

Boston Re-entry Initiative

For

2004 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing

Boston Police Department

Kathleen M. O'Toole, Police Commissioner

June 4, 2004

1. SUMMARY

The Boston Reentry Initiative was created in response to a resurgence in violent crime across Boston's "hot-spot" or high-crime neighborhoods. An analysis led by Police Commissioner Evans showed that ex-offenders returning to high-crime neighborhoods from the Suffolk County House of Correction contributed significantly to the spike in crime. Fragmentation of roles and responsibilities among criminal justice agencies made it difficult for authorities to mount an effective response.

As part of Boston Strategy II, the Boston Reentry Initiative (BRI) was developed in partnership with faith-based, community and criminal justice agencies. The BRI was designed to reduce violent offending by focusing on those most serious and highest-risk returning offenders. Its objectives included reducing offender anonymity with a highly collaborative criminal justice partnership supported by credible community leaders.

Inmates are offered tangible opportunities to make positive choices with faith-based and community mentor support. They are simultaneously warned of serious consequences of re-offending, to be delivered by a coordinated criminal justice response. After hearing this message from a panel of representatives, inmates are met by mentors to proceed with their post-release accountability plans. Individual support continues post-release. Intensive surveillance, swift arrest and fast-track prosecution by law enforcement results for non-compliant re-offenders.

Results to date are very promising, with a significant majority of active program participants maintaining a positive change, while non-compliant offenders are swiftly re-arrested. Individual successes further illustrate the strong positive impact of the BRI for individuals who otherwise lacked viable alternatives.

2. DESCRIPTION

A. SCANNING

Success of Boston's past violence prevention strategies saw dramatic reductions in citywide violent and firearm crimes. Beginning in the summer of 2000 through early 2001 however, the City experienced a sudden and significant 13% increase in the

incidence of firearm and violent crime in a small number of high-crime neighborhoods, rekindling community concern of returning violence.

The following newspaper headlines and excerpts illustrate the increases in violent crime and growing community concern throughout that time.

- **Tackling future crime today; Hub leaders meet to address youth issues**
Jose Martinez. Boston Herald. Boston, Mass. Jun 7, 2000
... Rivers said the community must step up its efforts to sway youths away from violence. Over the past week, two shootings in the South End and another in Jamaica Plain
- **Crime down in 1999, but rising this year**
Franci Richardson. Boston Herald. Boston, Mass.: Oct 16, 2000
- **The Path We Choose to Reduce Crime**
Jack Levin. Boston Globe. December 30, 2000
... first half of 2000 national reports of rape and aggravated assault rose, while most other serious offenses leveled off. The Boston statistics were even less encouraging, as crime went up in almost every major category...
- **Exodus From Violence**
Boston Globe. February 24, 2001
... Recent spikes in crime in Boston.. in minority neighborhoods of the city, leading to fears of dissonant times ahead...
- **Youth, 16, Shot Dead in Roxbury**
Boston Globe. Douglas Belkin, and Szymon Twarog, Published on May 7, 2001
... Sixteen-year-old Jermaine Mendes became the first juvenile shot to death in the city this year Witnesses said it was a gang-related attack...
- **Dorchester Area is Scene of ^{4th} Slaying in 2 Weeks.**
Published on August 4, 2001 Francie Latour, Boston Globe
... The shooting death of a 20-year-old man in Dorchester Thursday night marked the fourth homicide in Boston in two weeks...

Mayor Menino and then Police Commissioner Evans responded to these concerns with a rededication to the partnerships and community-police collaborations that saw dramatic decreases in crime in the mid-late 1990s. Mayor Menino initiated a revisiting of Boston's anti-violence strategy to look for new trends and patterns and potential new

solutions.

An initial scan of the problem incidents pointed to some new factors at work including older offenders returning from incarceration and becoming involved in criminal incidents in various combinations as perpetrators, victims, witnesses and associates. At a corrections conference attended that year by Police Commissioner Evans, Superintendent Patrick Bradley of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department presented on the numbers of offenders returning from the Suffolk County House of Correction (SCHOC) each month, and this was a statistic that caught Commissioner Evans' attention. The House of Correction releases between 200 and 250 offenders a month and is located less than two miles from the city's highest-crime areas. Veteran gang intelligence officers alerted superiors to the fact that they were seeing the names of the same individuals who had been identified as "impact players" during the early 90's, - one of Boston's most violent periods, in new incidents. They had been incarcerated but were now back out on the same streets and among the same people they had victimized in the previous decade.

B. ANALYSIS

Then Police Commissioner, Paul F. Evans initiated an in-depth analysis into the problem. Superintendent Paul Joyce was assigned to address the issue and convened both law enforcement, criminal justice and community partners to analyze the problem of returning offenders.

The analysis, which looked at the police incident reports of incidents contributing to the up-tick in violence, confirmed the concerns of veteran intelligence officers -the same "high profile" offenders who were successfully prosecuted, convicted, and incarcerated during the high tide of firearm violence in the city that occurred in the early 1990's were

now returning to communities after long periods of incarceration. The analysis pointed to the involvement of men in their twenties and early thirties, who were resuming the criminal life upon release from incarceration. The overwhelming majority were coming back to their communities from the SCHOC and some from the state Department of Correction. They were resuming criminal activities with younger individuals, many of whom were cycling through the county correctional facility on shorter bids.

