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Overview

Increasingly, rehabilitation counselors and job placement specialists find themselves working with persons with disabilities who also have criminal backgrounds. The presence of a disability may allow ex-offenders to apply and qualify for VR services. As a group, ex-offenders, especially those in rural settings, possess both unique individual and community characteristics that deny them access to traditional avenues of employment (Harley & Feist-Price, 2014). A criminal record limits opportunities for employment. In addition, employers' attitudes and hiring practices influence employment outcomes of ex-offenders. According to the Housing Assistance Council (2011), ex-offenders reentering rural communities are faced with specific housing challenges including a short supply of rental and transitional units, housing that is suppressed by quality and affordability constraints, the composition of rental housing that is typically single-family homes or small multifamily structures, and older or manufactured housing. Although

employment is a significant predictor of future success of ex-offenders, addressing the offender's antisocial attitudes, criminogenic beliefs, peer groups, and personality patterns is equally important (Justice Center, The Council of State Governments, 2013).

Prior to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), inmates with disabilities had very limited rights and essentially no access to accommodations. "The ADA was developed to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from public programs, services, and activities" (Krienert, Henderson, & Vandiver, 2003, p. 14). Moreover, Title II of the ADA prohibits discrimination based upon disability within all state and local governments. The ADA in conjunction with the decision of the Supreme Court in 1998 (i.e., *Yeskey v. Pennsylvania*) extended equal rights to inmates with disabilities, requiring government entities, including correctional institutions, to make their facilities, program, services, and activities accessible to both inmates and their visitors (Krienert et al.). See Discussion Box 12.1 for specific requirements.

Research has demonstrated differences exist between rural and urban communities, and as a result community can influence criminal behavior, culture, demography, and crime (Pfortmiller, 2011). Reentry into rural communities shows ex-offenders face difficulties as it relates to employment, housing, transportation, substance abuse,

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Discussion Box 12.1

Krienert, Henderson, and Vandiver (2003) described the requirements of the ADA for correctional institutions for inmates with disabilities and their visitors to make their facilities, programs, services, and activities accessible. These requirements include the following: (1) modify their programs if there are policies or procedures on the record that discriminate on the basis of disabilities, (2) modify the architectural design of buildings to accommodate disabilities, and (3) make sure that inmates with visual, speech, or hearing disabilities have appropriate mechanisms for communication. In *Yeskey v. Pennsylvania*, Yeskey was an inmate with a history of hypertension who was denied access to a motivational boot-camp program, which allowed inmates to be released on parole earlier than those who did not complete the program.

Questions

1. In what way was Yeskey discriminated against?
2. What ethical principles were violated in denying Yeskey access to a boot-camp program?
3. Do you believe ADA rights should have been extended to inmates? Why or why not?

and mental health treatment (Ward, 2016; Lurigio, Ward, & Merlo, 2016). Furthermore, offenders perceived structural barriers as their biggest hurdle to reentry, which include payment of fees and fines, while practitioners saw personal barriers of reentry of inmates as biggest hurdles to successful reentry (e.g., housing, lack of employment opportunities, and transportation).

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this chapter, the readers should be able to:

1. Identify barriers to employment for ex-offenders.
2. Identify barriers to community reintegration for ex-offenders.
3. Understand the differential effects of disability because of gender-related experiences.
4. Identify ways in which rurality impacts ex-offender community reintegration and employment opportunities.
5. Identify ways in which rehabilitation counselors, job placement specialists, and other human service providers can assist the ex-offender with transition reentry and employment.

Introduction

The United States has the highest incarceration rate of all countries in the world. In 2012, there were almost 7 million adults incarcerated in the United States (Glaze & Herberman, 2013). It is estimated that between 12 and 14 million, ex-offenders are of working age, and about 1 in 33 working-age adults is an ex-prisoner and about 1 in 15 working-age adults is an ex-felon (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011). The number of adults convicted of crimes has increased exponentially over the last decade, and it is estimated the number of ex-offenders of working age will likely rise substantially in the coming decades (Western & Pettit, 2010). Upon returning home, support systems and resources are not available for many ex-offenders. Reintegration into the community presents numerous barriers, including but not limited to employment, stigma, financial obstacles, educational limitations, transportation, addiction problems, legal issues, family adjustment concerns, attitudinal barriers, access to housing, and collateral consequences such as being barred from voting or civic participation and public housing or family participation (Ewert & Wildhagen, 2011; Fahey, Roberts, & Engel, 2006; LePage, Washington, Lewis, Johnson, & Garcia-Rea, 2011; Solomon, 2012). Most notably, the lack of and limited use of skills and changing technologies during incarceration may reduce marketable work

skills (LePage et al.). Although prisons offer work assignments with the chance to learn basic job skills (e.g., electronic assembly), most of the work opportunities are in low-skilled positions such as food service, janitorial, and furniture assembly (Solomon, Johnson, Travis, & McBride, 2004). In addition, the acceptance of ex-offenders in rural areas may be further hampered by requirements of retribution and personal values within the community (Garland, Wodahl, & Schuhmann, 2013).

Though reentry among rural ex-offenders may not differ significantly from their urban counterpart, challenges upon reintegration in society exist nonetheless. By examining a rural community within a broader context, however, one can then uncover the specific difficulties ex-offenders face upon reentry. For instance, by identifying or defining a community's cultural values, social interactions (i.e., strong community involvement and social connectedness), population demographics (average age, religious values), and economic conditions, rehabilitation counselors, job placement specialists, and other human service providers can implement a proactive approach to enable this population to successfully reintegrate within society (Wodahl, 2006). Too often, however, service providers carry stigmatizing perceptions of ex-offenders, which inhibit a positive working alliance, ultimately affecting successful rehabilitation outcomes (Schneider & McKim, 2003). Therefore, the broader perspective concept can improve the working relationship by understanding the context of change (i.e., the needs, deed, and demographic characteristics) and the change process (i.e., desistance from offending in terms of age and maturity, the development of positive social bonds, and the way ex-offenders construct their personal and social identities) and supporting change through interventions (i.e., risk classification, criminogenic needs, responsivity, community base, treatment modality, and program integrity) (McNeill, Batchelor, Burnett, & Knox, 2005). Several of these principles are discussed later in the chapter. According to McNeill et al., knowledge about these processes are essential for the counselor to understand not only what works in terms of

interventions but also of *how* and *why* ex-offenders in rural areas come to change their behavior.

Characteristics of Offender Populations

By the age of 23, one-third of American adults have been arrested (Barnes, Turner, Paternoster, & Bushway, 2012). Criminal records range from onetime arrests where charges are dropped to lengthy, serious, and violent criminal histories (Solomon, 2012). Ex-offenders with intellectual disabilities, mental health disorders, substance abuse, or co-occurring disabilities have a high level of historical contact with the legal system (Harrell & Rand, 2010; Weiss, 2013). Educationally, the offender population has lower levels of educational attainment than the general household population as well as the economically disadvantaged household population (Ewert & Wildhagen, 2011).

