inch Director of Federal Bureau of Prisons
Prison population total (including pre-trial detainees / remand prisoners)	2 145 100 <i>at 31.12.2015 (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics - 693,300 in local jails, 1,256,100 in state prisons, 195,700 in federal prisons)</i>
Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	666 <i>based on an estimated national population of 322.3 million at end of 2015 (from U.S. Census Bureau figures)</i>
Pre-trial detainees / remand prisoners (percentage of prison population)	20.3% <i>(31.12.2015)</i> Further Information
Female prisoners (percentage of prison population)	c. 9.8% <i>(2015)</i> Further Information
Juveniles / minors / young prisoners incl. definition (percentage of prison population)	0.2% <i>(2014 - juveniles)</i>

Foreign prisoners (percentage of prison population)	5.2% (2014)																													
Number of establishments / institutions	4 575 (3,283 local jails at 2006, 1,190 state confinement facilities at 2005, 102 federal confinement facilities at 2005)																													
Official capacity of prison system	2 140 321 (2014)																													
Occupancy level (based on official capacity)	103.9% (2014)																													
Prison population trend (year, prison population total, prison population rate)	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>2000</td> <td>1,937,482</td> <td>683</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2002</td> <td>2,033,022</td> <td>703</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2004</td> <td>2,135,335</td> <td>725</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2006</td> <td>2,258,792</td> <td>752</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2008</td> <td>2,307,504</td> <td>755</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2010</td> <td>2,270,142</td> <td>731</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>2,228,424</td> <td>707</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014</td> <td>2,217,947</td> <td>693</td> </tr> </table>			2000	1,937,482	683	2002	2,033,022	703	2004	2,135,335	725	2006	2,258,792	752	2008	2,307,504	755				2010	2,270,142	731	2012	2,228,424	707	2014	2,217,947	693
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Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2014). *Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/bookstore/state-legislatures-magazine/health-care-in-and-out-of-prisons.aspx>.

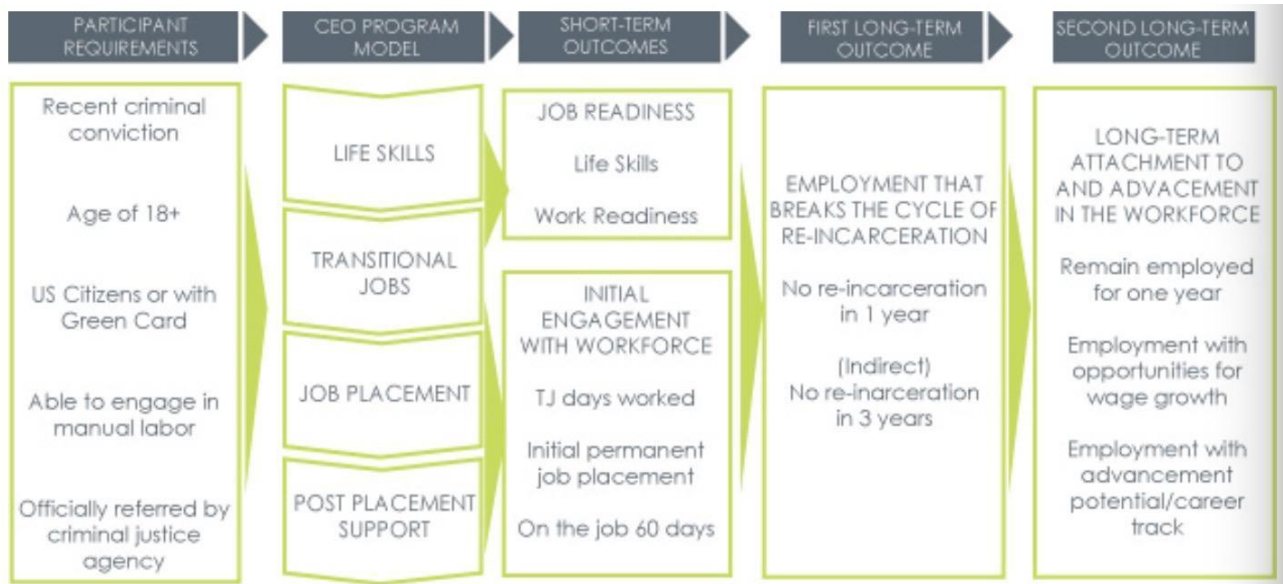
Table 2: Salaries for EPOCA House Employees

Position	Salary Range Per Hour	Median Salary	Yearly Salaries
Phlebotomist	\$10.01-\$16.51	\$12.97/hr	\$20,841-\$35,920
Registered Nurse	\$22.53-\$40.69	\$29.03/hr	\$47,064- \$89,650
Parole Officer	N/A	\$49,360/yr	\$32,090-\$75,103
Social Worker	\$30.00-\$35.00	\$32.00/hr	\$30,182-\$64,349
Employment Specialist	\$11.61-\$19.99	\$15.42/hr	\$25,514 -\$45,638
Mental Health Technician	\$9.85-\$16.78	\$12.67	\$20,644-\$38,678

Source: PayScale. (2018). Hourly rate for industry: clinician. Retrieved from https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Industry=Health_Clinic/Hourly_Rate.