Superintendent Paul Joyce called for a joint law enforcement and community effort in addressing the problem. Specific agencies involved from the outset on analysis and problem solving included:

- Boston Police Department
- Suffolk County House of Correction
- Faith-based organizations – Ella J. Baker House, Nation of Islam, Bruce Wall Ministries, Boston Ten Point Coalition
- Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office
- United States Attorney’s Office
- Probation
- Parole
- Community Organizations – Boston Community Centers, Community Resources for Justice
- Employment and human service agencies

A joint analysis between law enforcement entities saw that these individuals were well known throughout the criminal justice community and when cross-referenced with parole, probation, the DA’s Office and US Attorney’s office, a significant percentage of offenders have been involved with multiple agencies. Moreover a recent study in one particular violent hot-spot of Boston, found that 75% of offenders names appeared on HHS databases, confirming their on-going interactions with the CJ system. Not only did the individuals returning from jail have lengthy records, they were released to high-crime neighborhoods, maintained their criminal and gang associations, and they continued to

cycle through the system.

Current correctional and community-resources are inadequate to fully serve the 300-400 ex-prisoners who return to Boston from state and local correctional facilities monthly. The problem is exacerbated by the fragmented correctional system in Massachusetts. Some ex-prisoners receive post-release supervision from parole or probation agencies; others, though, including some of the most serious offenders, are released without any further supervision. The analysis of recent incidents involving ex-offenders revealed that some were still serving “on and after” probationary sentences; a smaller handful were on parole and most were under no ongoing legal sanction. Absent an intensive, collaborative re-entry program, their legal status seemed not to be a significant variable in their behavior

Superintendent Joyce also called faith and community based agencies into the analysis and discussion of the problem. Dorchester, Mattapan, Roxbury and South End, the four identified hot-spot neighborhoods, are often very close-knit communities. Specifically, those organizations that were known for their strong community leadership within the four neighborhoods were called upon to work with police. Four faith based organizations, Nation of Islam, Ella J. Baker House, Bruce Wall Ministries, and Boston Ten Point Coalition have a strong base and are esteemed leaders in these particular neighborhoods with community credibility as well as authority amongst the returning offender population. Given their extensive knowledge of the community, and history of experience in youth and community outreach initiatives, these organizations’ streetworkers and youth workers were also very familiar with the offender pool. As many faith-based representatives are ex-offenders themselves their close partnership with the

police would ensure a solution that would be most relevant and meaningful to the target offender group.

The SCHOC releases **200-250 offenders a month** and is located in Boston, less than two miles from the city's highest-crime areas. A significant percentage of these released offenders return to the same streets and neighborhoods in areas where violence, firearm and drug crimes are concentrated, and where they committed their most serious offenses. This factor alone seems to drive an increase in recidivism among released offenders. With recent inmate databases and mapping technology, Boston Police (BPD) were able to specify that a large number of offenders were returning from SCHOC to the identified hot-spot or high-crime neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan and South End (See Attachment A – mapping releases). Over 50% of DOC inmates are released to these three neighborhoods. In calendar year 2000, these four neighborhoods experienced 963, or 75%, of Boston's 1,288 reported firearm offenses while constituting only 45% of the city's population (2000 US Census).

In addition to experiencing significant population growth (the 2000 Census reported a roughly 15% increase in population for these communities), these neighborhoods also experience disproportionate unemployment, poverty and low educational attainment.

Imprisonment often results in long-term economic and social consequences for the offenders themselves, including disproportionate unemployment, poverty, and low educational attainment. Most offenders are released without sufficient support in their attempt to reintegrate into the community. Indeed, many returning offenders felt that there were few options available to them besides returning to a life of crime.

The need for an aggressive offender reentry initiative to effectively prevent re-offending was evident.

C. RESPONSE

The primary goal of the BRI was to reduce violent offending and victimization by serious and violent offenders across Boston neighborhoods. Its specific objectives, premised on three strategic ideas are:

- 1) focusing efforts and resources on the most serious returning offenders;
- 2) a joint public safety and social service approach involving an unprecedented partnership between law enforcement, government agencies, community providers, and faith-based organizations; and
- 3) “real” intervention services to address significant hurdles faced by offenders returning from confinement, grounded in research and past experience of several model programs run by the BPD and SCHOC.

Each month Boston Police gang intelligence detectives identify the highest-risk offenders scheduled for release from the Suffolk County House of Corrections (SCHOC). Degree of threat is analyzed, and selection is made, based on criteria agreed to by all the community and institutional stakeholders involved in the collaboration. Selection is scrutinized for fairness by the sheriff’s department, U.S. Attorney’s Office, District Attorney’s Office, Probation, and faith and community partners. Of the 250 inmates released from the SCHOC each month, police gang intelligence officers prioritize for intervention, inmates 18-32 years old, with chronic firearm and violent offense histories, who are gang-involved, are returning to high-crime areas, and are deemed most likely to recidivate upon release. (See attachment B Target population characteristics).

