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Framework for Reducing Recidivism in the District of Columbia

Second Chance Act Statewide Adult Recidivism Reduction Strategic Planning Program

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Introduction

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) (Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice) awarded the District of Columbia's Department of Corrections (DOC) a Second Chance Act grant in 2017 to develop a strategic plan to reduce recidivism in the District by 50 percent over five years. Recognizing the many parts of the District's government and the many federal justice agencies that impact recidivism, the DOC and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) convened a strategic planning group to develop the goals and share information and insights regarding the many issues surrounding reentry and recidivism. The DOC used its grant to contract with the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) to staff this process, analyze available data, and conduct information gathering in order for the District to develop its plan.

The Goals and Vision of the Strategic Plan

The DOC and CJCC convened four meetings of the strategic planning group between February and mid-June 2018. At the second of these, the members established both the indicators of recidivism they wished to measure and the vision for the District that they wanted the plan to help move forward. First, the group agreed that the plan should track rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration as measures of recidivism. Second, the group's vision for the plan focused on the role to be played by reducing recidivism in a larger effort to improve the health of communities and transform what justice looks like in the District. Recognizing the critical role that young adults and women play in the overall health of communities, the group chose to focus on these two populations for recidivism reduction efforts.

Vera's Approach to Our Work

Vera began its work in February 2018, conducting initial telephone interviews with District and federal agencies to determine whether and how they measured recidivism, and to understand what current efforts were underway to reduce recidivism. Using the information gathered in the phone interviews, Vera then conducted follow-up, in-person interviews with representatives of the public agencies most directly involved with the success of returning citizens, including:

- the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP);
- the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC);
- the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA);
- the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH);
- the Department of Corrections (DOC);
- the Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens' Affairs (MORCA);
- the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD);*
- the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice;

- the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE);
- the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG);
- the Public Defender Service (PDS);
- the Pretrial Services Agency for the District of Columbia (PSA);*
- the Resources to Empower And Develop You Center (READY Center); and,
- the U.S. Parole Commission.

*indicates interview was conducted by telephone only.

Vera staff also conducted an extensive review of agencies' policies and programs; research on best and evidence-based practices around recidivism reduction and reentry; and previous research and recidivism-reduction and reentry plans completed for the District. The latter included the following reports:

- *2003 Comprehensive Reentry Strategy for Adults in the District of Columbia*
- *Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) implementation MOU*
- *2009-2015 Strategic Plan for Persons with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness or Co-Occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Involved in the Criminal Justice System in the District of Columbia*
- *2011 Reentry Steering Committee Report and Recommendations*
- *Measuring Recidivism in the District of Columbia 2012*
- *CJCC's 2013 Reentry in the District of Columbia: Supporting Returning Citizens' Transitions into the Community*
- *Returning Home: A Collective Action Plan for Reentry in the District of Columbia*

This report is informed by these previous efforts, and its recommendations build on them. Finally, Vera conducted a quantitative study of recidivism in a DOC release cohort. The full study, *Exploring Recidivism in the District of Columbia's FY 2015 Department of Corrections Release Cohort*, is available in the Appendix to this report.¹ The highlights of that study are presented below.

Key Observations

This report is intended to provide the framework for a strategic plan for recidivism reduction in the District. It is informed by the vision and goals of the strategic planning group gathered through the strategic planning sessions, as well as by information and common themes developed through the interviews with various individuals and agencies.

Four key observations are fundamental to the recommendations in this report:

1. The District has already embarked on a number of strategic initiatives aimed at reducing recidivism, crime, and violence. These enjoy the support of the District's elected leadership and are a firm basis on which to build further efforts.
2. The commitment of everyone Vera spoke with to improving the odds for returning citizens and to putting in place the strongest evidence-based practices to do that was inspiring.
3. There are simply not enough resources—from treatment slots to affordable places to live—to make it easy for returning citizens to realize their full potential and be successful members of the community.
4. The District faces unique and complex challenges in achieving its vision of justice for its neighborhoods because of the bifurcated federal-local structure of its criminal justice system.

Why Recidivism Matters

Many people incarcerated for the first time, whether in jail or prison, are there because they are young, lack sufficient education to make a decent life, have been introduced to drugs or to lower-level offenses like retail theft by their peers, and have graduated to something more serious. Once detained or incarcerated, the risk that these men and women will reoffend rises exponentially—unless this trajectory is interrupted. If returning citizens are not offered the services they need, and the support of the community and the justice system, their lives are likely to continue with one incarceration after another.

Those returning without support, who then continue to commit offenses, represent a threat to the safety and well-being of everyone; and, for those over-supervised and in communities that are over-policed, their lives may end up on the same path because they have been reincarcerated unnecessarily. Those lives represent lost, untold assets to the District; families in crisis; and greater risks to public safety.

To many, reducing recidivism is about watching returning citizens closely so they don't reoffend or, if they do, catching them immediately and returning them to jail or prison. However, we know, from years of research, that reducing recidivism is far more complicated. Seeking the *success* of returning citizens, not waiting and watching for their failure, must be the first goal of all who have contact with them. This requires coordinated efforts by the community, government and private service providers, and criminal justice agencies. Shunning those with "a criminal record" or sweeping up those on supervision for minor infractions is counter-productive to public safety. This does not mean that returning citizens should not be monitored or be held responsible for their violations or criminal activity. It requires, rather, being more measured in response, offering incentives as well as sanctions, and recognizing the harm that

further and more severe punishment, when unwarranted by the seriousness of the behavior or the individual's risk, is likely to do to this individual's success and the community's safety.

Principles to Guide a Plan to Reduce Recidivism

The recommendations in this report are framed by six key principles distilled from Vera's work with the strategic planning group and interviews with key stakeholders. They include the following:

1. Women and young adults are critical assets to the current and future health of the District. Their potential is often lost when they have contact with the criminal justice system, when they become "offenders" and "ex-offenders" with all the collateral damage that brings. Thus, the District loses those who might build strong, healthy families; bring energy, creativity, and innovation to the creation of new economic opportunities for the District; contribute to the tax base of the city; and raise the next generation of productive, contributing citizens.
2. The health of communities is influenced by how criminal justice agencies respond to the behavior of all who live in the District. A robust, evidence-based vision of what produces public safety can help turn the presence of crime into an opportunity to rebuild a community's sense of agency and engagement in its own safety.
3. It is critical that agents of the criminal justice system focus on restoring the ability of those who have already become enmeshed in the justice system to become self-motivated assets to their families and communities.
4. To do that effectively, criminal justice agencies and human service providers need a shared, evidence-based approach to public safety that is not focused solely on law enforcement, and a collaborative partnership built on mutual respect and support in pursuit of a common mission.
5. All agencies whose work touches on the task of restoration of people and communities should have articulated agreements to share, as allowed by law, information about those they serve when it is in the interests of those served; to avoid unnecessary duplication of services; to share resources; and to coordinate their work.
6. Both human service and criminal justice agencies need the full-throated support, political and financial, of all elected officials and community leaders in the District to work toward reducing the rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration of its residents, and thus toward strengthening communities.

What We Know About Recidivism in the District

The District of Columbia has undertaken past analyses to guide recidivism reduction efforts. In 2012, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) commissioned a study to assess recidivism in the District. It focused on three outcomes: rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration. The study found that among those individuals released from the D.C. DOC in FY2007, 62 percent were rearrested, 36 percent were reconvicted, and 36 percent were reincarcerated over a three-year follow up period.² These rates are similar to those found in two previous studies by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). A BJS study that tracked releasees from prisons in 11 states in 1983 found that 63 percent were rearrested, 47 percent were reconvicted and 41 percent were reincarcerated within three years of release.³ A second BJS study that followed releasees from prisons in 15 states in 1994 found a 68 percent rearrest rate, 47 percent reconviction rate and 25 percent reincarceration rate within three years of release.⁴

Vera's current study examines recommitments to DOC in a FY2015 DOC release cohort over a follow-up period of 33 to 44 months. The study sample is drawn from the District of Columbia Custodial Population Study, which included both individuals sentenced to DOC and those detained pretrial.⁵ DOC provided post-release justice, socioeconomic, and health data through the end of May 2018 for the study sample. Vera did not have access to data on rearrests, reconvictions, or reincarceration at BOP.

Two subgroups of the release cohort hold particular interest for recidivism mitigation initiatives in D.C. The first is females and the second is young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years. Analyses were conducted on each of the three samples. A summary of results for the full release cohort are presented below, while those for females and young adults are found in the respective sections of this report. The complete analyses for all three samples are available in the Appendix.