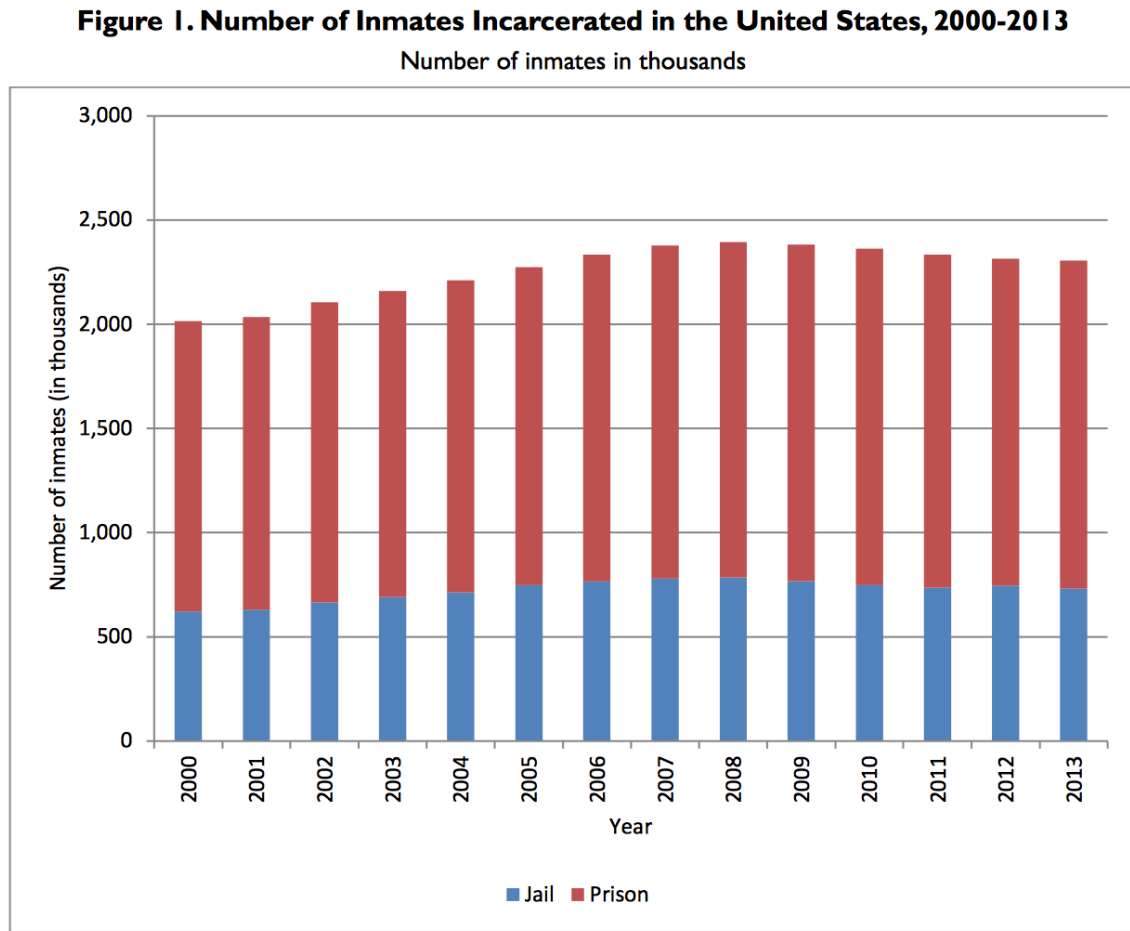
Figures

Figure 1. CEO Program Roadmap



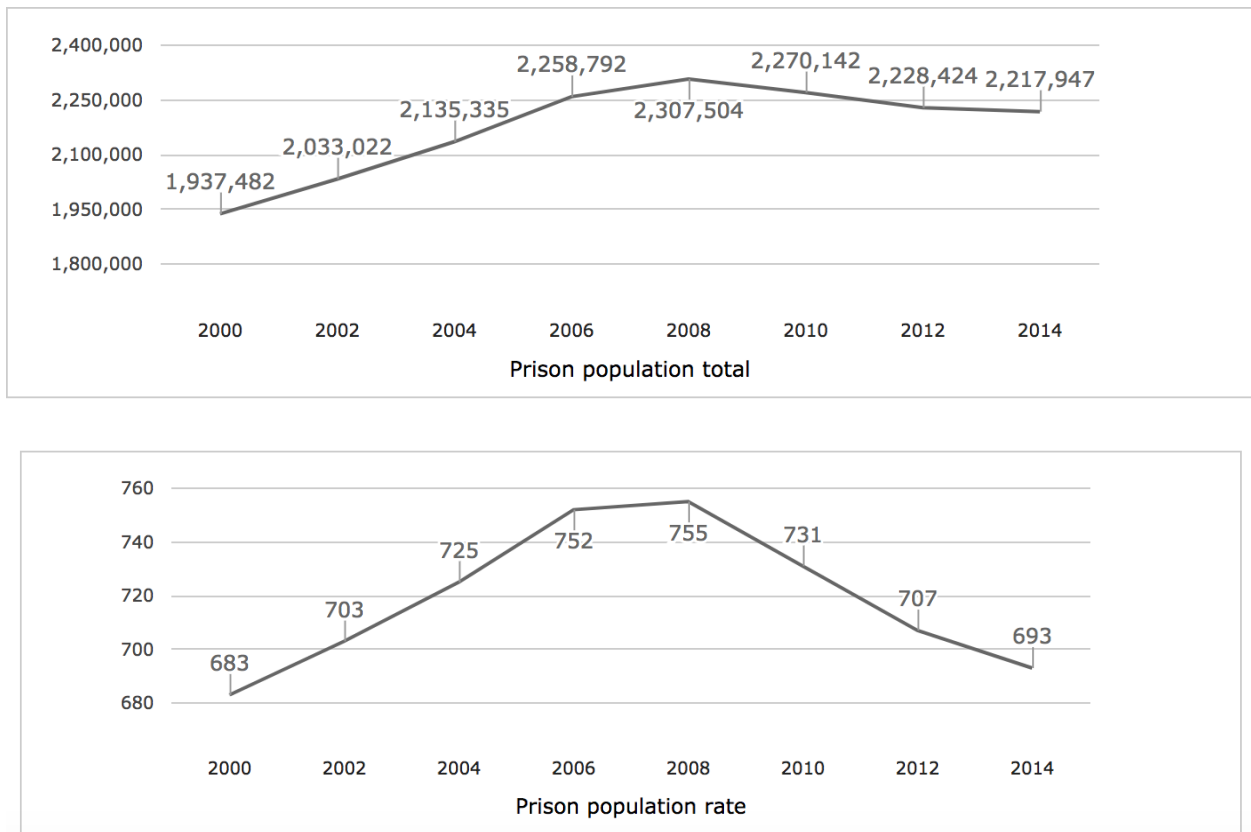
Source: Ceoworks. (2018). Background information. Retrieved from <https://ceoworks.org>.

Figure 2. Number of Inmates Incarcerated in the United States, 2000-2013



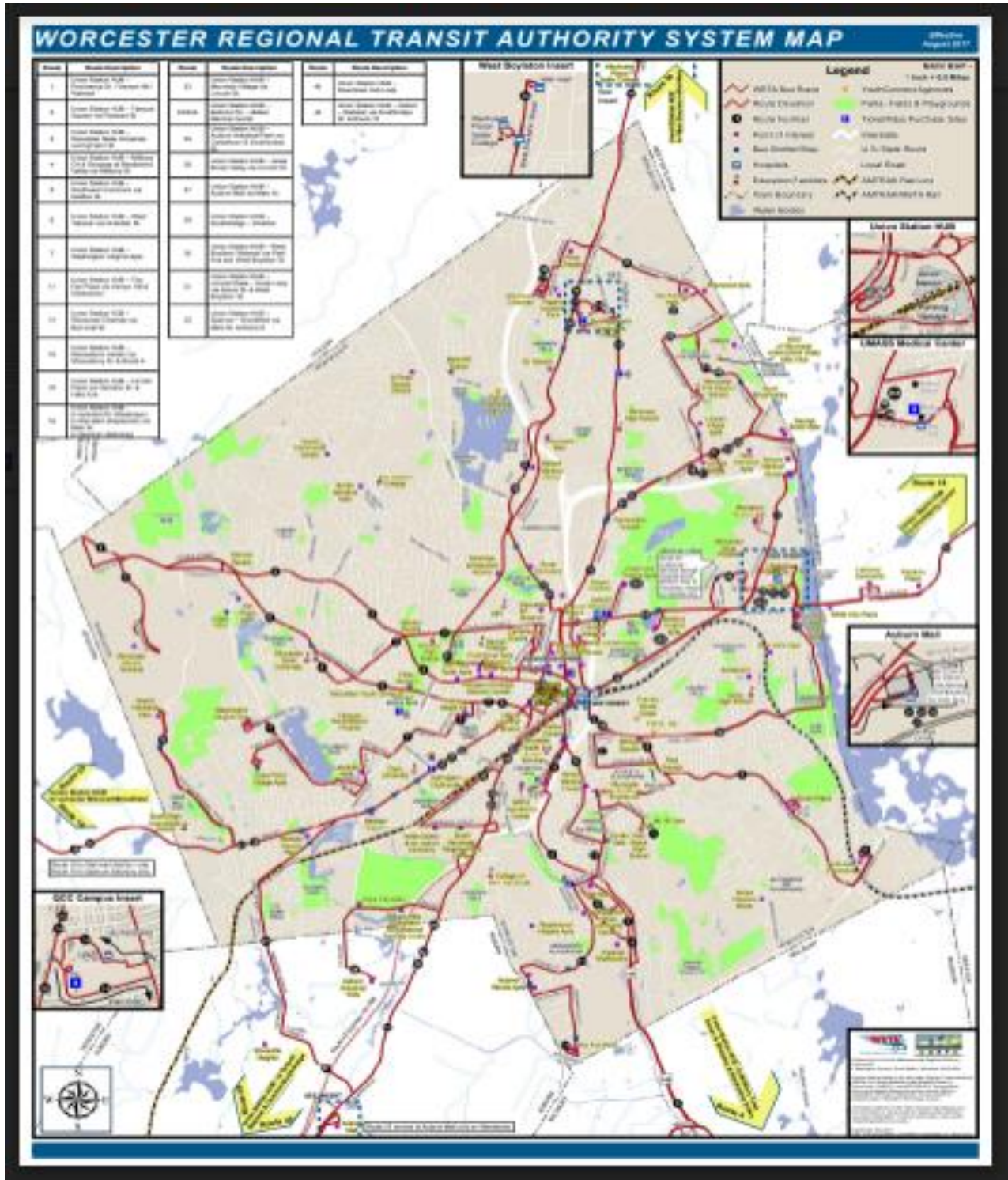
Source: The prison population counts were taken from U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Prisoners in 2011* and *Prisoners in 2013*. The jail population counts were taken from U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Jail Inmates and Midyear 2013—Statistical Tables*.