Several studies have reported rural and urban differences in drug use, higher DUI arrest rates and fewer treatment programs (Webster, Dickson, Duvall, Clark, 2010). There is limited research on differences in recidivism and behavioral health predictors (substance abuse and mental health) among offenders paroling in urban and rural areas. Urban offenders are more likely to participate in community treatment aftercare following release than offenders in rural communities (Staton-Tindall, Harp, Winston, Webster & Pangburn, 2015). In addition, rural offenders who recidivate were younger, unmarried, and less likely to be employed, have relapsed to drug use, and were more likely to have had acquired a new charge compared to parole violation. Marital status is a significant predictor of recidivism in rural areas and may be attributed to the social bonds, kinship, and relationships that are more common in rural areas. Furthermore, no gender differences were noted in return to custody offenders in rural areas as opposed to differences found for urban offenders. Supporting past research, male offenders were more likely to recidivate and return to prison than female offenders living in urban communities (Staton-Tindall, et al., 2015).

The majority of ex-offenders are racial or ethnic minorities (i.e., African American and Latino), and they constitute the majority of imprisoned offenders in prison or jail and on parole or probation (Glaze, Bonczar, & Zhang, 2010; Guerino, Harrison, & Sabol, 2012; West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010). Although African Americans are still incarcerated at dramatically higher rates than Whites, there is a notable increase in the incarceration of White women. In the offense categories of violent crimes, property crimes, and drug offenses, White arrest rose for both property and drug offenses (Mauer, 2013). Male and female offenders also differ in the types of offenses for which they are incarcerated. Females have higher rates of incarceration for drug offenses and property crimes, whereas males have higher rates violent crimes, property offenses, and sexual offenses (Ewert & Wildhagen, 2011). Pathways into crime also vary by gender. Females have a stronger correlation between prior victimization and offending, histories of physical or sexual abuse, and intimate partner violence (Covington, 2007).

Byrne and Trew (2008) postulate that women offenders committed crime motivated by restricted resources as opposed to intrinsic rewards. Female offenders commit crimes as a means to provide for their children out of fear of being deemed a bad mother and their children taken into custody. In addition, problems manifested from childhood such as abuse, domestic violence, and substance abuse contributed as a coping factor to life's difficulties and were linked to offending. Having restricted resources and limited choices, unemployment and being single parents acted as motivators to offending. Being female offenders was perceived with disdain owing to conflicts with conventional social values. Compared to males, female offenders are introduced to crime through relationships with family, friends, and significant others (Cobbina, 2009). Women who are romantically involved with men frequently engaged in criminal activities increase their criminal opportunities and maladaptive behaviors (Richardson & Flower, 2014). Upon release from prison, female ex-offenders report more frequent and severe

experiences of gender discrimination than male counterparts, especially in relation to drug offenses (van Olphen, Eliason, Freudenberg, & Barnes, 2009).

Ex-offenders identified six factors that influence their ability to reintegrate and abstain from reoffending: (a) substance abuse, (b) employment, (c) family support, (d) types of friends, (e) personal motivation, and (f) age (in relation to maturity) (Davis, Bahr, & Ward, 2012). The majority of offenders identified support from family, friends, and substance abuse treatment services as important for successful reintegration. In addition, both a personal desire to change and a support system helped ex-offenders to reintegrate and desist from drug use and crime. Support had more impact among those who desired to change, and those who received support were more likely to perceive that change is possible (Davis et al.). In a study by Bahr, Harris, Fisher, and Armstrong (2010), the authors found substance abuse courses offered in prison increase successful parole outcomes, and upon release, ex-offenders are more likely to engage in enjoyable activities with family and friends. Employment was also positively correlated with successful parole outcomes. For example, those that worked at least 40 h per week are more likely to complete parole successfully. Additionally, ex-offenders who had more support from family and friends, and had some self-efficacy, were more likely to stay away from drugs and persons who may influence them to revert to previous mischievous behavior. The Bahr et al. study found the results consistent with an integrated life course theory.

Rarely are ex-offenders thought of as vulnerable or marginalized; rather, they are seen as perpetrators against those who are vulnerable (Harley, Cabe, Woolums, & Turner-Whittaker, 2014). "Vulnerability involves several interrelated dimensions: capacities and actions, availability or lack of intimate and instrumental support, and neighborhood and community resources that may facilitate or hinder personal coping and interpersonal relationships" (Mechanic & Tanner, 2007, p. 1222). According to Geiger (2006), ex-offenders occupy one of the

most marginalized positions in the United States and that marginalization has become more extreme as a result of “the War on Drugs, the criminalization of poverty, mental illness and addiction, the technological advancement of criminal recordkeeping, and the media promotion and distribution of the image of the pathological criminal through popular culture” (p. 1191). Ex-offenders with disabilities are at risk for multiple vulnerabilities because they are politically, economically, socially, and legally ignored, excluded, and neglected in regard to employment and civil liberties. Research exposes the susceptibility of ex-offenders to workplace discrimination, discrepancy between employers’ stated attitudes toward the hiring of ex-offenders and their actual hiring practices (Holtzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2003, 2004, 2007; Schmitt & Warner, 2011; Varghese, Hardin, Bauer, & Morgan, 2010), limited education (Cronin, 2011), barriers to citizenship rights and legal disenfranchisement (Chung, 2013), and health issues, poverty, social stress, lack of social support, rurality, disability, and various personal limitations (Communities and Local Government, 2008; Geiger, 2006; Mechanic & Tanner, 2007; Pager, 2007; Sokoloff & Burgess-Proctor, 2011). Overwhelmingly, for ex-offenders these vulnerabilities are persistent rather than temporary ones (Harley et al., 2014). We contend that the vulnerability of ex-offenders in rural communities is fueled rather than supported by “social capital” (ways in which networks are linked), “building capital” (to build reciprocity and social solidarity through shared norms and loyalties), and “bonding capital” (to exclude and isolate ex-offenders from community reintegration and social and employment opportunities) (Mechanic & Tanner).

Disability Among Ex-offender Populations

Overwhelmingly, the literature on offenders is concerned with cognitive and intellectual disorders, mental health issues, and substance abuse and is limited with respect to physical, sensory,

or other types of disabilities. Otherwise, the literature addresses types of disabilities among offenders with respect to a particular vulnerability status in prison and risk factors (Harley et al., 2014). For example, Krienert et al. (2003) examined data collection practices, the number of offenders with physical disabilities, and services available to those with physical disabilities residing in state correctional facilities. The study revealed that some states did not have these data and did not know where to find programs within their jurisdiction. The diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and conduct disorder is overrepresented among the offender population when compared to the general population (Lindsay et al., 2013). Belcher (2014) stresses that ADHD can be, for some people, a pathway to prison because despite interventions at an early age, some people still develop antisocial and criminal behavior.

The type and degree of disability differs among ex-offenders based on gender because women and men experience disability differently. Compared to males, a larger percentage of female ex-offenders have histories of mental health disorders and co-occurring substance abuse and mental health issues (Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2010; McPhail, Falvo, & Burkner, 2012). Specifically, women offenders have a higher prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to exposure to traumatic events such as physical and sexual abuse, borderline personality disorder (BPD), depression, and substance abuse. According to McPhail et al., to meet the needs of female offenders, treatment and rehabilitation programs are necessary at all three levels of rehabilitation: in prison, the transition from prison to the community, and within the community. The type of disability also varies based on race/ethnicity. White offenders self-report higher prevalence rates of mental health problems than their counterparts (James & Glaze, 2006). Compared to Whites, Black and Latino males are twice as likely to be HIV positive, whereas female offenders of color are about six times as likely (Maruschak, 2006).