Characteristics of the Release Cohort

The primary characteristics of the 7,744 individuals released from the D.C. DOC in FY2015 were as follows. The majority were male (87 percent) and Black (91 percent). The mean age at release was 35 (± 12) years. The mean years of schooling for the release cohort was 11 (± 2). Upon entry to DOC, less than one third of the release cohort was employed full-time (31 percent) and almost one half was unemployed (46 percent). The median length of stay from arrest to release was 24 days.

Recommitment to DOC

Ten percent of the release cohort was recommitted to DOC within six months (180 days). About half of releasees were recommitted after 3½ years (1,260 days). The median time to re-commitment after release was 259 days. By comparison, the CJCC study referenced above found that in the FY2007 D.C. DOC

cohort, 36 percent were reconvicted and 36 percent were reincarcerated over a three-year follow up period. The relatively high rate of recommitment in the current study may be partly explained by the fact that many people return to DOC as pretrial detainees and are not sentenced at release.

Factors Associated with Recombitment

The current study demonstrates that certain subgroups of the FY2015 DOC release cohort were more likely to be recommitted to the DOC after release than others.⁶ Regarding the two subgroups that are prioritized in this report, women had a lower probability of recommitment than men, and young adults aged 18-24 had a higher probability of recommitment than those over age 24.

Most subgroup differences in the probability of recommitment in the FY2015 DOC release cohort persisted even after accounting for the influence of demographic, socioeconomic, health, and justice factors. Generally, these findings suggest that it may be fruitful for recidivism reduction efforts to focus on:

- younger releasees,
- those identified as racial or ethnic minority groups,
- releasees with lower levels of education, and
- those charged with crimes specified as violent/dangerous according to the D.C. Code Chapter 22 Section 4501.

Importantly, the higher probability of recommitment for males compared to females was explained, at least partially, by the influence of socioeconomic factors. Sex differences in recommitment were diminished in size and no longer statistically significant after accounting for the impact of education. In other words, years of schooling was a significant moderator of sex differences in recommitment risk. Notably, this study demonstrates that educational attainment is a protective factor for recidivism, especially among males, giving further weight to arguments for the value of spillover effects of investments in education. This finding strongly points to the potential value of ensuring that male releasees have access to education as well as the supports they need to attain their educational goals.

Regarding factors associated with recidivism, key findings in the analysis of the FY2015 DOC release cohort echo those in the 2012 CJCC study, including higher rates of recidivism among males, black releasees, and younger people. Further research is needed to examine the mechanisms behind these findings. For example, while the communities with the highest rates of recidivism are also primarily black communities (Wards 7 and 8, and some parts of Ward 5), perhaps it is factors such as living in neighborhoods with high rates of unemployment and low levels of educational attainment, and being

young with a prior history of arrest or incarceration, as well as structural factors such as racial discrimination, that contribute to the high risk of recommitment among black people.

Target Populations for Recidivism Reduction

At the first strategic planning session, on April 24, 2018, the strategic planning group identified two populations for which specific recidivism-reduction efforts would be targeted. These two populations are women and young adults (ages 18 through 24). The following sections discuss the unique characteristics and needs of each target population and offer recommendations for reducing recidivism among them within the District.

Responding to the Unique Needs of Justice-Involved Women

Women make up a smaller proportion of those in the criminal justice system nationally. In 2016, women made up 14.5 percent of people incarcerated in jail and 7.4 percent of all people incarcerated in state and federal prisons.⁷ In the District in 2015, 12 percent of DOC's custodial population and 4 percent of DC Code offenders in BOP custody were women.⁸ In 2017, women made up 16.4 percent of those supervised by CSOSA.⁹

Nationally, women also tend to have lower rates of recidivism than men. A study of national releases in 1994 found that, in the three years following release from prison, 58 percent of women were rearrested (compared to 68 percent of men), 40 percent were reconvicted (compared to 48 percent of men), and 39 percent returned to prison (compared to 53 percent of men).¹⁰ One study of 2005 national release data measured recidivism five years out, finding that approximately one-quarter of women were rearrested within six months of release, one-third within one year, and just over two-thirds within five years. All of these rates were lower than those of men, regardless of the incarceration offense or the recidivism period.¹¹ A second study of this release cohort extended the period of measurement to nine years post-release (2005-2014) and found 77 percent of women were rearrested at least once during that time period (compared to 84 percent of men).¹²

Two other studies have tracked women's recidivism over an eight-year period. The first followed 506 women released from prison to parole in 1998 and found 47 percent of the women recidivated, with 23 percent (of the total) sustaining a new conviction and 25 percent returning to prison for a technical violation. Additionally, 40 percent of the women that recidivated did so within the first year.¹³ The second eight-year study looked at rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration for federal releases between 2005

and 2013 and found, across the board, women were less likely than men to be rearrested (36 percent, compared to 52 percent of men), reconvicted (22 percent, compared to 34 percent of men), and reincarcerated (15 percent, compared to 27 percent of men) during their reentry.¹⁴

The 2012 CJCC study of recidivism in the District found that, overall, men and women recidivated at roughly the same rate.¹⁵ Interestingly, though, that study did find differences by gender among the three measures of recidivism—women were 7 percent less likely to be rearrested and 9 percent less likely to be reincarcerated than men, but were 8 percent *more* likely to be reconvicted than men.¹⁶ The numbers for revocations in the District, however, are more similar to national trends—among those supervised by CSOSA in 2017, women accounted for only 10.9 percent of those revoked to incarceration, despite making up 16.4 percent of the supervised population.¹⁷

Drivers of Recidivism Among Women

While some drivers of women’s recidivism are similar to those of men, research shows that women coming into the justice system tend to be more socially marginalized, creating unique and complex challenges to reentry.¹⁸ These challenges intersect with wider systems of racial and gender inequality and impede successful reentry in ways that are not easily captured in recidivism rates. Women are more likely to be mothers of minor children and to be the primary caretakers of those children. One study found that 61.7 percent of women in state prison (compared to 51.2 percent of men) were parents of minor children, and that 77.1 percent of women (compared to 26.1 percent of men) provided most of the daily care for their children prior to incarceration.¹⁹

Justice-involved women’s higher rates of mental illness, substance use disorders, poverty, and histories of trauma have been linked to reentry challenges and poor outcomes. Nationally, 69.2 percent of women in state prisons and 72.3 percent of women sentenced to jail met the criteria for drug dependence or abuse.²⁰ Approximately 20 percent of women in state prisons (compared to 14 percent of men) and 32.3 percent of women sentenced to jail (compared to 25.5 percent of men) met the threshold for serious psychological distress, and 65.8 percent of women in state prisons (compared to 34.8 percent of men) and 67.9 percent of women in jail (compared to 40.8 percent of men) had a history of mental health problems.²¹ A 2002 study of national jail inmates found that 44.9 percent of women (compared to 11.2 percent of men) were victims of prior physical abuse, and 35.9 percent of women (compared to 4 percent of men) were victims of prior sexual abuse; for 66.7 percent of women (compared to 10.5 percent of men) the abuse was by an intimate partner.²²

Past work in the District has demonstrated similar trends with regards to mental illness and substance use. CSOSA’s 2015 data revealed that “while nearly half of men on parole or supervised release had an

identified mental illness... [the prevalence of] mental health issues among women was higher at nearly 80 percent.”²³ One study of women returning home from prison found that even though men convicted of drug offenses are more likely to recidivate than women convicted of drug offenses, “[i]n the months following their release from prison women are more likely than men to engage in drug use, to have problems stemming from drug use, and to have partners who drink or use drugs daily.”²⁴

Women also experience greater employment challenges than men. One study found only 40 percent of women were employed at the time of their arrest compared to 60 percent of men and another found only one-third of women were employed 8-10 months post-release compared to over half of men.²⁵ Additionally, women are far less likely than men to participate in job placement services, be legally employed following release, or be able to meet their financial needs post-release, and are more likely to rely on public assistance.²⁶ Women who are able to obtain jobs after release earn, on average, \$1.50 less per hour than formerly incarcerated men.²⁷ The report, *D.C. Women in Prison: Continuing Problems and Recommendations for Change*, noted that offering women a working wage for their labor while incarcerated reduces recidivism and improves employment opportunities post-release, though many correctional institutions across the country pay women well under \$1 per hour, if they pay them at all.²⁸