Figure 3. Prison Population Total versus Prison Population Rate



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2014). *Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/bookstore/state-legislatures-magazine/health-care-in-and-out-of-prisons.aspx>.

Figure 4. Worcester Regional Transit Authority System Map



Source: Worcester Regional Transit Authority. (2018). Transit authority system map. Retrieved from <http://www.therta.com/wp-content/themes/therta/system-map-new.htm>.

Appendices

Appendix A. Capstone Project Charter



School of Professional Studies

Project Charter for EPOCA House Implementation Strategy

Courtney Thomas, Mingjun Xie, Shuxiao Teng, Yaffa Fain

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The Rationale for a Project Charter

The project charter is a document that officially starts a project or a phase. It formally authorizes the existence of the project and provides a reference source for the future. The charter gives a direction and a sense of purpose to the management from start to end.

A project charter names the project manager and defines the authority of the project manager. It gives the project manager the authority to utilize organizational

resources to accomplish the project objectives. It must explain the business need that lead to the project being taken up. It also captures high level planning information (scope, deliverables, assumptions, etc.) about the project. The specifics of the project activities are developed later.

This document provides an outline with explanation of the composition of the various components of a project charter. It is designed to provide the project team with a road map for the project deliverables.

Glossary of Terms in a Project Charter

This glossary defines key terms used in this document. Although some of the terms will have slightly different definitions outside of this project, this glossary defines the meaning within this initiative.

Assumption – An item taken to be factual even though that fact has not been confirmed. Wherever possible the accuracy of assumptions is validated during the project

Constraint – An unchangeable condition that impacts the project.

Contingency – An activity, budget or time period that is held in reserve in order to minimise the impact that a risk has on the project if that risk is realised

EPOCA- Ex Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement

Major Stakeholder – One of the key interested parties and decision makers in the project.

Mitigation – An activity that is undertaken to minimise the impact and /or the likelihood of occurrence of an adverse risk or to maximise the impact and /or the likelihood of occurrence of a positive risk

Project Charter – This document. The document that authorises the project and sets out the framework for what is to be done and how it is to be managed.

Project Manager – The person responsible for the management of the execution of all work items.

Required End State – The definition of what constitutes a completed project.

Risk – An uncertainty that may impact the project in either a positive or negative manner if it occurs.

Scope – The sum of the changes to be made in order to achieve the Required End State.

Steering Committee – The group of people responsible for making major decisions on the project.

Project Overview

1.1 Introduction

Ex-Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement (EPOCA) is an advocacy organization dedicated to fighting for the rights and opportunities of the ex-prison population in Worcester, Massachusetts. EPOCA House is a recent initiative within EPOCA that works to create temporary housing for adult men and women re-entering the community. The EPOCA House initiative encompasses the vocational, educational, wellbeing and other holistic needs of the ex-prisoner population. This Capstone project will focus on creating a research-based strategy to effectively implement the EPOCA House programming and resources. This will include researching the literature on successful reentry programs and models, background on mass incarceration in Worcester, discussion with local practitioners and experts, and recommendations on how EPOCA House can implement the findings.

Major Stakeholders

- Kevin Lynch: Executive Director of EPOCA
- Yoshada K: Community Outreach Coordinator of EPOCA
- EPOCA Staff and Volunteers
- Worcester Ex-Prisoner Population and their Families
- Clark University School of Professional Studies
- Stephanie Medden: Professor and Capstone Adviser

1.2 Document Purpose

This project will investigate a research-based strategy to implement programs for EPOCA House. We will examine the literature on existing models to determine best practices for enacting a reentry program. Through a content analysis we will develop evidence for four program areas: wellness, vocational training, environmental sustainability, and educational planning. Next, we will talk with local practitioners and experts on salient issues regarding criminal justice reform. Finally based on the data, the Capstone Team will provide a list of recommendations for the organization to go about implementing programs for EPOCA House. All of these items will be given to EPOCA in a binder and presentation. They can use these materials as they continue in the planning stages for EPOCA House.

2 Project End State and Scope

2.1 Required End State

The major requirement for the project end is the Capstone Presentation on April 27th and Capstone report due on the same date. The project will be completed when the Capstone Team has finished all of the deliverables (literature review, interviews, data analysis, funding sources, and recommendations) and they are presented both written and orally to the Executive Director (Kevin Lynch) and Community Outreach Coordinator (Yoshada K) of EPOCA. The organization will be provided with a binder containing a detailed implementation strategy for moving forward with EPOCA House.

2.2 Project Scope

Work Area	In Scope	Out of Scope
Needs Assessment	We will meet with EPOCA leadership to determine organizational needs and resources.	We will not meet with outside nonprofit organizations or NGOs in Worcester.
Literature Review and Best Practice Examination	We will analyze existing EPOCA resources, national best practices in comparable programs, and EPOCA clientele responses.	We will not evaluate material unrelated to the subject of the ex-prisoner population.
Implementation Strategy Report	We will produce a Capstone Report and Presentation outlining our program findings and recommendations for implementing EPOCA House.	We will not produce a steering committee plan, long-term sustainability plan, or financial report.
Communication	We will communicate directly with our teammates, Capstone Adviser, and EPOCA administration.	We will not communicate directly with EPOCA board members, EPOCA House steering committee members, or EPOCA volunteers.

2.3 Change Management

In the case of changes to the charter and overall project, the change management process is as follows:

- Our team will provide an overview of the requested change at our weekly meetings.

- We will provide an explanation of the reason for the request.
- We will consult Project Advisor Stephanie Madden to discuss the feasibility of the proposed change.
- We will Discuss the effects/impacts of the change(s) with the capstone team, Yoshada K, Kevin Lynch.
- As a result of the change, we will Include a recommendation to Yoshada and Kevin Lynch.

No change will be executed unless approved by the major stakeholders.