Inmates attend an initial community panel from across the spectrum of law enforcement, criminal justice, and faith-based and community entities, introducing them to the program and outlining the community safety plan, including incentives for playing by the rules upon release, and consequences of failing to do so. Key partners who are currently involved in the BRI and address inmates at a panel presentation are:

- Boston Police Department
- Suffolk County House of Correction
- Faith-based organizations – nation of Islam, Ella J. Baker House, Bruce Wall Ministries, Boston Ten Point Coalition
- Suffolk County District Attorney's Office
- United States Attorney's Office
- Probation
- Parole
- Community Organizations – Boston Community Centers, SNAP, Community Resources for Justice
- Employment and human service agencies – The Workplace, The Internal Revenue Service (Child Support),

This “Panel”, is a monthly forum that affords face-to-face interactions between the concerned community and these highest-risk offenders. Inmates receive an individualized presentation by line-level members of the criminal justice system, from the probation officers to whom they may be assigned, to the assistant U.S. attorney who will prosecute their case should it reach federal court. They effectively warn offenders about the consequences of re-offending including the likelihood of classification resulting from next offense, and the corresponding penalties if so convicted in either state or federal court. These are the individuals in the system that offenders would otherwise not encounter, but who now challenge them with the promise to personally deliver on consequences.

Faith-based and community mentors who will work with ex-offenders also sit

across from them at the Panel with a similar message, but their promise is to deliver support and services. Mentors from Ella J. Baker House, Boston Ten Point Coalition, Nation of Islam Mosque #11, Bruce Wall Ministries, and Boston Community Centers relay a message of hope and extend an opportunity for change. These panelists pledge their help to those who are serious about leaving the criminal life. Faith and community mentors, some of whom are ex-offenders themselves, are esteemed leaders in the community and therefore have an inherent credibility with offenders. Their presence on the panel sends a message of consolidated community support for the intervention.

Through this process two important outcomes result: a) offender anonymity is eliminated, and b) each offender is forced to confront their future decision-making in light of new and very real consequences.

Individualized Reentry Plans

Faith-based and community mentors continue to meet with inmates individually while inside the jail to develop client relationships and assist inmates in pursuing their individual transition plans. Assigned caseworkers also begin meeting and working with inmates immediately. A team case management approach for BRI participants ensures a seamless continuum of services and supervision. SCHOC caseworkers conduct an initial questionnaire upon intake and are responsible for ensuring that participants are matched to appropriate prison-based programming during the period of incarceration. After the Reentry Panel, case managers are assigned to each participant. They will be responsible for being the team case management leader, coordinating and administering initial assessments such as the L-SIR assessment. With this initial assessment case managers and mentors work with the inmate to develop a Reentry Plan, and work towards

achieving the outlined goals through accessing services. Faith and community-based mentors have proven extremely effective in the BRI given their inherent credibility with this population. They advocate for the offender, conduct regular inmate visits while inside the jail, and encourage and offer day-to-day support in transition through experienced-based mentoring. They also visit ex-offenders at home, schedule appointments with providers and accompany them to various interviews and appointments upon release.

Additional case management team members would include probation and parole officers and transitional housing staff, depending upon the inmate's classification and supervision upon release.

An individual reentry plan is tailored to the individual inmate, including their desired goals and objectives towards achieving those goals. Specific issues addressed by reentry plans include, but are not limited to:

- ✓Housing
- ✓Substance abuse
- ✓Family and parenting
- ✓Employment, education and job training
- ✓Transportation and immediate needs.
- ✓Mental health
- ✓Counseling
- ✓Medical health and health insurance
- ✓Photo ID and licensing issues,

Non-profits – Community Resources for Justice, Father friendly, and SNAP offer housing, life-skills and other basic support services to returning offenders.

Plans are regularly reviewed by the case manager to monitor progress and re-evaluate goals. Boston Private Industry Council's subsidiary agency, The Workplace, provides an employment specialist - assigned to the SCHOC to work with inmates on job development and placement prior to and upon release to develop an employment plan, which outlines training, educational and employment goals – short, medium, and long -

term goals. The Employment Specialist also runs job development classes in the jail – addressing work readiness related topics, as well as obtains referrals which inmates are able to follow-up upon release.

Upon release inmates are met at the door of the institution by their mentor, in recognition of the fact that the first 24-48 hours are crucial in determining any return to criminality. Mentors assist in the ongoing development of their individual plan and encourage ex-offenders to meet their goals. Case managers and mentors meet with their clients on a regular basis.

Individuals who spurn the offer of assistance and return to offending become “Impact Players” and, as promised, encounter strict enforcement and fast-track prosecution. BRI ensures fair treatment of these high-risk individuals by offering a balanced mix of assistance and services with strict enforcement and swift prosecution for new offenses.

The program in its entirety was developed over the course of a year through much trial and error, overcoming of obstacles and fine-tuning of processes. Establishing a T-1 data line between the BPD and SCSD in late 2001 was a significant milestone in program implementation. This allowed police and sheriff full, live and lawful access to one another’s data on the target individuals with an additional layer of information on their inmates/offender target group, conferring and correlating information on those inmates they were most concerned about. Police were now able to identify inmates much earlier (within weeks of commitment) and thereby have mentors focus on developing a relationship with inmates a significant time prior to their release. This live information also allowed for mentors to have most up-to-date information on their client’s release

date (including calculations of good time towards early release) to ensure they were met on their day of release.

Also late in 2001, the first receipt of funding for the BRI was a key milestone. The BRI secured a grant from the USDOJ Office of Community Oriented Policing Services' Value Based Initiative, which allowed the program to support its four faith-based mentors to work full-time for the BRI who, prior to this funding, had been allocating any available time to the project, in-kind. It also improved the ability of mentors to track participants and follow-up and focus full-time on their caseload. Adding an employment specialist and case manager to the initiative with Bureau of Justice Assistance funds occurred in very early 2002, filling a gap in the service component of the initiative and therefore an important milestone for the program. Offenders were then able to benefit from a job development workshop inside the SCHOC with a link to employer contact and job development upon release. The panel process has also evolved significantly to become a very effective method of communicating the goals of the initiative to inmates. Inmates are more engaged in the panel process itself, where they are involved in discussion with the panel presenters. This seems to deepen their understanding and trust of the process.