The literature and research on the value of intimate relationships to reduce recidivism for women is mixed, and largely overlooks the substance of such relationships.²⁹ A 2003 study of women on probation “found that women who were living with a significant other were less likely to be involved in non-drug crimes while these same relationships enhanced the likelihood of drug-related activities,” but found that living with an intimate partner did not have a statistically significant impact on reducing recidivism over eight years post-release.³⁰ This limitation is serious, given that though “women report roughly the same degree of family support as men... the source of that support is quite different, with men relying on female family members (mothers, aunts, sisters, grandmothers) and women on their children.”³¹ Thus, while formerly incarcerated men’s relationships involve people the men can depend on for support post-release, women are much less likely than men to receive support from a parent or partner and their significant relationships are generally with dependents for whom they are the primary provider (or were prior to their incarceration).³²

Justice-involved women consistently identified parenting as a priority during their reentry, and research has identified links between parental stress and women’s recidivism.³³ Separation from children is also a particular challenge for women while incarcerated. The 2016 report, *D.C. Women in Prison*, noted that “the United States lags behind the rest of the world in developing prison nursery programs,” which have shown positive benefits for mother and child, “including increased secure attachment and knowledge of child care, and decreased recidivism rates.”³⁴

It is also important to note how the intersectionality of gender and race has differential effects on recidivism risk factors. A study looking at federal recidivism rates between 2005 and 2013 found “racial variation in the effect of education, drug use, and neighborhood concentrated disadvantage on recidivism” for women.³⁵ Researchers noted differences in the following areas:

- **Drug use:** For both white women and women of color, drug use was a strong predictor of recidivism, but the magnitude of the effect was much stronger for women of color.
- **Mental health:** White women with “stable mental health histories” were significantly less likely to recidivate, but the same effect was not true for women of color. The authors noted, however, that some of this variation could be due to women of color being incorrectly classified as not having a history of mental illness.
- **Risk scores:** While women assessed as “high risk” were more likely to fail on parole overall, risk scores were significantly more predictive of white women’s recidivism. Additionally, the study found white women were far more likely to recidivate when returning to disadvantaged communities than women of color in similar situations.
- **Education:** For women of color, obtaining a high school diploma decreased the probability of failure and increased the time until failure much more significantly than for white women.
- **Relationships:** Generally, women who lived with a partner were less likely to recidivate, but the findings were not statistically significant, suggesting “marital relationships may not have the same protective effect for women as they do men.” The study also questioned the validity of relationships as a protective factor for women of color, finding that while “living with a partner decreased the risk of recidivism for white women,” it only *delayed* time to recidivism for women of color.

Vera’s Analysis of Recidivism among Women in the District

Vera’s study provides empirical evidence about recommitments to DOC in a sample of females drawn from the FY2015 DOC release cohort (N=982). This cohort was followed over a period of 33 to 44 months. While the highlights are presented below, the full analysis is available in the Appendix.

About ten percent of the female FY2015 DOC release cohort was recommitted to DOC within six months (180 days). Over 40 percent of female releasees were recommitted after three and a half years (1,260 days). The median time to recommitment after release was 246 days.

Vera’s analysis demonstrates that some subgroups of the women in the release cohort were more likely to be recommitted to DOC after release than others. For example, young adult females ages 18-24 had a higher probability of recommitment than older female releasees, as did black female releasees compared

to other racial or ethnic groups. Similarly, female releasees who were unemployed had a higher probability of recommitment than those with full- or part-time employment.

Some subgroup differences in the probability of recommitment among females persisted even after accounting for the impact of demographic, socioeconomic, health, and justice factors. These findings suggest that it may be fruitful for recidivism reduction efforts to focus on specific sub groups of female releasees including:

- women who remain at DOC more than 7 days from arrest to release, and
- women with less than full-time employment.

Notably, other subgroup differences in the probability of recommitment among females were explained, at least partially, by the influence of socioeconomic factors. For example, in the female cohort, the higher probability of recommitment for younger releasees and for black releasees was diminished in size and no longer statistically significant after accounting for the impact of education and employment. These findings strongly point to the potential benefits of ensuring that young female releasees have access to education and full-time employment that pays a living wage, as well as the supports they need to attain their educational goals and maintain long-term employment.

Current Efforts to Help Justice-Involved Women in the District

Multiple agencies dealing with justice-involved women in the District have established programs and services intended to address their unique needs and help them avoid recidivating. For example, DOC uses a gender-responsive risk and needs assessment for the women in its custody, and has established a Women's Program that includes gender-specific programs and services, and separate Residential Substance Abuse Treatment and Reentry Units for women.³⁶ Despite the fact that women have a considerably shorter average length of stay than men, DOC also reports that 92.5 percent of women in its custody in 2017 participated in programs and services.³⁷

CSOSA has established specialized female supervision teams, a centrally located field unit dedicated to women where they can receive gender-specific services, and a separate unit for women in its Reentry and Sanctions Center (RSC) where women can receive transitional housing, an intensive needs assessment, a 44-day holistic program, referrals to substance abuse treatment programs, and the opportunity to participate in an aftercare support group as a way to avoid reincarceration.³⁸ CSOSA has also established a Community Engagement and Achievement Center solely for women, and has hosted an annual Women's Reentry Forum since 2004.³⁹

CSOSA and MORCA have worked together to arrange twice-yearly bus trips for women's families to FCI Hazelton, where the largest number of DC women are held, and partnered with Hope House to offer video visitation for up to 10 women a week.⁴⁰

BOP and CSOSA have worked to coordinate informally with DBH to exchange lists every few months of all DC women with serious mental illnesses who are approaching release, to connect women with service agencies that will work with them in the community.⁴¹ BOP has established a central office, now known as the Women and Special Populations (WASP) Branch, to oversee classification, management, and programming for female offenders, and offers gender-specific programming for women at some of its facilities.⁴² BOP's Mothers and Infants Together (MINT) Program also provides for some women who are pregnant upon commitment to be sent to a Residential Reentry Center (RRC) for the last two months of their pregnancy and remain there for three to six months after giving birth, to bond with their children.⁴³

Recommendations for Reducing Recidivism among Women in the District

Agencies dealing with justice-involved women in the District have clearly recognized the need for gender-responsive approaches. These approaches, generally, are those that reflect an understanding of "the realities of women's lives ... [and] address social (e.g., poverty, race, class and gender inequality) and cultural factors, as well as therapeutic interventions. These interventions address issues such as abuse, violence, family relationships, substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. They provide a strength-based approach to treatment and skill building. The emphasis is on self-efficacy."⁴⁴

This is extremely important, as research has shown that gender-responsive programming is essential to reducing recidivism among women. For example, a meta-analysis of 37 studies and almost 22,000 women in correctional settings found that those who participated in gender-responsive interventions had greater odds of community success and that programs tailored for women are not just effective, they are actually more effective for women than evidence-based, gender-neutral programs.⁴⁵ Similarly, cognitive behavioral therapy that is gender-neutral has been found to have no impact on women's likelihood of recidivism.⁴⁶ One study even found that women who received gender-neutral programming (including mixed-gender treatment groups) reported an increase in impaired functioning, such as problems with work, family, and relationships.⁴⁷

While the current efforts to help justice-involved women in the District are promising, there are several other strategic priorities recommended here that should be adopted to reduce recidivism.

➤ **Recommendation Number 1: Use gender-responsive risk and needs assessment instruments and validate them locally.**

It is well-recognized now that a “[risk assessment] instrument that is tested on a total correctional population will naturally misclassify females.”⁴⁸ Risk assessment literature has found that including parental stress, family support, self-efficacy, and mental health measures improves recidivism prediction for women.⁴⁹ Gender-responsive risk factors include depression, psychotic symptoms, housing safety, and parental stress. Gender informed assessments also account for women’s assets, or strengths, which in turn play a protective role and mitigate the risk of negative outcomes. Research on gender-responsive risk and needs assessments also suggests that many women traditionally considered “high-risk” should be more accurately characterized as “high-needs,” calling for a shift from punitive to rehabilitative approaches.⁵⁰ The use of gender-responsive tools helps practitioners identify the most salient needs faced by women and can inform case management and service delivery.⁵¹ A number of gender-responsive tools for women have been developed, including the Women’s Risk/Need Assessment (WRNA), the WRNA Supplement, Service Planning Instrument for Women (SPIn-W), COMPAS Women, the LSI-R, and the Inventory of Needs (ION).⁵²

While DOC uses a gender-responsive risk and needs assessment instrument, the extent to which other agencies are using assessment instruments that have been tailored to women’s particular risks and needs is unclear. All agencies dealing with justice-involved women in the District in pretrial, correctional, and community supervision settings should ensure that they are using risk and needs assessment instruments that have been validated for gender responsiveness, and these tools should be used for all women in their custody or under their supervision. Agencies should also consider sharing the results of these assessments, to ensure continuity in the provision of needed services. Further, as most risk and needs assessment instruments were originally validated on national populations or in other jurisdictions, agencies should undertake local validation studies to make sure that the tools they are using properly reflect the risks and needs of women in the District.