3 Assumptions

- The project will focus on and generate a research based strategy to successfully promote and implement the EPOCA house programming.
- The research will incorporate focus group or interview data to obtain useful resources and evidence.
- The group will remain in contact with the project client, EPOCA leadership, to make sure the project is on the right progress track.
- Our group will explore possible funding opportunities to implement the research and recommendations.
- We will provide several recommendations for the EPOCA institution to implement EPOCA house.
- The project will be accomplished within the 12 weeks time period of the assignment deadlines.

4 Constraints

There are several limitations to consider:

- Cost, lack of funding, and grants
- Time limitations during the three months
- Available educational, professional, and data resources
- Potential Challenges with research methodology
- Communication, miscommunication, and remaining in contact with project team members, EPOCA staff, and Clark faculty
- Scheduling complications

5 Risks

This project raises several ethical, professional, and operational risks as well as multiple positive risk outcomes.

Negative Risks:

- Unanticipated Findings: Our group may discover undesirable or unexpected costs, issues, or other challenges associated with developing the EPOCA House programs.

- Time Constraints: Our Project Deadline for the completed presentation and research paper is April 27th, 2018. It will likely be infeasible for EPOCA to implement our recommendations prior to or immediately after the completion of this project.
- Ethical Challenges: The topic of ex-prisoner resources and needs is sensitive and we are not experts in the field.
- Participant Issues: Participants in our focus groups and interviews may encounter personal or emotional responses to partaking in our study.
- Personal Consequences: Our group could fail to deliver on the Capstone requirements; subsequently, we will not complete our respective degree programs.

Positive Risks:

- Feasible Recommendations: Our group may offer effective, appropriate, and meaningful solutions for EPOCA House programming needs.
- Effective Implementation: Our recommendations may be implemented effectively onsite and over the course of the EPOCA House inauguration.
- EPOCA Staff and Volunteers Support: EPOCA members may gain support and creative input from our team partnership.
- EPOCA Clientele Opportunities: This research may benefit EPOCA clients in terms of their personal and professional success.
- Personal Benefits: Our group may successfully complete the Capstone requirements of our respective degree programs.

6 Communication Strategy

The primary communication between the Capstone team and EPOCA will be done through electronic mail and telephone between the project lead, Courtney Thomas, with the Community Outreach Coordinator Yoshada K. As this project progresses any physical meetings will be scheduled with EPOCA as required. All team members will be present at these meetings according to availability. Detailed notes will be taken and shared with the entire team for discussion.

We will meet and discuss the project during weekly meetings. The team meetings will take place on Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 in School of Professional Studies Conference Room. In the situation that a team member is unable to attend the meeting, it is the

responsibility of said member to look over the meeting minutes. The Project lead is also responsible to ensure that all team members are aware of the tasks and deadlines for the week. This will be done through reminders on the Team's facebook group message.

Project Structure

Date	Deliverables
02/09/2018	Draft of Project Charter
02/16/2018	Institutional Review Board Paperwork
02/28/2018	February Monthly Status Report
03/31/2018	Literature Review Draft Complete
03/31/2018	March Monthly Status Report
04/14/2018	Data Analysis and Recommendations
04/27/2018	Final Presentation
04/27/2018	Final Paper
04/30/2018	April Monthly Status Report

7 Stakeholder Commitments

7.1 Stakeholder Commitments

Major Stakeholders

- **Kevin Lynch**, Executive Director of EPOCA: Provide effective data and information on EPOCA's history, statistical findings, etc.
- **Yoshada K**, Community Outreach Coordinator of EPOCA: Provide general EPOCA information and background. Serve as a point of contact with the capstone team.
- **EPOCA Staff and Volunteers**: Provide evidence for four program areas: wellness, vocational training , environmental sustainability, and educational planning.
- **Stephanie Medden, Professor and Capstone Adviser**: Assist and guide capstone team throughout the course of the project.
- **Worcester Ex-Prisoner Population**: Will be future stakeholder in EPOCA House and are impacted by these findings.
- **The Clark University School of Professional Studies**: Provides a forum for the capstone team to present project findings.

8 Roles & Responsibilities/RASCI Chart

The chart below identifies the roles that will be played by the main groups on this project. As the project structure becomes clearer, this chart will be updated to reflect individuals rather than generic roles, and will also identify any exceptions for specific work areas. Additionally, a greater level of detail will be provided through the addition of additional tasks.

There are five different functions in the RASCI chart:

Responsible – The role(s) that is expected to complete the work (R)

Accountable – The role that is expected to ensure that the work is completed (escalation point) (A)

Sign-Off – The role(s) that is expected to approve the work Pr

Consulted – The role(s) that is consulted on/contributes to the completion of the work

Informed – The role(s) that receives the output of the work and/or receives status reports on the progress of the work

Assignment	Roles / Responsibilities			
	Courtney	Mingjun	Shuxiao	Yaffa
Client Overview Report	S	S	R	S
Project charter including end state and scope	R	R	R	R
Institutional Review Board Proposal	R	R	R	R
CITI Training	R	R	R	R
Project management and control	R	A	A	A
Project communication	R	I	I	I
Project planning	R	R	R	R
Resource allocation	R	R	R	R
Problem identification and analysis	R	R	R	R
Problem resolution	R	R	R	R
Project Minutes	RI	I	I	R

9 Measures of Success

Project Performance Dimensions by Project Success Factor	
Project Outcomes	Measure of Success
Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting schedule expectations ● Finishing the project within 12 weeks ● Meeting technical specifications
Customer Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EPOCA is able to use deliverables in their upcoming steering committees ● Recommendations serve influential in further planning for EPOCA house.
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Receive IRB Approval before March 1st ● Find sufficient models and programs for literature review ● Advice from industry professionals and scholarly articles ● Creating recommendations for implementation based on four program areas
Project Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Team members experience personal improvement ● Highly satisfied and motivated team ● Team highly loyal and responsible to project ● Team members understand more on team work spirit ● Team successfully meet clients requirement and create a list of recommendations for the organization to go about implementing programs for EPOCA House

10 Stakeholder Sign-off

To ensure that project charter is aligned with the project sponsor and all stakeholders, their signature is required. This gives authority to the project manager to execute the project through the management of the schedule, budget and resource allocation.

Capstone Adviser

EPOCA Point of Contact

Appendix B. Project Risk Assessment

This project raises several ethical, professional, and operational risks as well as multiple positive risk outcomes.

Negative Risks:

- Unanticipated Findings: Our group may discover undesirable or unexpected costs, issues, or other challenges associated with developing the EPOCA House programs.
- Time Constraints: Our Project Deadline for the completed presentation and research paper is April 27th, 2018. It will likely be infeasible for EPOCA to implement our recommendations prior to or immediately after the completion of this project.
- Ethical Challenges: The topic of ex-prisoner resources and needs is sensitive and we are not experts in the field.
- Participant Issues: Participants in our focus groups and interviews may encounter personal or emotional responses to partaking in our study.
- Personal Consequences: Our group could fail to deliver on the Capstone requirements; subsequently, we will not complete our respective degree programs.

Positive Risks:

- Feasible Recommendations: Our group may offer effective, appropriate, and meaningful solutions for EPOCA House programming needs.
- Effective Implementation: Our recommendations may be implemented effectively onsite and over the course of the EPOCA House inauguration.
- EPOCA Staff and Volunteers Support: EPOCA members may gain support and creative input from our team partnership.
- EPOCA Clientele Opportunities: This research may benefit EPOCA clients in terms of their personal and professional success.
- Personal Benefits: Our group may successfully complete the Capstone requirements of our respective degree programs.