D. ASSESSMENT

Participants are tracked up to one year post-release. Mentors and service-providers complete monthly assessments outlining their inmates' progress. The monthly report specifies when the mentor was last in contact with the client as well as documents the services accessed, employment plans, and overall activity level within the program.

BPD Reentry coordinators monitor police incident or arrest reports regularly for ex-offender names. BPD intelligence officers also inform the program of any ex-offender appearing under their surveillance from field interrogations and observations. Also entered into the database is information from the House of Correction regarding the inmate's visitors as well as information of in-house feuding.

This information in its entirety is captured on a 'live' database accessible to law enforcement partners. As part of an extensive evaluation plan, which is still in the process of being implemented, additional information will be analyzed regularly to monitor the progress of participants and assess the outcomes of the initiative as a whole.

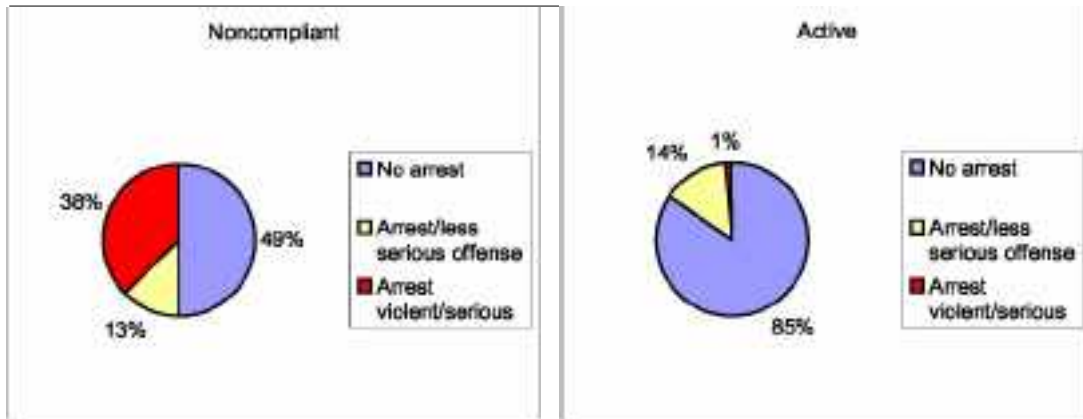
Reentry coordinators run a Board of Probation check regularly on released offenders to determine their return to criminal activity. Currently, this along with the severity of their charge, as well as time to re-arrest, are the measures used in program evaluation.

The Boston Police Department's Office of Research and Evaluation also conduct an analysis of the "hot-spot" or high crime neighborhoods, to which a majority of offenders return. Looking at violent and firearm incidents and arrests in these hot-spots, they measure the decrease in the crime prior to and post reentry initiative.

We see a promising correlation between 1) participation and changes in participants' post-release criminal profiles; and 2) violent crime trends in participants' home communities.

1. All those who qualify for the program would be expected, based on criminal histories, to continue to offend, absent any form of post-release intervention. Yet we have seen a significant difference in criminal offending between those in Impact Player status, i.e.

who have rejected offers of support and assistance, as versus those with some level of participation in the program.



	No arrest	Arrest/less serious offense	Arrest violent/serious	Total
Active	60	10	1	71
Noncompliant	32	8	24	64
Other	2	0	0	2
Total	94	18	25	137

An analysis revealed that of the 137 released offenders between March 2003 and March 2004, 64 participants were inactive or refused to comply in the program. Of these, 50% offended after release and 75% of those arrests were for serious and violent offenses. By contrast of the 71 who actively participated in the program, only 15% re-offended, and the majority of these arrests (91%) were on minor, non-violent matters . Re-arrests further point to quick detection and swift action by law enforcement, -showing offenders that we are delivering on pledges made at the panel presentation.

A 2003 analysis of Crime data showed an overall 4% decrease in violent crime in the violent crime hot-spots that are home to most BRI participants, between the period

prior to the initiative (January 1, 2000-May 20,2001) and post initiative (January 1, 2002 – May 20, 2003). At the same time, crime in general was rising somewhat.

Individual success stories also illustrate the impact and effectiveness of the program. A few of the mentor accounts have been included below which exemplify the positive changes that have been made by inmates who previously had strong gang affiliations, and histories of firearm and drug activity. The following examples illustrate the success of the BRI:

From Truesee Allah, reentry mentor, Nation of Islam, who is himself an ex-offender:

“Kyon is a 21 year old who was strongly in the mix before I met him. I established a good relationship with him while he was in the jail and he has now turned his life around completely. He has completed his first semester at Bunker Hill Community College and has a steady job at Target in Watertown. He explained that he is very grateful for this program because without this support and help he would have gone straight back into the mix. He is in contact with me regularly and is extremely motivated”.