➤ **Recommendation Number 2: Consider adopting the Women Offender Case Management Model.**

The Women Offender Case Management Model (WOCMM)—also known as Collaborative Case Work (CCW-W) 47—has demonstrated success, with evaluations consistently finding lower recidivism rates, absconding rates, and technical violations among participating women.⁵³ The WOCMM “evolved from gender-responsive, evidence-based practices, and was designed to reduce recidivism, increase the availability of services and enhance the lives of women. The model is

intended for use not only with women sentenced to probation but also with those going through the spectrum of reentry processes, and results were also consistent with the risk principle, impacting higher-risk women to a greater degree than medium risk women.⁵⁴ Since this model has been shown to reduce both reoffending and technical violations of supervision, it should be considered for use with women under community supervision and women who are returning from incarceration.

➤ **Recommendation Number 3: Provide training on the effects of trauma and adopt trauma-informed practices.**

The vast majority of justice-involved women and girls have experienced violence, and the nature of that violence is often different than that experienced by men, including intimate-partner violence, as well as sexual, emotional, and mental forms of violence.⁵⁵ Because of the prevalence of past violence among justice-involved women, it is essential that the criminal justice system incorporate trauma-informed approaches. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a trauma-informed approach “is inclusive of trauma-specific interventions, whether assessment, treatment or recovery supports, yet it also incorporates key trauma principles into the organizational culture,” which include safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues.”⁵⁶ It is true, of course, that justice-involved men also have high rates of past trauma and could benefit from trauma-informed approaches as well.⁵⁷ In order to reduce recidivism among women, however, it is important that training on trauma and trauma-based practices be specific to the types of violence commonly experienced by women and their reactions to that trauma. To the extent that such training has not already been provided, actors throughout the District’s criminal justice system, including police, community supervision and corrections officers, judges, prosecutors, and service providers, should receive training on the effects of women’s trauma and how to incorporate trauma-informed approaches into their interactions with justice-involved women.

➤ **Recommendation Number 4: Ensure gender-responsive programming and services are available to as many women as possible.**

While many gender-responsive programs and services do currently exist, they are not always available to all women. For women in the custody of DOC, this is often due to the limited or undetermined amount of time they will spend in DOC facilities. Every effort should be made to extend programs and services to all women and to connect women leaving DOC custody with comparable programs and services in the community. While some programs require a minimum

amount of time to complete, DOC should consider alternative, shorter, gender-responsive programs for those women who will be incarcerated for brief or unknown periods of time.

The lack of access to gender-responsive programs and services seems particularly acute at BOP. For example, the Female Integrated Treatment Program is only available in one facility—FCI Danbury.⁵⁸ Similarly, BOP’s Steps Toward Awareness, Growth, and Emotional Strength Program—a residential treatment program for those with a primary diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder—is only available at certain men’s facilities, despite the fact that 75 percent of those diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder are women.⁵⁹ Efforts should be made to expand appropriate program options to additional facilities to serve all women who need them.

➤ **Recommendation Number 5: Evaluate existing gender-responsive programming and services for effectiveness.**

Since the District already provides a number of gender-responsive programs and services, efforts to further reduce recidivism among women will need to be able to account for their effectiveness. Existing programs should be fully evaluated to determine what, if any, effect they are having at reducing recidivism among women. Any programs established in the future should be similarly evaluated at the appropriate time to make sure that they are having the desired effects.

➤ **Recommendation Number 6: Provide programming and services to address the particular needs of women of color.**

As detailed above, recidivism risk factors differ for women of color. Vera’s analysis also found that women of color released from DOC have a higher probability of being recommitted there. While research in this area is still fairly limited, the District should consider how programs and services could be better tailored towards women of color, perhaps by combining gender-responsive approaches with culturally competent treatment models.⁶⁰ Multnomah County, OR, has taken this approach, working with service providers to set up culturally specific programming, including a residential treatment program for African American women.⁶¹ District agencies should also engage specifically with returning women of color to determine their most acute needs and how to effectively respond to them.

Responding to the Unique Needs of Justice-Involved Young Adults

Recent research in developmental neuroscience has indicated that the adult brain is not fully developed until people reach their mid-20s. This research has shown that 18- to 24-year-olds, typically referred to as young adults or emerging adults, often have less impulse control, particularly in situations of negative emotional arousal; are strongly influenced by peer pressure; and are more inclined to risky behavior than adults.⁶² Childhood trauma and neglect can further delay brain development.⁶³

It is not surprising, then, that young adults are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, both nationally and in the District. In 2016, 18- to 24-year-olds made up 9.6 percent of the U.S. population, but accounted for 24.6 percent of arrests nationally and 10.8 percent of all state and federal prisoners.⁶⁴ In 2012, the most recent year for which data by age group is available, 18- to 24-year-olds made up 25.8 percent of jail inmates nationwide.⁶⁵

In the District in 2015, 18- to 24-year-olds made up 12.7 percent of the population, but were:

- 27 percent of arrests,
- 38.2 percent of admissions to DOC,
- 25 percent of DOC's custodial population,
- approximately 20 percent of those under CSOSA's supervision, and
- 12.4 percent of DC Code offenders in BOP.⁶⁶

Among young adults in the criminal justice system, substance use and mental illness are common. Nationally, 64.2 percent of 18- to 24-year olds incarcerated in prison and 61.9 percent of 18- to 24-year olds serving jail sentences met the criteria for drug dependence or abuse.⁶⁷ For this same age group, 14.9 percent of those in prison and 26.3 percent of those in jail met the threshold for serious psychological distress, and 26.3 percent of those in prison and 42.3 percent of those in jail had a history of mental illness.⁶⁸

Young adults nationally also have very high rates of recidivism. A study of individuals released from state prison in 1994 found that 75.4 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds were rearrested within three years, and 52 percent were reconvicted.⁶⁹ Another study of individuals released from prison in 30 states in 2005 found that 51.8 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds were rearrested within one year, and 90.1 percent were rearrested within nine years.⁷⁰

Young adults are not only involved in the criminal justice system as offenders, however. They are also among the most frequent victims of crime. In 2016, the national rate of violent victimization for 18- to 24-

year-olds was 30.9 per 1,000 (compared to 21.1 per 1,000 for all victims of violent crime).⁷¹ In the District in 2016, 15.8 percent of victims of felonies were 18 to 24 years old.⁷² Overall, young men between 16 and 24 experience higher rates of violence than any other age group, with young men of color among the most likely to be victims of serious violence, including homicide.⁷³

Vera's Analysis of Recidivism among Young Adults in the District

Vera's study provides empirical evidence about recommitments to DOC in a sample of young adults aged 18 to 24 years drawn from the FY2015 DOC release cohort (N=1,192). This cohort was followed over a period of 33 to 44 months. While the highlights are presented below, the full analysis is available in the Appendix.

Ten percent of the young adult FY2015 DOC release cohort was recommitted to DOC within six months (180 days). About 60 percent of young adult releases were recommitted after three and a half years (1,260 days). The median time to recommitment after release was 246 days.

Vera's analysis demonstrates that some subgroups of the young adults in the release cohort were more likely to be recommitted to DOC after release than others. For example, in the young adult cohort, men had a higher probability of recommitment than women, as did black releasees compared to other racial or ethnic groups. Similarly, young adults who were unemployed had a higher probability of recommitment compared to those with full- or part-time employment.

Most subgroup differences in the probability of recommitment among young adults persisted even after accounting for the impact of demographic, socioeconomic, health, and justice factors. These findings suggest that it may be fruitful for recidivism reduction efforts to focus on specific groups of young adult releasees including:

- males,
- black releasees,
- those with less than full-time employment, and
- those who remain at DOC from 2 to 12 weeks.

Notably, sex differences in the probability of recommitment among young adults were partially explained by the influence of socioeconomic factors. Among young adults, the higher probability of recommitment for men compared to women was reduced considerably, although still statistically significant, after accounting for the impact of employment. This finding strongly points to the potential benefits of ensuring that male young adult releasees have access to full-time employment that pays a living wage, as well as the supports they need to maintain long-term employment.

