



This Criminal Justice Task Force project, led by Northeastern Law Professor Deborah Ramirez, seeks to address two national problems: recidivism and the labor shortage. According to the United States Department of Justice, approximately sixty-eight percent of individuals who are released from incarceration are re-arrested within three years. One major contributing factor to this high recidivism rate is that in every state - except Massachusetts - there is no centralized, coordinated state-wide/ state-funded reentry system offering every person coming out of prison or jail the essential re-entry resources they need to become productive members of society.

Instead, in each state—except Massachusetts—the system is one of specialized, uncoordinated privately-funded re-entry organizations. These state-specific programs vary in their scope, focus and efficacy. Those coming out of prison or jail have trouble searching for a private reentry program for which they can qualify. The savings accrued when private reentry organizations are successful—namely, reducing the costs associated with recidivism—rebound to the state and not to the private reentry organization. Moreover, organizations willing to provide services and job-training to those coming out of prison or jail have trouble forging relationships with a myriad of private uncoordinated reentry programs.

Hence, the first step to providing consistent, comprehensive and stable reentry resources is to create a state-wide/ state-funded reentry network which will provide essential re-entry resources to every person coming out of jail or prison, regardless of probation or parole status. Massachusetts is the only state in the country to have built this infrastructure by creating the Community Justice Support Centers (CJSC) —19 offices with a state-funded budget of 30 million dollars. This Massachusetts model provides one-stop shopping for both the people coming out of jail seeking essential reentry resources, and for the community partners that seek to provide these individuals with resources.

This infrastructure, designed by Professor Ramirez and Northeastern’s Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF), is a vast improvement over the haphazard approach prevailing in other states, but it is not sufficient. To be effective, it must lead to viable employment. CJTF seeks to move to the next step: building a jail to jobs pipeline. Research establishes that obtaining—and

retaining—a job is the number one predictor for successful reentry. Currently, there are more jobs than there are people to fill them. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, we have over 10 million job openings in the U.S., but only around 6 million unemployed workers.

CJTF seeks to design and execute, for Massachusetts, a pipeline from jail to jobs. Given its state-wide re-entry network, Massachusetts is in a unique position to model such a program. The pipeline would match the employers who need workers with those returning from jail who need jobs. A first step would be to educate prospective employers on how to hire and train individuals returning from prison or released from jail. In Massachusetts, 25% of residents have a criminal record. Integrating these residents into the labor force will go a long way to solving the labor shortage problem while it addresses the challenges of recidivism.

CLEAR's Criminal Justice Task Force, consisting of students, judges, researchers, and stakeholders, serves as the academic partner for the Massachusetts Community Justice Support Centers (CJSC). Two years ago, CJTF successfully lobbied the legislature to create this reentry network. It supports the CJSC's by convening stakeholders, partnering with local sheriffs and prisons to coordinate services, mapping out private resources available for all of the 19 offices and creating an app to access those resources. Working with the CJTF, the CJSC's were awarded a State Justice Institute grant to train volunteers to become mentors and navigators for those leaving prison. This year CJTF successfully lobbied the state legislature to fully fund this network.

With support, CLEAR'S Criminal Justice Task Force would convene stakeholders from four arenas: private employers, educational training partners, the CJSC and public officials. CJTF would lead this collaborative effort to design an effective jail to jobs pipeline. The CJSC was awarded a \$900,000 from the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance to implement this plan. Led by Professor Ramirez, CJTF would assist the CJSC to recruit employers for the pipeline. Specifically, funding would support a project coordinator and convening opportunities.