From Kurt Francois, Case manager:

“Vincent is a 23-year-old black male who has been incarcerated for about five years. I met Vincent in August 2002 after the panel and he was very negative about his future. His demeanor and lifestyle in the House of Correction was of someone who lost hope and wanted to return to his negative behaviors upon release. After a couple of meetings with him he started to ask himself some questions, ‘is this lifestyle his faith’? It was at this point that things started changing for him and his family. This step was the biggest obstacle he had to overcome. No longer you saw a person with little confidence but someone who would not accept less than perfect. With this new drive behind him he excels in programs in the jail and is now at the Brooke House. His next goal is to find full-time employment and enrolled in college.”

From Wilbur Smart, Reentry mentor, Boston Ten Point Coalition:

“I feel Corey has made great strides and is a success story to be reckoned with. He held a position of security intern for about two months and then went on to be a group leader at an after-school program. He was laid off from that position and still didn't give up. He found a training program. I feel he is doing a good job and with the right support he will continue to excel.”

Individual cases such as these, given the offenders involved, are a tremendous success for the program.

The results to date have been as, if not better than we originally anticipated. Given the severity of the criminal histories, gang associations and behaviors of these offenders, we could not expect that a lifetime of poor choices and minimal opportunity could be overturned within just a few months of programming. . The change in individual behavior also has long-term effects on the overall level of violence across the City. As many ex-offenders have severed gang ties as a result of this initiative, the BRI contributes to a break in the cycle of retaliatory violence and street justice

Given the results to date, we are very confident that the program has made a significant difference both to the lives of individual inmates as well as to the safety of their communities (See Attachment C – articles highlighting the Boston Reentry Initiative and successes).

3. AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

Superintendent Paul Joyce, then commander of the Bureau of Special Operations, having initiated and pioneered some of the Boston Police Department's most successful programs that saw dramatic reductions in violence in the 1990's, took the lead in developing the solutions proposed in this initiative. He coordinated with line-level officers of the Youth Violence Strike Force, Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, as well as Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, United States Attorney's Office and faith and community based organizations. The initiative was developed as a city-wide program for adult offenders which was then expanded to include juvenile as well as state and federal offenders. No training was received for this initiative. Officers were given

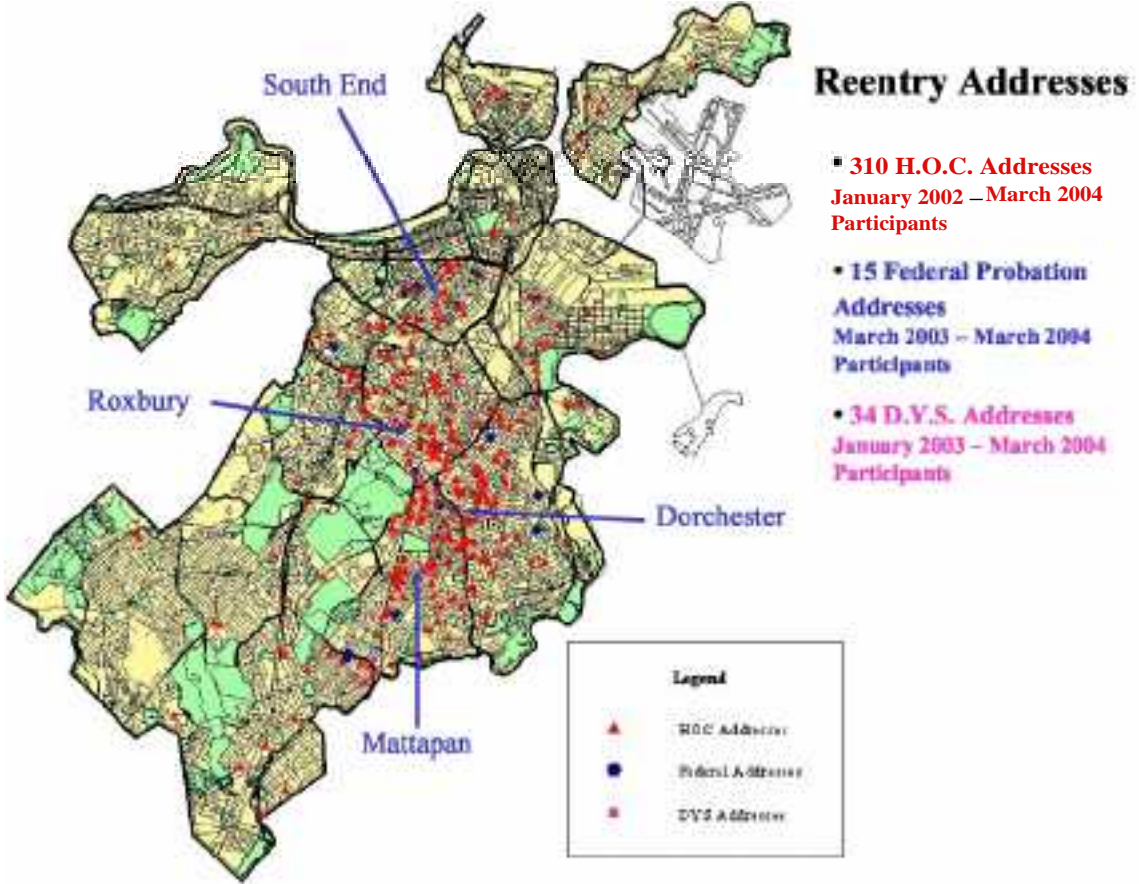
recognition for the initiative by Police Commissioner Paul Evans and command staff, Mayor Menino and City leaders, as recognized as a model program by federal funding agencies such as the US Department of Justice.