People with intellectual, cognitive, and developmental disabilities get involved with the

criminal justice system as both victims and suspects/offenders. Individuals with intellectual, cognitive, and developmental disabilities become victims of crime because of insufficient adaptive behaviors, constant interactions with “protectors” who exploit them, lack of knowledge on how to protect themselves, and living and working in high-risk environments that increase their vulnerability to victimization (Davis, 2009). As victims or suspects, people with intellectual disabilities may encounter the following problems: (a) they are frequently used by other criminals in law-breaking activities without understanding their involvement in a crime or the consequences; (b) they have a strong need to be accepted and go along to fit in; (c) they unintentionally give misunderstood responses to officers, which increase their vulnerability to arrest and incarceration; and (d) once in the criminal justice system, they are less likely to receive probation or parole because of an inability to understand or adapt to prison rules (Davis).

Research suggests the link between substance abuse and recidivism is substantial. Early studies identified more frequent use of alcohol and sedatives in rural drug abusers than urban ones (Blazer et al., 1985; Gamm, Hutchinson, Ballamy, & Dabney, 2002; Lambert, Gale, & Hartley, 2008; Leukefeld et al., 2002). More recent reports of substance abuse reveal substantial drug abuse problems in rural areas (Dixon & Chartier, 2016). According to Dixon and Chartier (2016) in a review of alcohol use patterns among urban and rural residents, alcohol use disorder (AUD) was lower for urban residents than for rural residents (29.6% and 33.3%, respectively). Rural drinkers were more likely to report a past year AUD. They found rural drinkers were more likely to surpass the recommended daily drinking limit for men (four drinks) and women (three drinks). Despite changes in rates for alcohol use and for driving under the influence (DUI), the rate of DUI arrests has significantly increased for female offenders and has remained higher in rural areas of the country (Webster, Matthew, Harp, Clark & Staton-Tindall, 2009). Moreover, being underage, drug problems, meeting clinical criteria for substance abuse and dependence, and being

referred to substance abuse treatment as opposed to education-based intervention and referral non-compliance and multiple DUI offenses have been attributed to rurality (Webster et al., 2009).

Substance Abuse Treatment

In rural communities, seeking treatment and services for substance abuse and mental health may be faced with barriers compounded by low socioeconomic status, cultural disparities, language barriers, and geographical challenges (Benevides-Vaello, Strode, & Sheeran, 2013). Treatment approaches grounded in urban approaches cannot be transferred and used in rural areas without changes conducive to the population (Leukefeld, Godlaski, Clark, Brown, & Hays, 2002). (See Chap. 28 on substance abuse.) The use of telecommunication in health care has shown to be effective in removing some of the barriers attributed to access to treatment and services. The use of video conferencing, telerobotics, picture phones, and interactive video platforms (telehealth) has increased access to specialty services, health information, and health education where services will otherwise be inaccessible to individuals in rural communities at a rate comparable to those in urban areas (Benevides-Vaello et al., 2013; Frueh, Henderson, & Myrick, 2005). Furthermore, telehealth or telemedicine has been advantageous in filling the gap for shortages of care providers that are one of the primary barriers to mental health and substance abuse services in nonmetropolitan areas in addition to transportation difficulties. (See Chap. 4 for discussion on the use of technology.)

In rural areas the rate of substance abuse is close to those in urban communities; however, greater disparities are found in the continuum of services for patients with substance use difficulties (Chan et al., 2015). Referrals to treatment are often by the criminal justice system, and individuals referred with substance abuse disorders often have comorbid psychiatric conditions, social difficulties, and psychological illness. Very few individuals seek and receive adequate treatment, which results in many individuals not benefitting from treatment

and specialty health services. Lack of health insurance, underserved minority populations, and low income contributes to the lack of health-care services and is exacerbated in remote rural areas where shortages of professionals and behavioral facilities exist (Chan et al., 2015). Warner and Leukefeld (2001) posit the lack of transportation plays an important role in treatment utilization of rural residents. Rural residents that identify with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) community face additional barriers such as stigma, negative attitudes that affect their well-being and health-care-seeking behaviors. A comparative study between rural and non-rural transgendered individuals reports overall similarities in substance use behaviors for heavy alcohol use, illicit drug use excluding marijuana, and small differences in binge drinking (10% rural vs. 7% non-rural) for transgendered participants (Horvath, Iantaffi, Swinburne-Romine & Bockting, 2014). High levels of self-reported substance use in probationers in rural communities show a need for treatment services. Individuals may be faced with additional barriers in receiving services, which may give an account for under-used treatment services by probationers (Oser, Harp, O'Connell, Martin, & Leukefeld, 2012). According to Oser et al. (2012), prescription opiates and methamphetamines tend to be higher in rural areas, and individuals on probation more likely abuse cocaine and alcohol than non-probationers. Without treatment, offenders that are substance abusers are likely to be repeat offenders, which increase the likelihood of recidivism among probationers. Leukefeld et al. (2002a) posit that incorporating and reinforcing a social skills component in substance abuse treatment where motivational interviewing, using structured stories, and role-playing may be effective in getting substance abusers in rural areas to talk about their problems and get engaged in the treatment process.

With the investment in therapeutic communities (TCs) in prison for substance abuse and alcohol treatment, a reduction in cost of drug-related crimes can be observed at a rate of \$4.00–\$7.00 (NIDA, 2012; Staton-Tindall et al., 2015). The use of TCs operates under the principle of behavior change and has been shown

to have positive results for the reduction of drug use following release, thus minimizing recidivism (Staton-Tindall et al., 2015; De Leon, 2010). Moreover, they postulate behavioral indicators, treatment utilization and other factors affect recidivism among participants released to urban and rural areas, and limited research exists demonstrating the effects of these factors. Findings from research carried out by Staton-Tindall et al. (2015) state that abstinent rate for both rural and urban offenders 1 year post release was similar, but urban offenders were more to engage in lifetime substance use treatment and self-help groups than rural offenders. Rural offenders were more likely to return to prison for new charges and less likely to report a substance abuse treatment history.

Employment Barriers

Barriers to employment are considered to be one of, if not, the primary reasons for high rates of recidivism among ex-offenders regardless of geographical location. According to Visser, Winterfield, and Coggeshall (2005), “one consequence of the tremendous growth in the number of persons under supervision of the criminal justice system, whether incarcerated, on parole, or on probation, is the effect of this criminal history in finding and keeping a job” (p. 295). However, Freeman (2003) argues that because offenders also did less well in the job market before incarceration, it is unclear whether incarceration per se reduces their employment and earning prospects. In this section, we present some of the most common barriers to employment for ex-offenders. These barriers are not necessarily distinct to rural areas but should be considered within that context.