Appendix C. Proposed Interview Question Guide

Questions for Interview and/or Focus Group Participants

Background

1. Are you originally from Worcester? How long have you been living in Worcester?
2. How long were you incarcerated? When were you released?
3. Were you offered resources upon leaving jail (e.g. clothing, transportation, food, etc.)? If so, what services were you offered?
4. When you first left jail, what were your immediate needs?

Housing Related Challenges

5. Have you experienced homelessness after being incarcerated?
6. Are you currently homeless (e.g. Street homeless, shelter homeless, halfway house homeless)?

Services and Resources

7. What resources/services (if any) were offered to you before you left jail?
 - a) mental health
 - b)housing
 - c) food stamps
8. What services do you have access to currently? Where are these services located? Would you consider these services accessible to you?
9. How long did it take for you to receive these services?
10. Are you currently looking for any additional services/resources? What kind?

Job and Vocational Training Skills

11. What vocational or job training skills would be helpful to you?
12. In a transitional living center for ex-prisoners, what health services would you need? (E.g. drug treatment, mental health, etc.)

Appendix D. Local Practitioner Interview Script

Questions for Local Practitioners and Industry Specialists

1. From your experience, what are the salient issues affecting the worcester ex-prisoner population?

O'Brien: Worcester needs a better strategy to get people jobs and economic opportunities. Ex-prisoners need a place to live, jobs, education, and GED opportunities. There are barriers for Ex-prisoners getting a job and there is miscommunication in getting people access to resources. Another issue is funding programming.

Yoshada: Recidivism, the revolving door due to lack of funding, lack of housing, and employment are major issues. There are not enough programs that aid with emergency needs when ex-prisoner get out of prisoners. The AISS, the Sheriff department, has not been living up to their end of the deal.

Kevin: Access to Housing, Employment, jobs , Healthcare--- including mental health, substance abuse.

2. Do you know of programs in place or resources available to ex-prisoners?

O'Brien: There is the New Leaf program out of Workforce Central, Dismas House for small housing needs, and EPOCA for advocacy. Dismas House leader, David Man could be a resource to discuss programming with and Jeffrey Turegeon from the Central MA Workforce Investment Board might be another person to guide employment discussions.

Yoshada: Just us, and the AISS (supposedly), we're the only ones that specialize in after-care or wrap around services when the ex-prisoners come home from prison.

Kevin: There are non-profits and other organizations but they are CORI friendly, but not really felony friendly. Massachusetts has alot of rehabilitation centers. "But programs are really restrictive...." "Others don't qualify because of their sentence structure". For example the advocates (program) has a very small amount of people, it only helps a very very small population. Overall, "The need is not met..." "The grants run their course" "AISS Program is a complete failure." "They don't have the funding to help."

3. In your opinion, what/if any services are lacking for this population?

O'Brien: Ex-prisoners need opportunity for training, work, and educational access.

Yoshada: A gamete of things. Emergency services when ex-prisoners come out. A place to go. The proper ID, most people do not want to go to Queen Street because it's a wet shelter. Many people need clothing. The opioid addiction ties into this because they don't have access to housing, they end up in contact with bad influences. Ex-prisoners need opportunities to concentrate on finding a job, without food or housing, they can't concentrate.

Kevin: Skill training--- (vocational training) – which would help with employment, house of healing and HVP—cognitive behavioral programs. They are much needed, need a strong id

program. Housing services are necessary as well. You need Massachusetts residency to get housing, and if you are in House of Corrections it doesn't count.. because it is in West Bolyston.” There is no other programing for them... (they have to go to Boston) , couch surf, and a lot of people will go to Boston , “Methodone Mile”—is a place people frequent. For Hector Reyes, you cant come off the street must be coming from another program.” Dismiss House is very successful program, and lots of success stories, and they take people from prison. SMOC--has lots of their houses are wet shelters, and there is drug use , and drug dealing so not effective in keeping people clean. These programs , for example Everyday Miracles, (EDM) try and try and people just end up in the streets.”

4. What effective solutions can be put in place to help ex-prisoners?

O'Brien: EPOCA can partner with anchor institutions, or major groups within the city who have a stake in the community, to leverage employment opportunities. These anchor institutions want to take care of the community so there are not adverse effects on their organizations. Also, anchor institutions like universities often are progressive thinking, and based in liberal and moral traditions which serve as a framework for their organizational activities. Thus, Holy Cross and Clark University might be driven to participate in helping EPOCA make opportunities for ex-prisoners. Institutions in the city need to commit to training, hiring, and strategically aiding the ex-prisoner population. There must be incentive to reincorporate ex-prisoners within Worcester society.

Yoshada: The government needs to come off the money. They need to give it to programs that will be upfront to assist ex-prisoners when they come out. There needs to be a prison employee, working a month before ex-prisoners exit jail, to help set ex-prisoners set up resources. Ex-cons need TAMP assistance, beyond food stamps. Without housing or jobs, ex-prisoners cannot pay for anything, eat properly, and maintain their mental stability. The ex-cons need wraparound services before and after they get out of jail. EPOCA House cannot go into the jails right now because of CORI issues, but ideally EPOCA House will be able to assess candidates in jail. We need to cut down the window of people roaming from jail to the streets because there are not follow-up services. We need services and money available to provide money to ex-prisoners. In Springfield, the AIIS program provides ex-prisoners with \$500. They have resources for mental health, housing, and other offerings. I believe the Springfield and Worcester branches should collaborate. We keep straining other organizations and duplicating services because there are not specialized program. Then there is not anything left for the next ex-prisoner.

Kevin: We need support for the criminal justice reform, its great to get people out of jail earlier, but then what. We need to change the CORI laws, and get people off probation and they are going to be in a tough spot. The waiting list is where we lose a lot of people for re-offending” “And they are left to fend for themselves... and often don't have the skills and toolbox to stay out of jail. We need stronger support networkers. The city says they want to help, but we need someone to “walk the talk” We have a lot of wonderful people, coordinated by Richie Gonzales, and he does the best he can--with Hotel Grace, at St. Johns (doesn't ask for id) and they feed the

homeless.” The barrier in Worcester is politics, gentrification, the new developments do not really support the need. Sometimes there is funding. We need the money and then we need to get everything settled with the city. They are pushing around the poor people, not really helping people. They are cutting funding for housing. Gentrification, they don’t want anymore half-way houses. The bed costs, 43,000 we could house ex-offenders for much cheaper.

Supplemental Questions

Does EPOCA have a cooperative relationship with other organizations?

Yoshada: MOA or MOI with other organizations about collaboration and sharing services. EPOCA opted not to do that. I do make connections with other organizations, WCAC, Worcester Labor Coalition, Catholic Charities, and other groups to connect people with services and to get input. This is how they get to know what we offer. Transportation is an issue, I have connection with different TEMP agencies that will take ex-offenders, but they do not have transportation. The WRTA schedule is very few and far between, it’s scarce.

How many languages would you provide?

Yoshada: Predominantly English and Spanish. Asian communities tend to go to their own community. Some of the Africans use the services but they speak strong English. If someone should come in we will try to accommodate them.

After employers check CORI do they have problems with getting fired?

Yoshada: Usually after acquiring a job, the hiring agent will take 3-6 months to do the CORI check. The business owners, like landlords, are afraid of charges. They are afraid they will be accountable if a crime is committed on their property or in their neighborhood. How do you relieve these agents of this fear? Laws are going into place to make sure these agents are not liable, but the fear remains. It is not even so much about discrimination, the fear is a baseline.