Guidelines officers used to manage the initiative were those set as examples during earlier projects such as Operation Cease-fire. General resources came in the form of increased personnel assigned to the project along all agency lines as well as federal funding to support the service positions such as mentors, case managers and employment specialists.

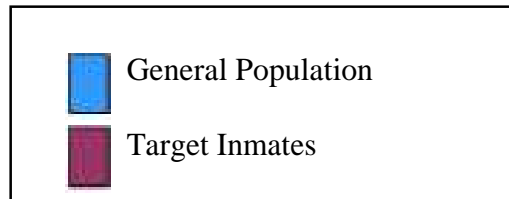
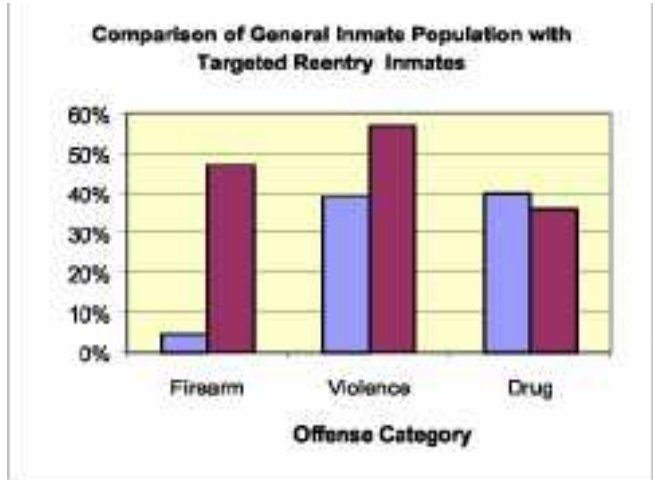
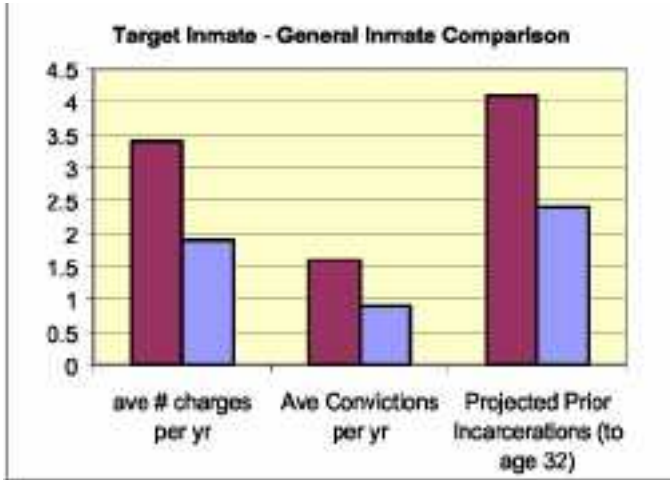
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ATTACHMENT A



ATTACHMENT B: Comparison Charts and Tables



	Average # Charges per year	Average # Convictions per Year	Average # Prior Adult Incarcerations
Target	3.4	1.6	1.7*
General	1.9	0.9	2.4

**If the target inmates frequency of incarceration (1.7 per year) is projected to the average inmate's age of 32, the average target group inmate will have 4.1 prior incarcerations by the age of 32, as compared with 2.4 for the average inmate.*

Inmate Group	Firearm	Violence	Drug
Target Population	47%	57%	36%
General Population	4%	39%	40%

ATTACHMENT C: Articles Related to Boston Reentry Initiative

Prison mentoring program meets early success

By: Jose Martinez, Boston Herald, 3/15/2002

An intensive mentoring program aimed at prisoners deemed most likely to get out of the House of Correction at South Bay and commit more crimes appears to be working, according to first-year figures released yesterday. Ex-cons who took part in the Boston Re-Entry Initiative are less than half as likely to return to jail as the prisoners who dropped out or refused to participate in the pilot program, numbers released by the Boston Police Department and Suffolk County Sheriff's Office show. "We've seen promising numbers and we have a lot of work to do, but we have to stick with it if we want the program to succeed, if we want to have an effect on these impact players," said Boston police Superintendent Paul Joyce. Of 153 hard-core inmates selected for the re-entry program and released over the past year, only 42 either dropped out or refused to take part from the start, Joyce said. Of the 111 who stuck to the program, 19 men (17 percent) wound up getting arrested within months of their release. However, South Bay Superintendent Pat Bradley said he sees a "positive negative" in the range of the new offenses, which include driving with suspended licenses, public drinking and shoplifting - minor offenses compared to the drug and violent crimes that landed the men behind bars originally. Not so rosy are the fates of the 42 prisoners who refused to participate in the program: 19 of them - 45 percent - have since been re-arrested. "These numbers may seem meager - just 150 or so inmates - but without a doubt these people are on a fast track to re-offend in a very short period of time if they are not mentored," Bradley said. "These are early numbers. We've only been at it a year." The Re-Entry Initiative, praised last year by outgoing Attorney General Janet Reno, follows Boston's community partnership approach to fighting crime. Inmates work monthly with a panel of law enforcement, community service agencies and the clergy before pairing off for weekly one-on-one sessions with mentors from the panel. The key, Joyce said, is to get the inmates the job, counseling and other services they need before they are released and then follow up when they are freed. "We send two messages," Joyce said. "First, we want to help you. Here are the services available to you. Secondly, if you decide you don't want our help and re-offend, we will be on you hard." The first 12 hours can make the difference between returning to crime and going straight, Joyce said. Every month, about 250 prisoners are released from Suffolk County's jails back into Boston neighborhoods. Yearly, 700 inmates return to Boston from state prisons. At the government watchdog group MassINC, research director Dana Ansel said the Boston re-entry program may still be too young to assess its success. A recent MassINC study found 22 percent of Bay State prisoners are re-incarcerated within a year of their release and 44 percent go back to prison within three years. "Most of those people are not out a year. Some of them have only been released a month or two, so it is likely the recidivism rate may well go up," she said.