In most rural areas, employment prospects are low. Unlike decades ago when rural residents worked primarily in the area in which they lived, today rural residents commute long distances to work. Within rural communities ex-offenders have to compete with local residents for existing jobs. Applying for jobs in rural communities in which they live, ex-offenders have the

disadvantage of everyone knowing each other, which makes it more difficult to avoid knowledge about their criminal history preceding them. As the job market becomes more compressed, the more difficult it becomes for ex-offenders in general and specifically rural ex-offenders to find employment. Often, the presence of a criminal record has a significant adverse effect on a person's job prospects in terms of employer's perception and an ex-offender's self-esteem (Holtzer et al., 2003). In fact, because of the likelihood of rejection in the job search process, ex-offenders need support in building self-esteem and staying the course. Just as with the ex-offender, rehabilitation counselors and job placement specialist will need to practice the art of patience and realize the job search process may be more elongated than short. In addition to providing motivation, rehabilitation counselors must be actively engaged in advocacy practices as it pertains to ex-offenders in rural communities (Ethridge, Dunlap, Boston, & Staten, 2014).

Another major barrier to employment of ex-offenders is the type of offense. Depending on the type of criminal offense, especially a felony, and regardless of how long ago the offense occurred, the person is automatically disqualified from certain employment opportunities (e.g., nursing home or medical attendant, childcare, any vulnerable population, barbering, plumbing, bartending, ambulance driving) because of legal restrictions on hiring ex-offenders (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll, 2004). In addition to the limitations imposed on the ex-offender as a result of his or her offense, more than 38,000 statutes impose "collateral consequences" (American Bar Association, 2011), thereby creating additional barriers, of which more than 80% operate as a denial of employment opportunities (Blumstein & Nakamura, 2009; Solomon, 2012). Thus, public policies aimed at being "tough on crime" (Pogorzelski, Wolff, Pan, & Blitz et al., 2005) have become a double-edge sword for ex-offenders. On the one hand, policies have eliminated public benefits and on the other hand have eliminated access to many of the better paying jobs in which ex-offenders could earn a better standard of living. Within a rural context, these

policies magnify the challenges of the job search for ex-offenders. Moreover, Freeman (2003) suggests ex-offenders' values or preferences that lead some persons to choose crime over legitimate activity can be critical in community and employment reentry.

The job application process provides additional challenges for ex-offenders when seeking employment, specifically, difficulty in responding to questions on job applications or interviews that ask about one's criminal record, frequently posing additional barriers toward successful employment outcomes. Overwhelmingly, the literature emphasizes the ex-offenders should not lie about his or her criminal record, rather, he or she should focus on presenting ways that demonstrate what they have gained from the experience and how they have turned their life around. For example, in discussing criminal background during the interview process of an application, the Workforce Professionals Training Institute (2006) recommends the following:

1. Express remorse. Employers like to see that a person knows what happened was wrong, since it shows personal reflection and growth and a desire for change.
2. State *that* you have changed. It can be as simple as saying "I am a different person today."
3. Explain *how* you have changed by listing the positive steps you have made in your life. This can cover a wide variety of areas – education, military service, work history, volunteer activities, and/or skills obtained in or outside of prison (p. 1).

According to the Workforce Professionals Training Institute, employers ask about criminal history not because they are particularly concerned about the actual event but out of a belief that past behavior predicts future behavior. As a job seeker, the ex-offender needs to demonstrate that he or she has changed his or her ways and will be a reliable, productive, and trustworthy worker. In the end, employers need to feel confident about whatever happened in the past will not be repeated. The basic premise of the recommendations by the Workforce Professionals Training Institute (2006)

is that it is vital for the ex-offender to “shift the conversation from the negative (i.e., what happened in the past) to the positive (i.e., what I can do for you today)” (p. 1).

As part of the job search, it is important for ex-offenders to know their rights. Lack of knowledge about their rights and the do’s and don’ts of the job search process is another barrier for ex-offenders. For example, in some cases ex-offenders do not have to reveal their history (e.g., when an arrest does not result in a conviction, a minor drug offense occurred and a certain number of years have passed since the conviction, or when one has erased the offense by obtaining a certificate of rehabilitation or similar document) to potential employers. It is, however, important to note that ex-offenders must avoid lying on job applications, which is a criminal offense (Harley et al., 2014; Mulqueen, 2013; Solomon, 2012). (See Table 12.1 for sources of ex-offender rights.) The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2012) recommends the following guidelines for employers to consider in reference to the applications of an ex-offender: (a) the nature of the offense, (b) the length of time since the last offense, and (c) the relationship of the offense to the job duties, rather than simply screening out anyone with a criminal record.

The counterpart to ex-offenders’ right in employment is “negligent hiring laws” (NHLs) that pertain to employers. NHLs are state laws specifying accountability among employers for criminal acts of their employee, particularly when reasonable caution is not taken during the hiring process (Mukamal, 2001). Because of the potential for liability, employers almost always err on the side of caution and not hire ex-offenders. A further point of contention for employers is the perception that the sources of protection of ex-offenders’ rights (see Table 12.1) create liability for them. The best advice to employers is to make sure they do due diligence in the hiring process of ex-offenders and simultaneously not violate their civil rights.

Furthermore, the impact of having a criminal record is exacerbated for racial or ethnic minorities. The criminal record penalty is substantially greater for African Americans and Latinos than

Table 12.1 Sources of ex-offender rights

Ban the Box
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
Fair Credit Report Act
Title VII of the Civil Rights of 1964
Certificate of Relief from Disabilities (misdemeanors and/or only one felony, applied for immediately after conviction)
Certificate of Good Conduct (more than one felony, applied for 3–5 years after completing a sentence)
Proof of Rehabilitation (allows an ex-offender to have occupational disqualifications lifted. The method to determine rehabilitation for employment purposes is defined by the state)
State laws on: (1) Waiver and appeal of disqualifying offenses, (2) restoration of eligibility for employment and occupational licensing, (3) expungement and sealing of criminal records, and (4) securing identification documents
The Second Chance Act of 2007, Reauthorization 2013

Adapted from EEOC (2012), Mulqueen (2013), Rodriguez, Farid, and Porter (2011), and Solomon (2012)

for White applicants in the job market (Harwin, 2013; Pager, Western, & Bonikowski, 2009; Solomon, 2012). Ex-offenders of color experience double stigmatization because of race and offender status and triple stigma because of a disability, especially a mental health disorder or substance abuse (Pager, 2007).

There is minority overrepresentation of ethnic minorities incarcerated in the juvenile and criminal justice system compared to their White counterparts that are being assessed for a psychiatric facility. Minority youths are more likely to face trial as adults and sent to jail than White youth who commit similar crimes (Rodney & Tachia, 2004). In an exploratory study of a rural juvenile court in Ohio, Mallett (2010) found that minority youth successfully completed probation more often than any other youth populations. Driving under the influence is more frequent in White, biracial, and Native American males and arrest rates for DUI more prevalent in rural communities (Dickson, Wasarhaley, & Webster, 2013). According to Willging et al. (2013), the prevalence of mental illness and substance dependence of rural Hispanic and Native American prisoners was high and similar to studies of minority women incarcerated. The lack of supports

increasing the risk of homelessness was found as a result of insufficient government-subsidized housing and economic hardships. Substance abuse and mental health treatment services are often unmet for female ex-offenders living in rural areas owing to insufficient mental health care and available services in rural areas (Willging et al., 2013).