Appendix E. EPOCA House Charter

EPOCA HOUSE INC.

E.P.O.C.A House Inc. is a dream of changing lives one by one for a better community and future for Worcester. EPOCA House Inc. will continue to fight for ex-offenders by lobbying to make changes in the judicial system and helping to make a difference in the work force of Massachusetts for ex-offenders.

In addition EPOCA will begin to grow and expand services with in Worcester Communities as well as neighboring towns by opening and presenting EPOCA House Inc. The dream of this exciting extension to EPOCA Inc. will attempt to provide re-entry services to ex-offenders coming home from jails and prisons in and around Worcester area, as well as services the homeless persons of Worcester County.

Services that are sorely needed in the community will be made available to the homeless and the ex-offender's population who are displaced and disenfranchised. Services proposed include emergency and transitional housing, job training programs, case management services, job and educational placement, food pantry, soup kitchen, Hi-Set, youth services, prevention outreach and counseling, HIV testing, HIV pre and post counseling, referrals, entitlement assistance, and permanent housing assistance and placement.

As a part of Community Development EPOCA House Inc. proposes to take building that has become an eye sore in the community. This will be a part of the Worcester Beautification Program.

Breakdown of Program

1. Emergency and Transitional Housing /28 rooms in total/14 women & 14 men
 - a. Clean and sober rooms
 - b. Four floors/ Separation of Women and Men from ages 17 and up.
 - c. Drug and alcohol testing on intake and random
 - d. Community cooking facility on each floor
 - e. Community bathrooms on each floor w/showers
 - f. Three participants per room
 - g. Sign in and Out required
 - h. Random Security checks
 - i. Program participation required to maintain residence
2. Job Training Programs
 - a. TABE Test
 - b. HI-SETT/GED Classes
 - c. Building and Custodial Maintenance
 - d. Culinary Arts/Serve Safe Certification and state number
 - e. HVAC/Entry Electrical and Plumbing
 - f. Resume writing /Mock Interviewing
 - g. Basic Computer Skills

- h. Floor Maintenance/Equipment Training
 - i. Horticulture
 - j. Carpentry
3. Case Management Service/Three Teams for the participants to utilize for day to day living as well as emergency assistance based on initial intake and walk-in appointments
- a. HIV Testing in-house referral
 - b. Job Training Referral
 - c. Entitlement assistance (Social Security, TANF, Food Stamp Application, etc.)
 - d. Fuel Assistance Referrals
 - e. National Grid Program Referrals
 - f. Mental Health Assessment and Referral
 - g. Drug Counseling/ Detox Referrals
 - h. Housing Specialist Referrals
 - i. Food pantry Referrals
 - j. Furniture Referral/Vouchers
 - k. Lifestyle Counseling (Healthy Living coaching) /Coaching

Appendix F. EPOCA House Bylaws

BYLAWS

OF

EPOCA HOUSE INC.

1 NAME

1.1 THE NAME OF THE CORPORATION SHALL BE “EPOCA HOUSE INC.” (Under the umbrella of EPOCA INC. the “Corporation”).

2 MISSION

2.1 We are ex-prisoners and felons, along with allies, friends, and family, coming together to create resources and opportunities for those who have paid their debt to society via Transitional Housing, Programing, Education and Job placement for each participant that works hard to achieve their goals and completes the program within 18-24 months. We shall provide these participants with the tools and means to live a healthy and sober lifestyle.

3 ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION

3.1 These By-Laws, the powers of the corporation an of its directors, and all matters concerning the conduct and regulations of the business and affairs of the corporation shall be subject to such provisions in regard thereto, if any, as are set forth in the ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION as from time to time in effect.

4 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

4.1 Participants are expected to adhere to weekly or bi-weekly, monthly or bi-monthly toxicology screenings.

4.2 Participants are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.

4.3 Participants are only allowed to leave the house for the first two (2) months if being escorted by an outreach worker or with participants who is on the 3rd or 4th success level as outlined by participant handbook. These Out Side Passes will only be granted for appointments to out sourced referrals (Doctors & Hospitals, Mental Health, etc.)

- 4.4 Participants are expected to adhere to daily curfew, Sunday to Thursday in house and signed in at 9:30 pm unless he or she has proper documentation or he or she's employment hours are past curfew and the participant has letter of proof from employer. Friday and Saturday curfew should be 11:15 pm unless work hours supersede curfew time (must have supporting documentation of work hours, hospital visits, etc.).
- 4.5 Participants must attend all in-house appointments and programming daily. Submitting proper documentation of outside appointments to Case Management Team.
- 4.6 Participants are required to adhere to random Toxicology Screening Tests. Toxicology Screening Testing schedule is as follows: First Eight(8) Months tested twice a week, Ninth month evaluation of performances will determine if participant will stay on twice a week testing or move on to SUCCESS LEVEL 1 for months 9-12 of once (1) a week, SUCCESS LEVEL 2 for months 13,14,15, & 16 will require testing Twice (2) a month, SUCCESS LEVEL3 will be the last months before graduation and the participant will be tested once (1) a month. If the participants' enrollment is extended to twenty-four (24) months Toxicology testing will be regulated on a case by case basis according to the participants' duration of stay in the program and toxicology history.
- 4.7 Participants' are required to attend a one (1) day orientation session. Participants' are required to sign Hand Book, Release Forms, House Rules and Regulations, etc.
- 4.8 Participants' are required to attend and participate in bi-weekly house meetings to present suggestions or grievances.
- 4.9 Participants are encouraged to stay crime free, but required to report any incident of police contact for review by Director and Case Management. Participants who have prior court cases are required to make all court dates and or probation appointments and should sign consent forms with the case management team to speak with and update if need be with probation or parole officers. Updates from the court case should also be given either verbally or with paperwork pertaining to next court dates of disposition and outcome of case.
- 4.10 Participants' who suffer from any type of "ADDICTION" must seek out and sign up for support meetings and Mental Health support that will accommodate their specific needs and assist the participant in their goals and efforts to a healthy clean and sober lifestyle.
- 4.11 At the Director and Case Management teams discretion a Participant may be brought up on allegations of misconduct and non-compliance of facility rules and regulations. Examples of Misconduct and/or Program Exclusion/Termination determination include but are not limited to three (3) or more missed curfews without proper documentation, three (3) dirty

toxicology screenings (which can result in termination), one (1) physical altercation or three (3) or more verbal altercations on premises of facility, verbal or physical threats to staff or other participants can result in immediate termination, stealing from another participant or staff can also result in immediate termination, sexual harassment or abuse of participants and staff (can result in immediate termination), black mail or coercion (can result in immediate termination), etc.

- 4.12 Participants who have small infractions may be given work assignments or given a Success Level (3) three participants' work assignment as a deterrence, loose weekend curfew, loose smoking privileges, writing assignments, etc. This is also governed by the Director and the Case Management Team. If on Success Level (1) one the participant maybe taken back to the entry level, Success Level (2) two will be pushed back to Level (1) one, etc.

Appendix G. Final Presentation Slides

EPOCA HOUSE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

April 27th, 2018



**CLARK
UNIVERSITY**

Courtney Thomas, Mingjun Xie, Shuxiao Teng, Yaffa Fain

Overview

- EPOCA Background
- Problem Statement
- Background & Historical Context
- Methodology
- Review of the Literature
 - Education
 - Vocational
 - Wellness
 - Sustainability
- Results & Findings
- Reflection
- Recommendations





Background on EPOCA

Ex Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement (EPOCA)

Mission: "Working together to create resources and opportunities for those who have paid their debt to society"

Founded in 2004 by ex-prisoners

Major Wins:

- Worcester Fair CORI Practices
- F.A.C.E.S.