Current Efforts to Help Young Adults in the District

While the increased national focus on justice-involved young adults as a distinct group is a fairly recent development, there are some existing programs in the District which may help in reducing their risk of recidivating. A prime example is CSOSA's Young Adult Initiative for people aged 25 and under, which employs specialized supervision teams that provide integrated case management, streamlined access to programs, and supervision plans tailored to the unique needs of young adults.⁷⁴ CSOSA intends to evaluate the Young Adult Initiative to determine whether it is more effective than general supervision strategies and whether there are other ways to improve supervision outcomes for young adults.⁷⁵

The District's Youth Rehabilitation Act (YRA) also provides a mechanism for some young adults to avoid the lasting consequences of a felony conviction by having that conviction set aside if they comply with the terms of their sentence.⁷⁶ Analysis by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) has shown that recidivism rates were significantly lower for young adults sentenced under the YRA who received the benefit of the "set aside."⁷⁷ As discussed in more detail below, the potential to further reduce recidivism among young adults would be greatly enhanced if amendments to the YRA, recently enacted by the DC Council, are fully implemented.

The Pathways Program operated by the recently established Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) also appears to have great potential to reduce recidivism among young adults. While not limited to that specific age range, the program focuses on decreasing criminal justice involvement among those most likely to be victims or perpetrators of violent crime, by providing reintegration services and using restorative justice practices.⁷⁸ Since young adults are disproportionately represented among both victims and perpetrators of violent crime, they are very likely to be participants in this program and could therefore see improved outcomes.

The District also has several programs aimed at helping young adults, though not specifically those with criminal justice involvement. The Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP) and the Pathways for Young Adults Program (PYAP), for example, both provide job skills and work readiness instruction and services for 18- to 24-year-olds, while the DC ReEngagement Center helps young adults without a high school diploma or GED reconnect with educational opportunities and provides supportive services, and the DC Career Connections Program provides work readiness training and individual coaching to those aged 20 to 24.⁷⁹

Recommendations for Reducing Recidivism among Young Adults in the District

Reducing recidivism among young adults by 50 percent over five years is an ambitious goal that will require coordinated efforts by District and federal agencies at many levels. While much of the national focus on justice-involved young adults as a distinct group—and many of the interventions being tried to help them—are relatively new, there are a number of initiatives recommended here which should be considered as strategic priorities.

➤ **Recommendation Number 7: Coordinate or combine planning for recidivism reduction among young adults with the strategic planning required by the Youth Rehabilitation Amendment Act of 2018, and ensure the Act is fully funded and implemented.**

The Youth Rehabilitation Amendment Act of 2018 (“the Act”) was enacted by the DC Council on September 6, 2018.⁸⁰ The Act makes several extremely important changes to the YRA. First, it expands the definition of “youth offender” from those under 22 to those 24 or younger, and it ties the age limitation to the time when the crime was committed, rather than the time of conviction.⁸¹ Second, it allows anyone who qualifies as a youth offender to request that the court set aside the conviction upon completion of the sentence, instead of restricting that opportunity to those explicitly sentenced under the YRA.⁸² Finally, it requires the Mayor to submit a strategic plan to the Council by September 30, 2019 for the provision of developmentally appropriate facilities, services, and treatment for youth offenders.⁸³ That strategic planning required would complement the strategic plan to reduce recidivism among young adults, and those efforts should be coordinated, if not combined.

It will also be essential for the Act to be fully funded and implemented. The current fiscal impact statement of \$1.2 million over four years does not include the costs of actually providing the developmentally appropriate facilities, services, and treatment identified in the Mayor’s strategic plan.⁸⁴ Additionally, since the Act would now require most youth offenders to file affirmative motions asking the court to set aside their convictions, it is likely that significant funding will be required to assist them in doing so. The best practice would be to provide appointed counsel to prepare and file motions requesting the set aside, as the process would likely be challenging for any layperson, let alone a young adult. CJCC’s analysis demonstrated that having the conviction set aside was the factor that most significantly reduced recidivism.⁸⁵ Without effective assistance in convincing the court to grant the set aside, much of the benefit of the Act would be lost.

➤ **Recommendation Number 8: Provide training and education for people throughout the criminal justice system on working with young adults.**

Understanding the effects of ongoing brain development from adolescence through the mid-20s can be difficult, but that understanding is key to responding appropriately and effectively to young adults at different points within the criminal justice system. Considering the high rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) among youth in the District—almost one-half had one ACE and almost one-quarter had two ACEs—it is also extremely important for those dealing with justice involved young adults to understand the effects of childhood trauma on brain development, as well as on mental illness and substance use later in life.⁸⁶ Training on brain development, addressing the effects of childhood trauma, and evidence-based approaches to dealing with young adults should be provided to police and corrections officers, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice system stakeholders, as well as interested community members and organizations.⁸⁷ Educational efforts like this could also be a key factor in shifting the narrative around young adults generally. It is important to note that the discussion of “incomplete” brain development risks having an infantilizing effect, suggesting that young adults are incapable of making better decisions. It is extremely important that training such as this focus on the tremendous potential for behavioral change at this stage of development if young adults are effectively engaged to become agents of their own success.

➤ **Recommendation Number 9: Develop diversion options focusing on young adults.**

Diversion programs are an effective way of reducing recidivism by reducing convictions and limiting justice-system involvement. While the District has diversion programs focusing on juveniles, there do not appear to be any specifically targeting young adults.⁸⁸ Programs for both pre-arrest and post-adjudication diversion of young adults should be established. Pre-arrest diversion by police officers is expanding nationally through many models, such as Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs or Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD). In the LEAD model, for example, young adults may be connected with appropriate services such as substance abuse treatment or cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) programs rather than having charges filed against them.⁸⁹

A good post-adjudication option would be to establish a young adult court. Similar to drug courts or mental health courts, young adult courts have been established in multiple jurisdictions to address the needs of young adult charged with more serious offenses by providing services and developing a culture of accountability, with the dismissal of charges or convictions upon successful completion.⁹⁰ Most of the young adult court programs are fairly new and there has not yet been sufficient time to evaluate their effects on reducing recidivism. A qualitative study on the

planning and early implementation of the San Francisco Young Adult Court, however, noted that system partners and participants in the program found it to be a good model for supporting young adult success, and that the retention rate in the program's first year-and-a-half was 65 percent.⁹¹ In conjunction with the YRA, a young adult court in the District might be particularly appropriate for youth offenders who are identified as at risk of violating community supervision and losing the opportunity to have their convictions set aside.

While expanding diversion options for young adults could potentially provoke some backlash from members of the public who want to see harsher sanctions for criminal conduct, expanding educational outreach about young adults to community members and organizations, and focusing on the evidence about brain development and childhood trauma, as recommended above, should help to dampen the impact.

➤ **Recommendation Number 10: Establish sufficient community-based programming focused on the needs of young adults.**

While there are already some community programs for young adults, the District should work with community-based organizations and health providers to make sure there is appropriate and sufficient programming to meet the needs of all justice-involved young adults, whether they are serving a community-based sentence or returning from incarceration. There are several programs nationally that have proven successful and can serve as models. Two programs that are frequently cited as being particularly effective are Roca and UTEC.⁹² Both target high-risk young adults, frequently those with serious criminal justice or gang involvement, and both engage in repeated outreach to potential participants, rather than having people referred or requiring participants to agree to services upfront.⁹³ UTEC, based in Massachusetts, provides individual case management, and workforce and educational programming; in FY2017, 90 percent of the young adults participating were not arrested during the year.⁹⁴ Roca, originally based in Massachusetts but starting a program in Baltimore this summer, is a long-term program with two years devoted to behavioral change—including a modified CBT curriculum found effective in community corrections settings, educational and workforce readiness programming, and transitional employment—and two years of follow-up; in FY2017 84 percent of its participants had no new arrests and 63 percent had retained unsubsidized employment for at least a year.⁹⁵

Another program, the YouthBuild Offender Project, operates in 46 states as an incarceration diversion program and a reentry program, involving young adults in building housing in their communities for low-income families, as well as providing job skills training, counseling, and educational opportunities.⁹⁶ A 2008 evaluation of the program found that only 28 percent of

graduates recidivated within two-and-a-half years, compared to 44 percent of dropouts. More recently the program reported a one-year recidivism rate of only 11 percent for all justice-involved participants.⁹⁷

➤ **Recommendation Number 11: Adapt existing programs to more specifically address and incorporate young adults with justice involvement.**

Existing programs in the District for young adults could also be utilized to more directly address recidivism reduction. The MBSYEP, PYAP, DC ReEngagement Center, and DC Career Connections, for example, all provide services for young adults, but none appear to have any focus on those with criminal justice involvement. A more targeted approach toward this population could achieve greater results. The DC Career Connections Program, which is currently only available to those aged 20 to 22, should also expand eligibility to include all young adults aged 18 to 24. On the other hand, the Project Empowerment Program, which provides similar treatment, and educational, job readiness, and life skills training, does target those with felony records and has a stated goal of reducing recidivism, but only people who are 22 or older are eligible.⁹⁸ Expanding eligibility for this program to people 18 or older could better target recidivism among young adults.