Many ex-offenders have low educational attainment and experience difficulties in addition to those associated with having a criminal record which impacts employment and employability in addition to having a criminal history. Characteristically, ex-offenders have less education, deficit in work experience and cognitive ability, higher instances of substance abuse, and physical and mental health disorders when compared to the rest of the population (Pettinato, 2014). Vaselak (2015) explains how educational attainment of offenders may be influential in the level of crime committed. Individuals with higher educational attainment risk more if they choose to engage in criminal activities and are less likely to engage in crime because it may not be beneficial to them. However, crimes are not exclusive to individuals with low-level educational attainment; some criminal activities are deemed low skilled, e.g., drug dealing and assault where individuals of a lower educational attainment may engage in. Increased educational attainment may lead to higher-level crimes like white-collar crimes (e.g., fraud and forgery) notoriously associated with those of high social status and yield higher returns (Vaselak, 2015).

Sabates (2008) posits higher education is positively related to reductions in criminal behavior and is also associated with crimes that require specialized skills and is associated with older adults. Moreover, crimes committed that require minimal skills tend to be committed by young individuals with little education. Burglary, vandalism, theft, and drug-related crimes are associated with low-level skills set and examples of such crimes. Socially disadvantaged adolescents may choose a high-risk life of crime owing to the perception of earning a higher reward as opposed to those associated with low scholastic achievements (Sabates, 2008). Immigrants are often characterized as having low socioeconomic

status and criminogenic tendencies, which have been depicted by the media (Vaughn, Salas-Wright, DeLisi, & Maynard, 2014). They put forward immigrants to the United States are less likely to engage in nonviolent antisocial and violent behavior than native-born Americans.

Stigma of being an offender is an additional barrier for both the ex-offender and the employer. In regard to employer stigma, the employer is able to move the ex-offender to a status of “not quite human,” as described by Goffman (1963). Goffman defined stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (p. 3), which allows for the dehumanization of people, thus enabling employers (people) to “exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life changes” (p. 5). LeBel (2012) examined the perceptions of ex-offenders concerning stigma and discrimination they face in society because of their membership in disadvantaged groups and of these perceptions that are related to self-esteem. Ex-offenders identified their ex-offender status as the primary reason for discrimination. The majority of men and women reported being an ex-offender (65.3%) as the primary reason for discrimination, followed by race/ethnicity (48.0%), past drug/alcohol use (47.5), and lack of money or being poor (35.3%). A substantial minority of ex-offenders also reported experiencing discrimination because of gender (15.5%), religious beliefs (11.5%), HIV-positive status (9.5%), and a diagnosed mental disorder (8.5%; LeBel, 2012).

In a study of offenders' expectations of community reentry by Benson, Alarid, Burton, and Cullen (2011), the results were mixed based on race/ethnicity. Benson et al. found White offenders did not feel as though they will be stigmatized as a result of their convictions, and most expect to be reintegrated upon reentry within their community, whereas Latino and African American offenders were less likely to expect successful reintegration. However, the participants were all males, majority Latino and African American, with an average age of 19.5 years and were court ordered to boot camp as an alternative to prison. By merely being in boot camp, White offenders could have the perception that they were not in prison/incarcerated. Conversely, Latino and

African American offenders tend to feel alienated from American society. The results are supported by “both defiance theory and reintegrative shaming theory which predict members of minority groups are at greater risk of experiencing negative stigmatizing treatment than those who are Caucasian” (Benson et al., p. 390).

Finally, recidivism is the ultimate barrier to employment. Although research supports both the success (e.g., Graffam, Shinkfield, & Lavelle, 2014; Pew Center on the States, 2011) and failure (e.g., Moses, 2012; Visher et al., 2005) of ex-offender programs in reducing recidivism, the majority of the literature provides support for the effectiveness of such programming. Tripodi, Kim, and Bender (2010) found that although obtaining employment is not associated with a significant decrease likelihood of reincarceration, it is associated with significantly greater time to reincarceration. For those parolees who obtain employment spend more time crime-free in the community before returning to prison. In a study of 6561 offenders released from the Indiana Department of Corrections (IDOC) in the community shows education and employment were the primary predictors of post-release recidivism. Ex-offenders were more likely to return to custody if they were unemployed and did not complete high school (Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2012). Research has shown that family ties have strong implication for post-release employment and recidivism as it reinforces identity and recognition (Berg & Hubner, 2011).

Employers’ Attitudes and Hiring Practices

Employers’ attitudes toward ex-offenders can impact successful reentry and reintegration practices (Swensen, Rakis, Synder, & Loss, 2014). Swensen et al. suggest that a lack of collaborative community supports can increase recidivism rates and increase costs to an overburden criminal justice system. One major barrier to hiring ex-offenders is employers often rely on criminal records databases, which can reduce employment outcomes (Paul-Emile, 2014). Finlay (2009) predicts that job prospects for ex-offend-

ers will worsen overtime as employers continue to gain easier and cheaper access to criminal records. Digital profiling of ex-offenders often leads employers to disregard or exclude them from consideration of employment. Furthermore, if an individual has been arrested and not convicted, he or she technically has a criminal record that shows up on a background check (Solomon, 2012).

Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll (2004) found more than 60% of employers refuse to hire ex-offenders. Holzer et al. (2007) explain employers might be unwilling to hire those with criminal records for a host of reasons including risk of legal liability if an ex-offender harms a customer or coworker, the risk of financial liability if the ex-offender engages in theft, fears of personal violence, and negative signals that a period of incarceration have affected their general skills and trustworthiness. In an evaluation of the attitudes of human resource managers toward the hiring of nonviolent ex-offenders who have obtained higher education, McBride-Owens (2013) found ex-offenders’ time since last offense and type of crime committed and its relation to the job duties being advertised as the most important factors when hiring ex-offenders. Varghese, Hardin, Bauer, and Morgan (2010) found that ex-offenders with drug offenses and low qualifications were less likely to be considered for employment. For ex-offenders with misdemeanor charges, qualifications increase employability, but qualifications have no influence for applicants with a felony.

Pettinato (2014) exclaimed that having a criminal record reduces the chances of an ex-offender being hired by approximately 50%. The chances are even slimmer for those offenders that have committed a violent crime. Many employers refuse to hire individuals with criminal record, which will be made apparent when a criminal background check is conducted. However, several states have prohibited ex-offenders from all public employment and/or have restricted them from certain types of occupation. Obtaining employment after incarceration is encountered with the stigma of having a criminal record and the lack of work skills and educational qualifications, which are vital assets for prospective employers in the hiring process. Employers may be unwilling to

hire ex-offenders with a criminal record even when they exceed qualifications for the stated position (Berg & Huebner, 2011). There is no evidence indicating an ex-offender's criminal record is indicative of poor job performance. The inability of ex-offenders to obtain employment is more impactful on Black and Hispanic men who are the majority of prison populations. Furthermore, having a criminal record is more likely to hinder African American males than Whites from obtaining jobs (Pettinato, 2014). The criminal background check may be more harmful for Blacks than Whites as statistics show employers "discriminate against black men on the basis of perceived criminality" (Stoll, 2009).