Client Testimonial



"I was arrested at 16 years old. I was remanded to Department of Youth Services at the age of 21. I was then released to a sober house, and at the time had no history of drug use. I was placed there for a week to wait for my interstate placement to be approved to go live with my father, in NH. It did not get approved so I was stuck in Worcester with no help. Unable to find employment because of my CORI and kicked out of the sober house, I was fortunate enough to receive assistance from WK Inc. with a room for five months before I aged out of the program and moved to Lawrence with family. I was there a couple of months before I got arrested for false allegations and did 10 months pretrial in Essex County jail until the case was processed. I was then released and moved in with an acquaintance back in Worcester. Right now, I am still struggling to obtain employment and am unable to receive any sort of help or assistance with housing. Since my release I have been constantly struggling to obtain employment and housing. I think if there was something like EPOCA House in place and accessible to me at the time I would be in a better space at this point."

-EPOCA Client



Client Testimonial



“I was arrested on August 11 2015. I did six months, upon release I was not offered any services, where to go for housing, where to go get food. I struggled to get a job because of my new CORI. I could not obtain employment. I feel that if EPOCA House was established at that time; I would not have been homeless and felt helpless. It could even helped me succeed with my drug addiction. I’m 3 years clean.”

-EPOCA Client



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Problem Statement: The Birth of the EPOCA HOUSE Project

- Massachusetts passed a criminal justice reform bill that will decrease incarceration rates throughout the state
- Worcester has few adequate resources for ex-offenders
- EPOCA House is a transitional facility that will provide reentry services and temporary housing to ex offenders and homeless people in and around the Worcester area.
- **Research Question: What best practices are employed for an effective and sustainable reentry program?**



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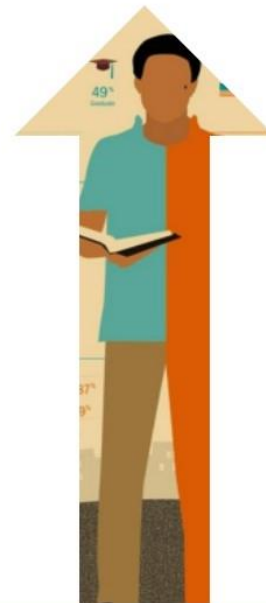


Part 1: Background Research on Mass Incarceration & the Worcester Prison Population



Background on Mass Incarceration

- US has 5% of population and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the World's prison population
- 1980s shift increase in mass incarceration on national and local scale
 - Social & political unrest
 - Economics & poverty
- Consequences
 - Hinder economic development
 - Additional crime
 - Disruption of family life





Research on Worcester Prison Population

- **1 out of every 25 men in Worcester served at the House of Corrections from 2009-2015**
 - \$24 million to incarcerate Worcester County
 - \$43,553 per inmate
 - 44% of prison population re-offends
- **Challenges to Reentry**
 - Limited access to employment, education, mental health, housing, and substance abuse
 - Systematic exclusion
 - Unrealistic expectations

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Part 2: Design and Methodology



Design and Methodology



Plan to conduct a focus group of 10 to 15 EPOCA clients

- Time constraints

Conduct secondary data analysis

Four key areas:

- Education
- Vocational training
- Wellness
- Sustainability

12 best practice models

Informal interview with local expert practitioners

- Kevin Lynch, EPOCA Executive Director
- Yoshada Kwaning, EPOCA Community Outreach Coordinator
- Joseph O'Brien, Former Worcester Mayor and City Councilor, Current Clark Professor

Data Analysis



Clark University Resources

- JStor, Lexisnexis, Digital Commons databases
- Clark University library reference professionals

Mass Media

- Scholarly journal articles, newspaper resources, and statistical information from the Worcester House of Corrections

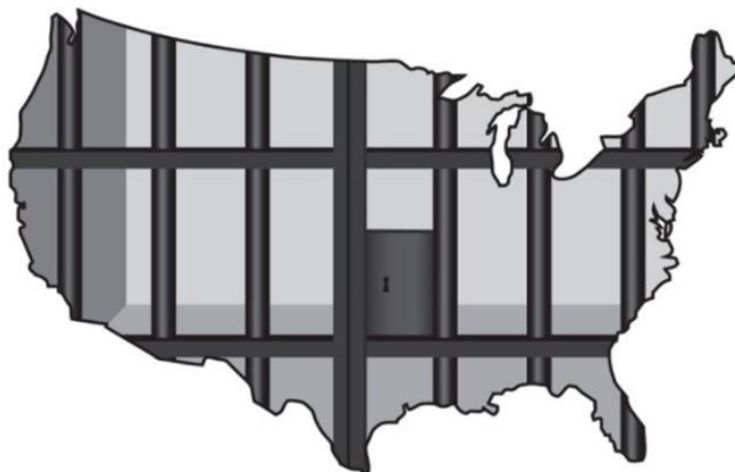
EPOCA

- Background information, existing programming, and statistics

Clark University faculty & EPOCA adviser

- Invaluable resource throughout our Capstone preparation and research process

Part 3: Literature Review and Trends in the Industry



Educational Programming



Ex-prisoners **NEED** educational support

- 41% of inmates are below High School level education

Educational programming **reduces** recidivism

- Recidivism rate for college-level educated ex-prisoners = approx 0%

Education **enables** vocational and societal success

- “Cost effective,” \$1 public education funding = \$4-5 return on investment

Educational Best Practice Models



Resilience Education

Partners university staff and student volunteers to teach college level courses to ex-prisoners



Project 180

Provides traditional education, career counseling, and unique creative classes

Fortune Society

Hosts financial literacy workshops on banking, loans, scams, and consumer protection

These programs offer:

- Community partnership
- GED and college courses
- Financial and computer literacy classes
- Creative electives



Vocational Training



Ex-prisoners NEED vocational training

- Ex-offenders frequently lack vocational skills and a steady history of employment

Employment reduces recidivism

- Ex-prisoners with jobs have a lower rate of recidivism and a greater length of time between re-incarcerations

Employers demand skilled workers

- “Skills to get the job done” is the primary concern for employers



Vocational Best Practice Models



The Center of Employment Opportunity (CEO)

- Offers comprehensive employment services for ex-prisoners
- Four Steps: life skill education, short-term transitional employment, time job placement, and post-placement services



EMERGE's Community Offender Re-Entry Experience (C.O.R.E.)