Hub plan aims to keep freed offenders on right path

By: Tom Farmer, Boston Herald, 11/19/2002

Armed with a \$1 million federal grant, Boston police and the Department of Youth Services launched an aggressive initiative yesterday to help violent juvenile offenders resist a return to crime once released from state custody. The Serious and Violent Juvenile Offender Re-Entry Initiative will target serious offenders between the ages of 14 and 21 from the moment they are sentenced to long after their release through a rigid supervisory program meant to assure successful transition back into the community. "We're going to try to attach resources and continuity to some of these more serious offenders," said DYS Commissioner Michael Boland. "Upon their entry (into DYS custody) we're going to develop a comprehensive treatment plan and continuity to work with these kids while they are with us." DYS will hire three full-time case manager/re-entry coordinators, a full-time project coordinator for the Boston police and an assistant project coordinator who will work 20 hours a week. The DYS and BPD partnered for the grant application with the U.S. Department of Justice in response to youth violence, including the tragic June killing of 10-year-old Trina Persad in a hail of gang gunfire in Roxbury. Massachusetts received a total of \$2 million in federal funds, of which \$1 million went to the DYS and Department of Correction for re-entry programs. Boston Police Superintendent Paul Joyce said the initiative will echo adult re-entry programs already in place. The point, he said, was to get to offenders before they are released to both help steer them clear of future trouble and to prevent crime. "We've seen success in the adult program and we think we will see success in the juvenile program," said Joyce. Boland said up to 240 offenders will be identified each year as being at-risk for re-offending and placed in the re-entry program. The first of three phases, Protect and Prepare, will involve educational, mental health, job training, mentoring and substance programs to prepare offenders for a return to society. The Control and Restore phase will feature community-based programs designed to work with offenders just prior to and immediately after their release. The second phase will continue to provide the educational and social service programs from the first phase. The final phase, Sustain and Support, will have long-term community-based programs to link offenders who have left DYS confinement to a network of social agencies to provide ongoing support and mentoring. The DYS and BPD will meet regularly to identify at-risk youth for the re-entry program. Boland stressed the selected offenders' participation in the re-entry initiative is not voluntary and those who cannot successfully return to society will find themselves incarcerated again. Boland said Massachusetts, and Boston in particular, is way ahead of other states in forging partnerships between police, the criminal justice system, community groups and the clergy. That partnership will be the key to the re-entry initiative, Boland said.

Mayor, activists unveil outreach plan

By: Alice Gomstyn and Corey Dade, Boston Globe, 7/11/2002

To try to stop youth violence, city and community officials announced yesterday they

will redouble efforts to reach out to city teenagers, keep them busy with work and enrichment programs, and offer more community support. The plan was put together with urgency as the city continues to reel from the shooting death of 10-year-old Trina Persad. "Nothing is more important in our city than the safety of our children, and none of us can stand by the sidelines while their lives are at risk," Mayor Thomas M. Menino said as he kicked off what he called the "Summer of Responsibility" at an afternoon press conference at Roxbury's Ramsey Park. Menino, who was joined by Boston Police Commissioner Paul F. Evans and several community and religious leaders, stressed the importance of citywide cooperation in confronting the recent upsurge in youth violence. "We have to join together and say enough is enough," he said. A key element of the initiative is to provide more jobs and recreation options to city youths so they spend their school vacation productively. Menino said the city would use federal funds for its empowerment zones to add 350 summer jobs for teenagers and devote \$180,000 from its budget to adding 100 positions for "at risk" youth between the ages of 14 and 17. To that end, 400 additional youths ages 11 to 14 would be added to the 2,000 youngsters already in summer programs at five middle-school community learning centers. Free transportation to the programs would be provided by an MBTA program as soon as next week, the mayor said. Among the new prevention and intervention measures is a reentry program for newly released prison inmates, the creation of Boston Youth Count, an initiative to identify families in need of counseling and support, and the deployment of "Healing Teams," groups of educators, counselors, and social workers who would work with youth in high-crime neighborhoods. Young victims of violent crime experience trauma that may leave them more inclined toward violence, said Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, of the Harvard School of Public Health, who also appeared at the event. "We have to, as a community, keep them from turning their pain and anger against us," she said. At an event earlier in the day at Jermaine Goffigan Park in Roxbury, where Persad was fatally shot on June 29, activists gathered to stress the need for grass-roots efforts to directly reach youths. And today at 6 p.m., City Councilor Chuck Turner is scheduled to meet with former police officers and religious and community leaders at St. John-St. Hugh Church in Roxbury to discuss how to reach at-risk teens. Despite the hope echoed by speakers at the two parks yesterday, some feel that the newly planned efforts to combat youth violence are simply not enough. "This plan needs to be magnified 5,000 times for it to work," said Dorchester resident Janet Connors, whose son was killed during a home invasion a year and a half ago. "But I know we need to start somewhere."