Self-efficacy, self-appraisal, planning, and goal setting are important components of career development of any individual. With unique concerns facing ex-offenders contributing to their high unemployment rate, this process may be difficult. When a career development workshop was carried out between ex-offenders and non-offenders, result indicated no significant differences in self-efficacy, and both parties experienced growth after the workshop (Westerling III, Koch, Mitchell, & Clark, 2015). Ex-offenders are disadvantaged in the labor market due to not accumulating work experience while incarcerated or loss of skills obtained prior to incarceration (Stoll, 2009).

Community Reintegration into Rural Settings

Ex-offenders reintegrating into rural communities face many of the same problems (e.g., transportation, fewer employment opportunities, housing, and cost burden) and civil disabilities as other rural residents; however, ex-offenders are not only impacted more adversely and severely but differently. In addition, the challenges that rural ex-offenders face upon community reentry differ from their urban counterparts. According to Wodahl (2006), "rural communities differ from urban communities in many important ways," and "the unique features of rural communities make it likely that urban-based policies will be ineffective in rural settings" (p. 33). Also,

because rural communities are not homogenous, the reader is cautioned to understand the content of this chapter within this context, and not to make broad generalizations. Many of the unique cultural qualities of rural communities can be challenges to ex-offenders' community reentry. For example, rural residents' distrust of outsiders, being less supportive of public programs and resistance to government involvement in their lives, and reliance on solving their own problems create barriers for ex-offenders. And, when support services are available in rural communities, these cultural barriers make it likely that they will be underutilized (Wodahl, 2006). Zajac, Hutchison, and Meyer (2014) examined the challenges and issues related to prisoner reentry to rural Pennsylvania and found that employment, housing, and transportation emerged as key challenges facing ex-offenders returning to rural areas. In addition, stigma of being an "ex-con" also contributes to difficulties in the areas of employment and housing. Social services for ex-offenders are unevenly distributed between rural counties. Ironically, social services may be more readily available in rural counties as opposed to urban areas, but ex-offenders must compete with non-offenders for community social services that are available. (See Research Box 12.1.)

Research Box 12.1

See Zajac et al. (2014).

Objective: This research examined the challenges and issues related to prisoner reentry to rural Pennsylvania including release trends and projections. The four primary research goals were to: (1) estimate the number and characteristics of state prison and county jail prisoners likely to be released into rural Pennsylvania communities over the next 5 years, (2) identify and document reentry programs and services available to released state and local prisoners in rural Pennsylvania, (3) conduct a gap analysis of reentry services available in rural Pennsylvania for

successful reentry, and (4) provide public policy considerations.

Method: The study used existing data from the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole and from the study of county jails sponsored by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania and also collected original data through interviews and surveys of key corrections officials.

Results: Releases of county jail inmates to rural counties are projected to hold constant over the next 5 years; however, releases of state inmates are projected to increase slightly over the same time period. The most notable demographic trends among released inmates are an increase in the number of older inmates being released and a slight increase in the number of female inmates being released. Significant reentry needs for returning rural inmates include assistance with employment, housing, and transportation. Social services and programs in rural counties are unevenly distributed between rural counties. Most notably, there are very few reentry programs for sex offenders in rural counties and almost no programs that specifically address the most important rehabilitative needs of ex-offenders, including program that addresses ex-offenders' thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills, and their peer networks, all of which are strongly linked to recidivism reduction.

Conclusion: Rural reentry will continue to be an important issue in Pennsylvania, as projections indicated a slight increase over time in the number of inmates returning to rural areas, especially inmates released from state prisons.

Questions

1. What are the major challenges facing ex-offenders upon reentry in rural communities?
2. What rehabilitative issues are not being addressed for ex-offenders' reentry into rural communities?
3. What type of offenders has the least access to programs in rural settings?

Many of the services people in transition rely upon, e.g., food stamps, public housing, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), are not typically available to ex-offenders. Pogorzelski et al. (2005) referred to denial of these services as "invisible punishments" for ex-offenders who overwhelmingly entered the criminal justice system from economically disadvantaged communities and, more likely, to return to the same community or a similar one after release. These invisible punishments may have more negative consequences for women ex-offenders' transition back into rural communities for several reasons: (a) women are more likely to meet criteria for substance dependence and abuse (Mumola & Karberg, 2006), (b) women are more likely to have a mental health disorder (Steadman, Osher, Robbins, Case, & Samuels, 2009), (c) women are more likely to have physical disabilities (Maruschak, 2009), (d) women are more likely to be economically disadvantaged (Steffensmeier & Haynie, 2000), and (e) women are more likely to be HIV positive (Maruschak).

Women are more likely to be stigmatized for breaking the law owing to societal expectations of the behavior of a female and femininity. They are faced with many life adversities that involve resource deficiencies, difficult home life, more social problems, poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, and physical and sexual abuse (Estrada and Nilsson, 2012). In addition to gender neutral adversities experienced upon reentry, female ex-offenders face a number of challenges such as victimization, abuse, parental and relationship issues, and mental health issues that require gender-specific attention (Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013). Zust (2009) explains women offenders who are victims of intimate partner violence and at high risk for depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicide, and other mental illnesses. The need for gender-sensitive interventions to reduce depression in women serves as a means to reduce recidivism and proposes the use of cognitive therapy to raise awareness and empowerment for women.

Reentry into community settings and the employment sector requires ex-offenders to address personal and psychosocial adjustment issues inherent in the transition back into societal

living (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). The inability of ex-offenders to adjust to reentry may contribute to higher recidivism rates. The rehabilitation counselor should help the ex-offender to be prepared to deal with the following realities of reentry into communities:

1. A person with a criminal record is going to face greater challenges in getting employment, which may be exacerbated by rurality. However, “challenging is not the same as impossible” (Rosen, 2003, p. 1).
2. Take the long-term view. “As frustrating as it is, the basic rule still applies – a person must rebuild his or her resume over time. And as time goes by, the criminal offense becomes less of a factor in a person’s life” (Rosen, 2003, p. 1).
3. “To deal with the stigma associated with being incarcerated and having a criminal record which may negatively impact all aspects of community reintegration including vocational, financial, social and educational” (Harley, 2014, p. 3).

Post-incarceration and Transition to Rural Communities

Ex-offenders often lack sufficient human and social capital to help them navigate the challenges of life outside of prison (Morani, Wikoff, Linhorst, & Bratton, 2011; Wilson & Davis, 2006). In addition, almost half of ex-offenders have multiple medical problems, chronic conditions, or disabilities “that it is unrealistic to expect them to reenter society as ‘normal’ productive citizens without much greater assistance than the U.S. has been willing to provide” (Freeman, 2003, p. 11). The Affordable Care Act (ACA) as of 2016 was still in place by virtue of the US Supreme Court’s decision to uphold most provisions of the act. The ACA has implications for the criminal justice system including “the potential to reduce crime, recidivism, and criminal justice costs, while simultaneously improving the health and safety of communities” (Bainbridge, 2012, p. 3). Bainbridge states, how-

ever, that the US Surgeon General has identified the criminal justice population as a cost containment opportunity for health-care systems. Thus, the true impact of ACA remains to be seen for the offender population.