➤ **Recommendation Number 12: Consider hiring peer navigators—young adults who have had prior experience with the criminal justice system and been successful afterwards.**

Young adult peer navigators could help newly justice-involved young adults navigate the array of services and programming and understand the challenges of reentry and the requirements of community supervision.⁹⁹ Employing navigators who are themselves young adults and have had similar experiences with the criminal justice system and reentry could be particularly effective.

➤ **Recommendation Number 13: Provide effective mental health treatment for young adults with serious mental illness.**

Young adulthood is frequently the time of onset for serious mental illness (SMI), and young adults who develop SMI are at even higher risk for criminal justice involvement than the general population.¹⁰⁰ Recently a therapeutic model called Multisystemic Therapy for Emerging Adults (MST-EA) has been adopted to both address the mental health treatment needs of young adults with SMI and reduce their rate of recidivism.¹⁰¹ The most recent clinical study of MST-EA found that 76 percent of those treated demonstrated a reduction in psychiatric symptoms, and 82 percent had no new arrests during treatment.¹⁰² The District should make sure treatment

providers are using therapeutic models like MST-EA that have been developed specifically for young adults. Consideration should also be given to providing education and resources for family members of young adults with serious mental illness to better equip them to offer support at home.

➤ **Recommendation Number 14: Enhance and possibly expand DOC's young adult unit.**

Based on the unique needs of young adults, some states have designated specific facilities for just this population. One of the oldest is the Anthony Correctional Center in West Virginia, which houses 18- to 25-year-old men and women sentenced under that state's Youthful Offenders Act and has a strong focus on educational and vocational programming.¹⁰³ While it does not appear that there has been a rigorous evaluation of the outcomes for young adults sent to this facility, one article reported that about 80 percent of those who complete the program do not recidivate.¹⁰⁴ The Mountain View Youth Development Center in Maine, a former juvenile facility, was redesignated in 2014 as a medium security facility for young men aged 18 to 25 and has a similar focus on treatment and educational and vocational programming.¹⁰⁵

More recently, several jurisdictions have established or are developing specialized units within jail or prison facilities specifically for young adults through Vera's Restoring Promise initiative.¹⁰⁶ Starting with the TRUE Program at the Cheshire Correctional Institution in Connecticut and expanding to units in the Middlesex Jail in Billerica, MA, the South Carolina Department of Corrections, and, most recently, a unit for young women at the York Correctional Institution in Connecticut, these units aim to dramatically transform the experience of incarceration for 18- to 25-year-olds.¹⁰⁷ Beyond merely providing additional programming, these units focus on the developmental needs of young adults, providing specialized training for correctional staff, and emphasizing emotional growth, restorative justice approaches to dispute resolution, practical life skills, mentoring by older inmates, and maintaining supportive relationships with families and communities.¹⁰⁸ While it may be too soon to gauge the full impact of these young adult units, early results have been promising. The TRUE Program experienced vastly reduced disciplinary issues, no fights or attacks on correctional officers occurred in its first year of operation, and only one of the nine young men released to the community from the program so far was returned to prison (for a technical parole violation only).¹⁰⁹

Vera has been informed that DOC recently opened a special unit for young adults modeled on the TRUE Program, which is an excellent start. DOC should ensure that staff working on this unit are provided with the same sort of specialized training as in the TRUE Program, and should continue

to study what is being done in other young adult units and facilities and incorporate the best practices for its own young adult unit. While not every young adult will be appropriate for a specialized unit like this, DOC should expand this unit if there is not sufficient space for all of those eligible. DOC should also consider establishing community-based transitional housing for young adults based on a similar model. Finally, DOC should make sure that at least some developmentally appropriate programming is provided for those young adults not eligible for the specialized unit.

➤ **Recommendation Number 15: Work with BOP to keep young adult DC Code offenders close to home and provide them with appropriate programs and services.**

While BOP tries to keep DC residents as close to the District as possible, and the majority are located at facilities within 500 miles, a number of young adult DC code offenders are placed in facilities much farther from home.¹¹⁰ Visits from family and maintaining strong connections to communities have been found to greatly reduce recidivism among incarcerated people of all ages, but those needs are especially acute for young adults, so the importance of keeping them in facilities close to home is heightened.¹¹¹ Additionally, BOP does not have programs targeted to young adults. The closest it has is the Bureau Rehabilitation and Values Enhancement (BRAVE) Program which is available for people age 32 or younger.¹¹² However, in addition to not being limited to or designed for young adults, the BRAVE Program is aimed at adjustment to incarceration, rather than reducing recidivism, and it is only offered in two facilities, only one of which is anywhere near the District.¹¹³

Ultimately, BOP should develop specific programming and services to address the particular needs of young adults, which will help all incarcerated people in that age range, not just those from the District. BOP should also consider establishing an RRC in the District specifically for young adults, perhaps in conjunction with DOC. More immediately, however, BOP and DOC should work towards an agreement to allow more DC young adults to serve their sentences, or at least the final year of their sentences, at DOC. This would allow young adults to maintain ties or reconnect with families and their community prior to release, which would put them in a better position to connect with appropriate programs and services upon reentry.

General Recommendations

Over 2,000 people return to the District from prison every year; CSOSA has about 11,000 people on supervision on any given day.¹¹⁴ Approximately 7,500 individuals are released from the DC DOC each year, nearly 5,000 of whom return directly to the community.¹¹⁵ While the current recidivism reduction strategic planning is focused specifically on women and young adults, the following sections offer recommendations for improving reentry and reducing recidivism generally which will also benefit those two target populations.

Enhancing Oversight and Coordination of Recidivism Reduction Activities

District Efforts to Support Reentry

Vera's examination of past studies and reentry plans conducted in the District over the last 15 years reveals that significant time, consideration, and planning has been dedicated to the aim of improving the reentry process for returning citizens in the District. There are certainly tangible outcomes from those efforts, including increased information sharing between BOP and CSOSA; the creation of MORCA; efforts to interrupt the cycle of violence, victimization, and retaliation in the NEAR Act; and soon, the READY Center. Further, there are *many* other current projects and programs underway to reduce crime and violence in the District—all of which have the potential to help reduce recidivism. Many of those we interviewed pointed to the desire of political leaders to address the combined issues of reentry and recidivism, and to the abundance of services available to returning citizens in the District—although some also noted that the need for services still exceeds the capacity of existing services. It is clear, however, that numerous District and federal agencies, service providers, and community groups are all focused on ways to support citizens returning to the community after a period of justice involvement.

- **Recommendation Number 16: Provide oversight for the recidivism reduction strategic plan and tracking outcomes, and ensure that relevant agencies approve any necessary steps for implementation.**

To achieve the goal of reducing recidivism among the target populations by 50 percent over five years, a determination needs to be made about which strategies will be adopted and the steps necessary to implement them. This will require a group or agency to oversee the process. Whether this is the CJCC, the Reentry Steering Committee, or some other group or agency, it is important that this responsibility be specifically assigned so that it is clear who will be coordinating, following up on implementation, assessing and reporting on the success of the strategies adopted, and proposing improvements or changes. Similarly, it needs to be clear exactly who will be tracking the three recidivism measures agreed upon by the strategic planning group and how that

will be done, so that progress toward the overall goal can be tracked. Finally, some stakeholders suggested in interviews with Vera that previous strategic planning efforts had not been as successful as they could have been because input was solicited from various agencies while developing the recommendations but not when developing plans for implementation. Whether or not this was the case, this issue can be avoided by seeking explicit agreement from all involved agencies not only on which strategies to adopt, but also on what steps they will agree to take in order to implement those strategies.

➤ **Recommendation Number 17: The READY Center, MORCA, the Reentry Action Network, and CSOSA should coordinate the provision of services to returning citizens to ensure that there are no gaps or duplicated efforts.**

Although all District agencies providing services may work with the population of returning citizens in some way, from Vera's interviews with stakeholders it appears that the primary groups addressing the provision of services to returning citizens are the new READY Center, MORCA, and the Reentry Action Network (RAN). In addition, CSOSA offers services to those under its supervision and also refers them to other agencies.