Recharging the Boston Miracle

By: Thanassis Cambanis, Boston Globe, 7/7/2002

With the Boston murder rate climbing precipitously, gangs making a comeback, and hundreds of convicts freshly released from prison returning to their old neighborhoods, federal prosecutors and their partners have taken steps to refurbish and reenergize the so called "Boston Miracle," the community-government partnership that helped push the city's murder rate to a low of 31 in 1999. Founders of the effort to beat back the violent crime wave that gripped the city in 1990's admit that with success, complacency might have taken root and undermined the cooperation among federal and state law

enforcement, religious leaders, and community groups that served as a national model. "I think it's human nature that when things are quiet, when we go 21/2 years without a young person under 17 being murdered with a handgun, that some of the pressure to sustain this day to day lessens," said Donald K. Stern, who as US attorney from 1993 to 2001 was a primary force behind Boston's crime fighting strategy.

In Mass., freed inmates face dwindling prospects

By: Sarah Schweitzer, Boston Globe, 8/27/2001

As a swelling number of inmates wrap up sentences imposed during the incarceration boom of the 1990s, they are returning home to find few housing options and shrinking job prospects - a trend likely to worsen in a softening economy. While police say they cannot yet tie inmate releases to an uptick in crime, they worry that as inmates' critical needs go unmet, incident numbers will rise. Already, advocates for the homeless estimate that of the 20,000 inmates released from Massachusetts prisons and jails last year, 1 in 5 ended up in homeless shelters, in unstable living conditions with family and friends, or on the streets. "What we have is a growing number of ex-offenders in our communities, in our neighborhoods with a new sentence imposed on them: hopelessness," said Philip Mangano, executive director of the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance. The problem is compounded, specialists say, by cutbacks in programs like early release and parole, which provided supervision for inmates returning to life outside cell blocks. The result is a rudderless transition for former inmates, many struggling with substance abuse habits unbroken during incarceration. "These are the people most in need of services," said Brian A. Caller, president of Community Resources for Justice, a Boston think tank and a support group for former offenders. "But in most cases, they are coming out without any support or supervision." The boomerang effect of the 1990s sentencing blitz is being felt hardest in the state's urban areas, which send a disproportionate number of residents to correctional facilities and tend to draw former inmates from small towns where stigma lives long and social services are limited. In Boston, where an estimated 300 former inmates return each month, social service providers say they are increasingly in demand by former offenders. "I've never dealt with so many women with criminal records," said Tracey Williams, program coordinator for the Breakaway Program at Dimock Community Health Center in Roxbury, which helps women find jobs and build self-esteem. "It's like when HIV," the virus that causes AIDS, "came onto the scene. Now everyone is scrambling to throw all these things together, and you have chaos." Housing, Williams and others say, is the most pressing problem, particularly since federal rules bar many with criminal records from subsidized housing. "I've been homeless for years," said Alfred Gibson, who has been living in a shelter since his release from prison in 1999. This week, he qualified for federally subsidized housing, after a lengthy appeal. "Everyone wanted me to have a job before I got the housing, but I couldn't get a job." Gibson's situation is hardly unique, says City Councilor Chuck Turner of Roxbury. "They are piling in with relatives," Turner said. But increasingly, advocates for the homeless report, inmates are relying on social services and bypassing family homes. "We are getting written requests from inmates before they're released to see if there is space for them when they get out," said Aimee Coolidge, director of advocacy at the Pine Street

Inn, the region's largest homeless shelter. This year, 74 incoming residents reported jail or prison as their last residence, a 14 percent increase from 2000, Coolidge said. Boston police say they are deeply concerned about the bubbling population of former offenders. When violent crime spiked in the first half of 2000, the department identified newly released inmates as a key factor - an assertion later questioned when violent crime numbers fell in the second half of 2000. "This is an emerging trend that we have to be ready for," police Superintendent Paul Joyce said. Boston police have teamed up with clergy and social workers to provide counseling for violent offenders before their release from county jail. "We had to start small and focus on the individuals who could have the most immediate impact on the crime rate," Joyce said, adding that the department has applied for a federal grant to expand the program. The city has responded as well, holding several job fairs for former offenders and beseeching a number of employers - which the city would not name - to consider hiring former convicts. With a slowing economy, though, officials are worried that their pleas will go unheard. "We are all holding our breaths about the economy," said Conny Doty, director of the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services. "As it softens and as we see layoffs, we may reach a point where employers who have been willing to step up to the plate will become more risk-averse." One path for smoothing the transition, some criminal justice specialists argue, is to revive programs like parole that fell out of favor in the late 1980s as pressure for more severe sentences grew - particularly after convicted killer Willie Horton raped a Maryland woman and attacked her husband while on furlough from a Massachusetts prison. Only 35 percent of inmates are paroled now, compared with 65 percent in the early 1990s. "Public safety is our number one concern," said Justin Latini, a spokesman for the Massachusetts Department of Correction. But others say the approach is a short-sighted one. "These programs are not to coddle inmates," said John Laviree of Community Resources for Justice, which also runs support programs for former offenders and troubled youths. "It's to make the return easier." This story ran on page A1 of the Boston Globe on 8/27/2001. © Copyright 2001 Globe Newspaper Company.

http://www.massinc.org/handler.cfm?type=1&target=2003-1/scene_of_the_crime.htm

<http://www.bos.frb.org/economic/nerr/rr2002/q4/doingtime.pdf>