Preparation before release for reentry into communities and access to services, resources, and opportunities are recognized as key in helping ex-offenders obtain employment, reduce recidivism, and establish positive participation in society. Establishing multiagency initiatives, which often begin with in-prison services, is designed to prepare offenders for transition out of prison (Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation [MDRC], 2013). Transition planning while the offender is still incarcerated is critical to success once released for several reasons. First, exposure to crime as a way of life while incarcerated can serve as a stumbling block to rehabilitation through work (Holzer et al., 2003). While incarcerated, offenders may have ongoing exposure to and participation in violence. There exists an opportunity to change these types of behaviors and learn new ones that are appropriate for the workplace. Once released, the rehabilitation counselors can use various counseling techniques to work with the ex-offender on appropriate behavior, as well as recognizing consequences of inappropriate behavior. Second, once released and engaged in job search, the ex-offender typically will find the process to be lengthy and time-consuming, and the outcome may be a job with low pay and no benefits. In turn, the ex-offender may be tempted to return to criminal activity as a means of support. Again, there is an opportunity to work with the offender before release on various coping strategies, which can be continued post-incarceration. Third, because while incarcerated the primary focus is on exhibiting non-confrontational behavior and serving time as uneventfully as possible, limited attention is given to long-term goals (National Institute of Corrections, 2006). Having offenders to develop a transition plan encourages them to think about life after release. This transition plan can be used in the vocational rehabilitation process to develop an Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE). Finally, according to

Lichtenberger and Weygandt (2011), many offenders fear the lack of structure associated with being released and completing parole, which could become a barrier to community reentry. According to Morani et al., “structural factors have the capacity to facilitate or to hinder ex-offenders’ successful reintegration into the community, thereby impacting their chances of reoffending” (p. 348). The following sections discuss the series of steps that the ex-offender should do upon release.

Getting Connected to Services Ex-offenders face formidable challenges, and upon reentry to the community, primary identified services include employment and vocational, housing, clothing, and transportation (Morani, Wikoff, Linhorst, & Bratton, 2011). Moreover, the rate of recidivism is lower when services needed by ex-offenders are met within 90 days upon release into the community. Transition planning is essential prior to release to identify necessary services and treatment plans. Some offenders being released from prison may be faced with social and personal challenges such as depression, substance abuse, and disorganization from a state of order in prison to disorder in the community setting and require services to aid with the transition and health-related issues. Gender-specific services to combat challenges faced by men and women who are ex-offenders are important in their successful reintegration (Morani et al., 2011). Ex-offenders living in rural communities may have less access to health services. Cason (2009) posits people living in rural communities have less access to care and other specialty services, and the use of telerehabilitation can be used to ameliorate disparities and improve health services and deliver interventions.

Upon release ex-offenders should get connected to community services specialized in helping with primary needs of reintegration such as employment, housing, and treatment. Many reentry services are grant-funded programs to support offenders and provide an array of services (James, 2015). Family plays a key role in the reentry process, therefore seeking support from family in addition to providing families

with the education, counseling, and material assistance in helping their loved ones in the reentry process (Gaynes, 2005).

Have an Assessment Once the offender is released from incarceration, an initial step should be to have a full assessment including vocational, psychological, educational, and financial. Concurrently or simultaneously, the ex-offender should do a self-assessment. The self-assessment will assist the ex-offender in making an honest inventory of his or her strength/skills and abilities and challenges, as well as identify related stressors or triggers. In tandem, the full assessment and self-assessment can help to increase the ex-offender’s self-awareness and may help him or her to avoid employment and personal situations for which he or she is not well suited. For example, information from both assessments may help the individual to discover that he or she does not work well under pressure or may find it difficult to work outside (University of Akron Career Center, 2009).

Volunteer Work Often, the initial step to improve quality of life for many ex-offenders is getting their foot-in-the-door for employment and community reentry. While there is great pressure to obtain employment upon release, the rehabilitation counselor and job placement specialist may consider working with the ex-offender to establish volunteer work and/or job shadowing experiences. Granted, neither of these will provide the offender with income, it can however provide them with an opportunity for employment. According to Rosen (2003), “the best way to get a great job in the future is to get any job you can right now, and perform well” (p. 2). According to Morrow-Howell, Hong, and Tang (2009), the benefits to volunteering have been reported to make a difference in the lives of volunteers, other people, and the community. Individuals who accumulated more volunteer hours express gaining more benefits and stay in their volunteer role longer. The benefit of volunteering is increased if volunteers are compensated with a stipend though it is argued receiving compensation may defeat the purpose of altruism.

tic nature of volunteering. In addition, Amin (2009) postulate that volunteering may be perceived as an opportunity to secure low to medium skilled work in the economy.

Transitional Jobs Transitional jobs (TJ) “is a model that provides temporary subsidized jobs and support services to help build the employability of individuals with little or not recent work history” (MDRC, 2013, p. 1). MDRC emphasizes that for ex-offenders, TJ programs provide a source of legitimate income during a critical period just after release. To date, TJ programs for ex-offenders dramatically increase employment rates initially while individuals are working in the subsidized jobs; however, the long-term improvements in labor market outcomes are yet to be determined.

Ex-offender Reentry Risk to Rural Communities

Wodahl (2006) suggests that not only does the ex-offender face barriers for transition into the community but these barriers also present problems or risk to the rural communities to which ex-offenders return. In response, researchers recommend the development of specific policy interventions to meet the unique features of rural life. Wodahl extended this recommendation to include combining research on ex-offender reentry with knowledge from other disciplines such as sociology, addictions, and health care to gain a better understanding of how these obstacles impede transition into rural settings. It is important to note that not all ex-offenders reentering communities pose a threat, and, equally important, it would be naive to assume that some ex-offenders are without risk. The reader should also consider that national data reveal that although half of ex-offenders that are reincarcerated within 3 years, many are for technical violations of parole conditions rather than for new crimes (MDRC, 2013).

Currently, there is a growing consensus that reentry strategies should be built on a framework known as Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR). The RNR approach is designed to help correction agencies identify and target resources to offenders

who are at higher risk of recidivism and provide individualized services to address behaviors and circumstances associated with crime. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is frequently included as a service to address values and thinking patterns that are considered as favorable to crime (MDRC, 2013). The RNR principle when applied appropriately is effective in decreasing the rate of recidivism among offenders inclusive of sex offenders (Marshall & Marshall, 2012). The “risk” principle states that treatment resources should be allocated to those offenders that are high risk, and providers should do more extensive treatment with this population when resources allow. High-risk offenders than low risk tend to do more harm if they recidivate and require more treatment attention. The “needs” principle operates on the premise that treatment providers are to address identifiable risk factors (criminogenic factors) that are able to be addressed and changed in treatment. Addressing these factors will help to prevent reoffending and maximize treatment effectiveness. Responsivity principle requires treatment providers to tailor treatment delivery to the client (e.g., personality, social status, cognitive functioning) referred to as specific responsivity. Treatment provider should also implement treatment approaches shown to be most effective, e.g., CBT across various offender populations (general responsivity), and uses techniques such as role-playing, reinforcement, and modeling (Marshall & Marshall, 2012).