The READY Center will be a one-stop resource on the DOC grounds for those leaving the jail. Many of the city's agencies will have staff present to work with those being released and assure they have needed documents and are connected to appropriate services. The READY Center staff, including some who are called Navigators, will work with those in the jail before they are released to prepare them for their return to the community.¹¹⁶ The planning has been thorough. When it initially opens, the READY Center will serve only those leaving the custody of DOC. The plan is for READY Center services to extend to those returning to the community from BOP custody.¹¹⁷ However, expansion of services will occur after the pilot phase is completed and the operational details have been worked out.¹¹⁸

According to its founding mission statement MORCA's role is:

to provide zealous advocacy, high-quality services and products, up-to-date, useful information for the empowerment of previously incarcerated persons in order to create a productive and supportive environment where persons may thrive, prosper and contribute to the social, political and economic development of self, family, and community.¹¹⁹

Based on its current budget and staffing, though, MORCA is not able to provide case management or direct services, but does serve as a source of information and referrals for returning citizens.¹²⁰

The RAN, organized by OVSJG, is a coalition of nonprofit organizations providing direct services to returning citizens.¹²¹ Its mission is:

to bring together a network of client-centered reentry services providers to exchange information, strengthen services, discuss and address issues of mutual concern, and be a collective voice in order to best meet the complex and varied needs of DC's incarcerated persons and returning citizens based on mutual respect, collaboration, and progressive policy and program development.¹²²

In addition to the above groups, CSOSA provides case management for all those under its supervision and also refers them to different District agencies for programs and services.

While the multiplicity of organizations and agencies addressing the needs of returning citizens is certainly one of the District's strengths, there is some potential for services to be duplicated or for there to be gaps if individuals are dealing with more than one of these entities and services are not coordinated. For example, a person leaving DOC custody who is sentenced to CSOSA supervision might first stop at the READY Center and be connected with services, but CSOSA might not know what had already been provided when that person reports for supervision. To make sure that there are no gaps or duplications, the READY Center, MORCA, RAN, and CSOSA should communicate regularly and coordinate their efforts.

➤ **Recommendation Number 18: As MORCA is undergoing its own strategic planning process, the District should consider its mission and resources.**

As quoted above, MORCA's original mission statement suggests that it was intended to play a more active role in the provision of services. In Vera's review of previous reentry studies and plans for the District, and in some interviews with current stakeholders, however, there were indications that MORCA may lack the financial resources, staff, and political standing to accomplish this challenging mission. It has changed directors five times in its 12 years and remains primarily a referral and information-sharing organization without the stature needed to convene or coordinate other efforts.

MORCA is currently engaged with consultants on its own strategic planning effort, which will likely address these issues and clarify its mission.¹²³ In light of the opening of the READY Center, though, the District should consider what ongoing role MORCA is to play. MORCA could be a critical piece of the District's safety infrastructure if it were seen that way and appropriately funded. For example, if it had the funding, MORCA could hire and train community navigators

who could help returning citizens understand the landscape of services available, guide them to obtain needed documents and enrollments, and assist them with some of the processes involved in securing services.

If the District is not willing or able to provide the resources needed for MORCA to fully serve the community of returning citizens, then it should consider whether MORCA should be merged with other efforts like the READY Center. On the other hand, if it is determined that MORCA does have a distinct role to play, it might be better situated within the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. Its current placement within the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs suggests that its main purpose is to address the political concerns of a particular constituency, while placing it within the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice would enhance its position as a public safety agency and better emphasize its primary purpose of coordinating programs and services for returning citizens.

Information Sharing and Case Coordination

The bifurcated federal-local structure of the District's criminal justice system can complicate efforts to share information about individuals within that system. It appears that federal agencies are able to share information with each other—for example, information from BOP on release dates, release plans, and in-prison programming for incarcerated DC residents is available to CSOSA through access to BOP's SENTRY database system and the receipt of automatically generated reports. However, the Privacy Act of 1974 prevents federal agencies from sharing information with non-federal agencies, other than law enforcement, without signed releases. CSOSA does currently share some information with DBH for individuals being released from BOP who have severe behavioral health issues, but only with a signed release of information.

- **Recommendation Number 19: Both federal and local agencies should assess their information needs and determine how they might be able to share information needed to better serve returning citizens.**

Returning citizens typically have contact with many agencies in their efforts to reenter their communities successfully, such as DOC, CSOSA, MORCA, DBH, the Department of Employment Services (DOES), the Housing Authority, clinics and hospitals, and many community- and faith-based organizations. For those returning from BOP custody, information about programming and services they received while incarcerated would also be important for successful reentry planning. While few of those organizations need *all* of the information about an individual's case, some will need more than is now available. Most agencies, absent shared information, will do their own intake and potentially duplicative assessments.

Federal and District agencies should work together to determine exactly what information it might be necessary to share and what it would require to do so. It is entirely possible that the Privacy Act would prohibit federal agencies from sharing any information without individual signed waivers. Understanding what is and is not possible, however, is an important first step. That understanding would inform planning for how to overcome obstacles to information sharing, whether that entails a better system for facilitating individual waivers or even pursuing legislative change at both the federal and local levels.

Coordinating with Non-Criminal Justice Agencies to Meet the Basic Needs of Returning Citizens

While many of the officials we interviewed spoke with pride about the wealth of services available in the District, several core needs emerged from many of our interviews; these fall under two broad categories: housing and childcare, and education and employment.

Housing and Childcare

In a 2018 report, CSOSA reported that almost 12 percent of its caseload lived in unstable housing, and that those in unstable housing were 37 percent more likely to fail supervision.¹²⁴ The District's struggles to ensure adequate affordable housing have been profiled recently in both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.¹²⁵ As gentrification and redevelopment in the District continues, the loss of affordable housing is one of the most negative consequences.¹²⁶

Affordable housing appears to already be a priority on the District's agenda. However, generally available affordable housing does not in itself address the problems of those returning from incarceration. In addition to the broader issue of being rejected for their criminal record, some groups need more specific and targeted attention. Returning citizens who are the primary caretakers of young children also need assistance with childcare to be able to comply with supervision requirements and successfully reintegrate into society.

- **Recommendation Number 20: The District's Housing Authority should share its policies and regulations regarding putting returning citizens on family leases more broadly.**

The District's public housing authority has, commendably, opened doors to some returning citizens, allowing their names to be added to their family's lease. While some agencies, like CSOSA, do work with the Housing Authority to get approval for individuals with certain charges

to live in Section 8 housing, awareness of Housing Authority policies in this area is not universal. Several people Vera spoke with continue to believe that the formerly incarcerated are forbidden to live in public housing by federal law. That is not the case, and HUD has issued specific guidance to local authorities on allowing returning citizens to live in public housing.¹²⁷ In order to provide the greatest number of returning citizens with the possibility of living with their families in public housing, the Housing Authority should make sure that its policies regarding those with criminal records are disseminated widely to both public agencies and community organizations. This should include a statement of the criteria the Authority uses to guide their decisions.

➤ **Recommendation Number 21: The District needs a significant increase in the availability of supportive housing for returning citizens dealing with mental illness or co-occurring disorders.**

Returning citizens living with mental illness in the District are more likely to be in unstable housing situations.¹²⁸ Mental illness and problematic substance use can also interfere with their ability to function and meet supervision requirements and put them at risk of being revoked or arrested. These individuals are especially in need of subsidized, supportive housing where they can receive needed services. However, an extensive review by the Council for Court Excellence of DBH's work with justice-involved individuals and the criminal justice system as a whole found significant problems with access to DBH housing for justice-involved individuals with mental illness.¹²⁹ In addition to long wait times and a housing waiting list more than double DBH's capacity, DBH does not consider those with justice involvement to be a special population unless they have severe and persistent mental illness or are in crisis.¹³⁰ This means that returning citizens with less severe mental illness are not given special consideration for housing, even though they are at high risk for homelessness and recidivism.¹³¹ Additionally, DBH provides a very limited window to help with reentry planning for those with mental illness.¹³² Consequently, in FYs 2015 and 2016, only one justice-involved individual was housed each year from prison or jail in DBH's Home First Program, and none were reported housed in FYs 2014 and 2017.¹³³ The District needs to significantly increase the availability of this supportive housing for returning citizens, both by creating more capacity and by ensuring that justice-involved individuals with mental illness or co-occurring disorders are treated as a special population by DBH and given priority for the supportive housing that exists.