- Provides immediate paid, part-time jobs in real workplace situations
- Provides mandatory program services



RecycleForce

- Uses the revenue generated from recycling business to support vocational training and job placement for ex-prisoners
- Partners with local industries committed to hiring ex-prisoners



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Wellness Programming



It is **NOT** easy to gain health treatment during incarceration

- Copayment Policy
- Limited Support from Family(Poverty)
- NO Medicaid

Health issues linked with recidivism rate

- Almost 76% of people who have been incarcerated are locked up again within five years because of health issues

Wellness programs helps the social reintegration for ex-inmates

- Improve Ex-prisoners' Health Conditions
- Reduce Rearrest Rates

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Top Wellness Models

Moving Ahead Program (MAP)-St. Francis House

- A 14 week life-skills training program
- Medical Clinic operated on-site by Boston Health Care which has a expert team
- Cooperation with Universities
- HIV testing Once a Week
- Staff Communication Once a Week



Healthy Measures program-Roots Clinic

- Benefits enrollment, health education
- Individualized Plans for Gaining "Whole Health"



Offender Reentry Program (ORP)-Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration(SAMHSA)

- Long-term substance use disorder (SUD) treatment program
- Ensures adult prisoners/ex-prisoners have completely recovered and integrated with their families



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Sustainability Initiatives

Ex-Prisoners are entitled to environmental justice

- Ex-prisoners flourish physically and mentally through sustainability initiatives

Marginalized ex-prisoner communities deserve access to the benefits of fresh food, animal therapy, and clean environments

Greening the prison industrial complex is not just about \$

- Environmental sustainability links to health benefits, cost, environmental footprint



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Sustainability Models

Dismas House

Transitional living facility with farm operation offering woodwork, food cultivation, management, and labor skills



These programs offer:

- Vocational skills
- Healthy options
- Environmental benefit
- General wellness
- Sustainability initiatives

Planting Justice

Nonprofit fighting social inequity, hunger, and crime through community gardens which teach ex-prisoners nutrition, food production, and landscaping

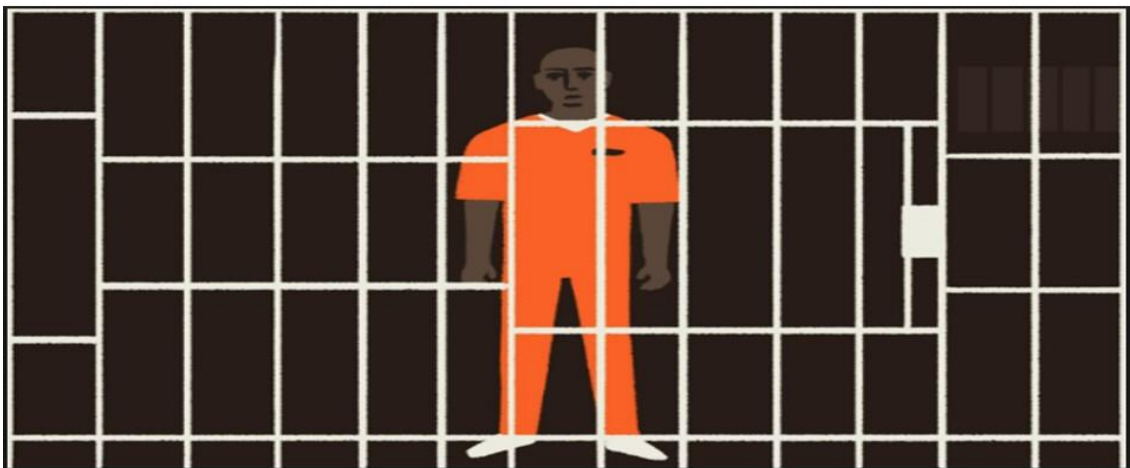


Sustainability in Prison Project

Promotes environmental projects including conservation, beekeeping, community gardening, and LEED certification



Part 4: Results and Findings





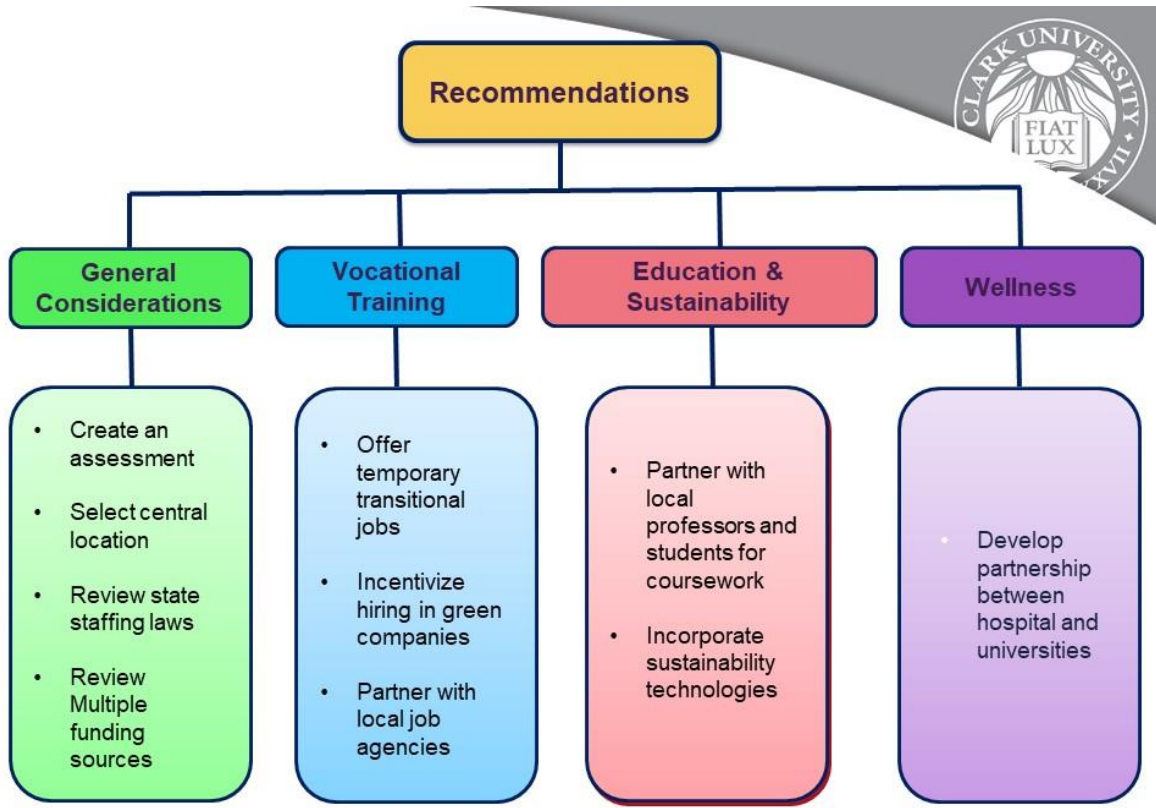
Results and Findings

- Half a million prisoners released annually
 - They need educational, vocational, wellness, and sustainability programming
 - 12 best practice models suggest solutions to improve ex-prisoner thriving
- Local Practitioners Suggest**
- ❖ *Worcester needs more local support and programs*
 - ❖ *Ex-prisoners plagued by homelessness, underemployment, health issues, and education gaps*
 - ❖ *Community partnerships are key*
 - ❖ *Criminal justice reform is in order*



Part 5: Recommendations and Moving Forward





Group Reflection

Challenges

- Time constraints
- Scheduling
- Language barriers
- Planning
- Workload
- IRB roadblocks

Skill Development and Lessons

- ★ Teamwork
- ★ Patience
- ★ Communication
- ★ Resilience
- ★ Flexibility
- ★ Cultural exchange
- ★ Content knowledge
- ★ Professional and personal networking



Acknowledgements

- Thank you to SPS for offering us this opportunity
- Thanks to our client Kevin Lynch, the Executive Director of EPOCA, and Yoshada Kwaning, the Community Outreach Coordinator of EPOCA, for their patience and passion
- Thanks for Professor Stephanie Medden and Dean Mary Piecewicz for their guidance and support
- Thank to our group members



Questions Time