The use of CBT has researched to be effective as a primary form of therapy as well as part of combination treatment strategies (McHugh, Hearon, & Otto, 2010). The use of CBT has been proven beneficial with addressing substance abuse and promotes coping skills while reinforcing the behavior of abstinence (Chandler, Fletcher, & Volkow, 2009). McHugh et al. (2010) proposed the use of CBT in working with individuals with substance abuse problems because it is effective when dealing with co-occurring disorders or dual diagnosis. Coping and communication skills training are important component of CBT for substance abuse, and it incorporates relationship and interpersonal skills building exercises as a method of mending relationships.

Case Study of Henry

Henry is a 48-year-old Latino male who was recently released after spending 12 years in prison for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and possession of narcotics. Henry grew up in a single-parent home with his mother and four other siblings in a rural area in Virginia. He has not been in contact with them for many years, and his mother has stopped visiting Henry after 5 years of being incarcerated. Henry expressed having three children who are living with their mother who has full custody in a neighboring town, and he is allowed to see them once per month in a supervised visit. Henry lives in a halfway house where he is required to seek employment as a condition of his release, and he earns enough income to buy groceries from doing odd jobs in the neighborhood.

Henry has reported feeling hopeless, restlessness, sleep deprivation, and worthlessness to Dr. Stuart, his rehabilitation counselor, whom he has been seeing for vocational services for the past 2 months because of difficulties finding employment. Henry did not complete high school and had dropped out in the 10th grade but expressed having held several jobs doing retail and landscaping. He has acquired some skills working in the kitchen of the prison for 2 years where he was incarcerated. Henry reports “wanting to get his life back” so he can live independently but finds it difficult to do with a criminal record. He expressed wanting to reconnect with his family and in developing a relationship with his children.

Questions

1. What services could be useful to help Henry achieve full independence?
2. Would you consider Henry to be “job ready” or employable? Why or why not?
3. Are there alternative housing options that would be a good fit for Henry?
4. What theoretical approach would you implement to help Henry?

Summary

Offender populations with disabilities face numerous barriers to community reentry and employment. Often, their readjustment and rehabilitation are hampered by substance abuse and addiction. For many offenders in rural areas, the problems they experienced are complicated further by local stigma and societal attitudes, limited employment opportunities, and housing restrictions. In addition, their disabilities may be hidden, but influence their behaviors, which may be unacceptable to residents and employers in their communities. Counselors working with offender populations in rural areas must be creative in their approach to providing services and identifying community resources. Also, they must work for changes in policies regarding offender status and disability. It is important for counselors to be as persistent as offender populations with disabilities residing in rural areas if a successive outcome is to be achieved.

Resources

- Adapting Offender Treatment for Specific Populations (Substance Abuse Treatment for Adults in the Criminal Justice System-SAMHSA): <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK64128/>
- Bellotti, J., Derr, M., Berk, J., & Paxton, N. (2011, March 16). Examining a new model for prisoner re-entry services: The evaluation of beneficiary choice. Final Report: http://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/Examining_a_new_Model_for_prisoner_Reentry_Services/FINAL_REPORT_examining_new_model_prisoner_reentry_services.pdf
- Community Resources for Justice: <http://www.crj.org>
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: <http://www.eeoc.gov>
- Employment Information Handbook for Ex-offenders. U.S. Department of labor: <http://www.exoffender.org/up/doc/Exohandbook.prd>

National Transitional Jobs Network: <http://www.heartlandalliance.org/ntjn>

Reentry Policy Council: <http://www.csgjusticecenter.org/reentry>

Reentry Programs for Ex-Offenders by State: <http://www.healpforsfelons.org/reentry-programs-ex-offenders-state/>

U.S. Department of Justice Reentry Site: <http://www.esgjusticecenter.org>

Learning Exercises

Self-Check Questions

1. What type of gateways are female offenders more likely to enter into criminal behaviors?
 2. What are the recommendations for an ex-offender to discuss his or her criminal background on a job application or in an interview?
 3. How are rural communities different than urban areas in responding to ex-offenders' reentry into their community?
2. Which of the following do offender populations have lower levels than the general household population?
 - (a) Poverty
 - (b) Intelligence
 - (c) Education
 - (d) Children
 3. Which of the following has a substantial link to recidivism?
 - (a) Lack of transportation
 - (b) Inadequate housing
 - (c) Substance abuse
 - (d) Type of disability
 4. Compared to the general population, which types of disabilities are overrepresented among offender populations?
 - (a) Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorder
 - (b) Reactive attachment disorder and learning disabilities
 - (c) Dissociative identity disorder and substance abuse
 - (d) Addictive disorders and sleep-wake disorders
 5. Which of the following services are not available to offenders in transition to the community?
 - (a) Food stamps
 - (b) Public housing
 - (c) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
 - (d) All of the above
 - (e) None of the above

Experiential Exercises

1. Volunteer or complete a service-learning project in a community-based center for ex-offenders.
2. Interview an ex-offender to identify his or her barriers to reentry in a rural community or small town.
3. Develop a resource manual for counselors and other human service providers working with offender populations in rural areas.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Which part of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against inmates with disabilities?
 - (a) Title I
 - (b) Title II
 - (c) Title IV
 - (d) Title V
2. Which of the following do offender populations have lower levels than the general household population?
 - (a) Poverty
 - (b) Intelligence
 - (c) Education
 - (d) Children
3. Which of the following has a substantial link to recidivism?
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5. Which of the following services are not available to offenders in transition to the community?
 - (a) Food stamps
 - (b) Public housing
 - (c) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
 - (d) All of the above
 - (e) None of the above
6. Which of the following is an advantage of a full assessment and self-assessment for the ex-offender?
 - (a) Gain insight into the behavior of others
 - (b) Avoid employment and personal situations for which he or she is not well suited
 - (c) Learn how to answer self-incriminating questions
 - (d) Learn how to seek support from family members
7. Which of the following reentry strategies is designed to help identify resources for offenders who are at higher risk of recidivism?

- (a) Psychoanalysis
 - (b) Risk-Needs-Responsivity
 - (c) Risk-Deflation-Inflation
 - (d) Trans-theoretical model
8. Which of the following is more likely to be stigmatized for breaking the law?
- (a) Women
 - (b) Men
 - (c) Adolescents
 - (d) Older Adults
9. Which of the following groups is the criminal record penalty substantially greater?
- (a) African Americans and Whites
 - (b) Latinos and Whites
 - (c) Whites and Hispanics
 - (d) African Americans and Latinos
10. Which of the following is a reason that employers are reluctant to hire ex-offenders?
- (a) Number of hours required to work
 - (b) Equal opportunity liability
 - (c) Potential for liability
 - (d) Stereotypes

Key

- 1 – B
- 2 – C
- 3 – C
- 4 – A
- 5 – D
- 6 – B
- 7 – B
- 8 – A
- 9 – D
- 10 – C

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