➤ **Recommendation Number 22: The District needs to create more supportive housing for returning citizens taking custody of their children and make sure that existing housing is fully utilized.**

Returning citizens who take custody of their minor children face many difficulties in finding housing and taking care of those children. While the problem is not solely limited to women, parenting and lack of stable housing have been specifically identified as two of the greatest challenges for returning women in the District. Focus groups with women returning to the District conducted by the Council for Court Excellence for its 2016 report, *Beyond Second Chances: Returning Citizen's Re-entry Struggles and Success in the District of Columbia*, revealed “tensions between adhering to the requirements of community supervision and the particular challenges facing women,” such as parenting or work responsibilities, or even conflicting times of mandated treatment and supervision check-ins.¹³⁴ The report also found that women face difficulties in acquiring stable housing in the District because of their role as primary caregivers. For example, though at the time the report was written, there were two housing partners that could accommodate single women, 25-30 percent of returning women have custody of young children, and a general “lack of understanding [by system actors] that time limits on housing are not conducive to successful re-entry,” prevents women from having enough time in supportive housing to successfully follow through on basic things like getting proper identification, applying to jobs, or taking care of their children.¹³⁵ In addition, when women were unable to find stable and safe housing, they reported “feeling there is no choice but to go back to a former partner or abuser, despite the risks involved and the trauma of considering the outcomes.”¹³⁶ To help reduce recidivism, particularly among women, the District needs to create more supportive housing for returning citizens who are custodial parents.

To properly assess how much additional supportive housing is needed, however, it is important to make sure that existing options are fully utilized. For example, OVSJG is currently funding transitional housing for formerly incarcerated women which has yet to have a waiting list, suggesting a lack of broader awareness of this program.¹³⁷ The District should make sure that information about this transitional housing program and other available housing for custodial parents is provided to all returning citizens, criminal justice agencies, and community organizations, so that they may take full advantage of existing opportunities.

Additionally, while supportive housing for returning citizens with children may often focus on parenting classes or other needs of the parent, it is important to also focus on the needs of their children. Children of returning parents may have, depending on their ages, conflicting feelings and responses to the return of formerly incarcerated parents, and any supportive housing for

returning custodial parents should include counseling and services to help their children adjust to the change.¹³⁸

➤ **Recommendation Number 23: Provide childcare for justice-involved individuals.**

For justice-involved women who are the primary caretakers for minor children, the difficulty in balancing taking care of their children with the need to find employment and comply with community supervision requirements has been a consistent issue.¹³⁹ Similarly, justice-involved young adults, particularly those who are unemployed, are often given the responsibility of caring for minor children. Lack of childcare itself can also be a significant barrier to employment for returning citizens, especially for returning women.¹⁴⁰ During one of Vera's interviews with CSOSA, the challenges of both women and young adults bringing children to their meetings with community supervision officers (CSOs) was specifically raised.¹⁴¹ Providing childcare for returning citizens in the District was identified as one of the priorities in the 2003 Strategic Plan, but it doesn't appear that this was ever implemented. In the short term, the District should explore a partnership with CSOSA to provide childcare at least for those under supervision when they need to meet with their CSOs or take part in programs and services there. Longer term, the District should work to provide free or heavily subsidized childcare for all returning citizens to make it easier for them to participate in programming and to seek and maintain employment.

➤ **Recommendation Number 24: Provide subsidized or supportive housing for high-risk young adults returning from incarceration.**

Many returning young adults were incarcerated while still in their teens, often directly from a family home. As they are released from incarceration in the adult criminal justice system or age out of the juvenile justice system, they are frequently unable to return to living with their families due to estrangement, the nature of their charges, housing restrictions, or perceived or actual dangerousness, especially when their parents have other, minor children and there are potential child welfare concerns.¹⁴² As a result, 1 in 10, or 3.5 million, young adults nationally experience homelessness in a year, 73 percent for a month or more.¹⁴³ Of these young adults experiencing homelessness, nearly half have also been incarcerated, either in the juvenile system or the adult criminal justice system.¹⁴⁴

To provide for these returning young adults, the District should provide independent living services with rental assistance.¹⁴⁵ In addition to providing these young adults with a place to live, evidence from a major study of youth aging out of foster care suggests that greater receipt of independent living services is related to a reduction in violent behavior and, thus, could lead to

reduced recidivism among young adults.¹⁴⁶ For returning young adults who want or need more support, transitional housing or specialized foster care should be considered as alternatives.¹⁴⁷

Education and Employment

A CSOSA report noted that 31 percent of individuals under its supervision in FY 2017 did not have a high school diploma or GED, 46 percent had only a high school or equivalent diploma, and only 18 percent had something higher than a high school degree.¹⁴⁸ The latest information from DOC indicates that only 8.9 percent of those in its custody had a college education.¹⁴⁹ This is especially concerning since a recent analysis of 2016 DC job postings by the Urban Institute found that only 18 percent require no more than a high school degree, while 74 percent require a bachelor's degree or higher.¹⁵⁰

Despite the District's growing economy, most of those returning from incarceration are unemployed—56 percent of the employable clients under CSOSA supervision were unemployed in 2017.¹⁵¹ Lack of education or experience, gaps in employment history and outdated skills due to long periods of incarceration, and employer reluctance to hire those with criminal records all contribute to the difficulty finding jobs. The District's Ban the Box legislation has likely helped with employer reluctance to some degree, but, according to an examination by the *City Paper* in October 2017, many problems with compliance and enforcement remain.¹⁵² Justice-involved women and young adults tend to have particular difficulties securing employment, but finding and maintaining a job can have a significant impact on recidivism—Vera's analysis of the 2015 DOC release cohort, included in the Appendix to this report, found that having full-time employment reduced the risk of recommitment by 64 percent among women and 23 percent among young adults. Thus, the District will need focused strategies to increase educational and employment opportunities.

- **Recommendation Number 25: The District should expand adult educational opportunities, with a focus on high school diplomas and postsecondary education.** The number and quality of jobs that are available in the District without at least a high school diploma are extremely limited. Given this, the priorities for adult educational programs should be on providing opportunities to earn high school diplomas and increasing access to postsecondary education.¹⁵³ Returning citizens should be given assistance to reduce difficulties with applications and securing financial aid. To increase access to programs, the number of sites and the frequency of offerings should be expanded. New approaches, such as free, online access to courses and educational programming at places like libraries and community centers or educational programming offered via DCTV, with only exams required to be taken at supervised locations,

could also help returning citizens balance the need for educational opportunities with the other demands of supervision and reintegration.

➤ **Recommendation Number 26: The District should ensure that education and employment preparation and training point to real jobs in the current economy.**

Educational and job training options for returning citizens are often restricted to a few traditional career paths for which there may not be great demand in the local economy. By looking at local educational, employment, and unemployment data, broken down by industry, and possibly supplementing it with real-time job-vacancy data from private sources like Burning Glass, the District could identify industry trends and determine what employees are most in demand, as well as the education and training they need.¹⁵⁴ DOES and OSSE could then coordinate to tailor educational, job training, and CTE programs to prepare returning citizens for jobs in industries with the greatest demand.

Another approach to consider is sector-based training, which similarly tries to match worker skills with current employer demands.¹⁵⁵ This approach identifies local economic sectors where employment is growing and likely to continue doing so, where the desired employees need some skills and training but below the level of a bachelor's degree, and where employers have had some difficulty finding employees with the needed skills and training.¹⁵⁶ Partnerships are then created between employers in those sectors or their industry associations, training providers, and government agencies and/or community-based organizations, who then work to develop specific training programs which will provide low-income workers with the necessary technical and soft skills, as well as any needed supportive services.¹⁵⁷ Sector-based training is similar to the “career pathways” model which has already been proposed in the District.¹⁵⁸ However, with sector-based training, employers are more substantively involved in the development and implementation of these training programs and know that individuals who complete them are likely to have the specific skills they need, and, thus, they are more likely to hire and retain participants.¹⁵⁹ While no sector-based training programs so far have specifically targeted justice-involved individuals, approximately 20 percent of the people involved in one major study of three programs applying this approach were formally incarcerated, and the results for the formally incarcerated participants in the “treatment” group were significantly better than for those in the control group across all measures, including months employed, hours worked, wages, and total earnings.¹⁶⁰

➤ **Recommendation Number 27: Enhance and expand employment programs for returning citizens.**

The Project Empowerment (PE) program run by DOES is the primary subsidized employment program available to returning citizens in the District. PE targets those with the greatest barriers to employment, serving approximately 700 to 800 participants annually. Participants must exhibit at least three of the following characteristics:

- Basic skills deficiency
- Lack of secondary school educational credential
- A documented history of substance abuse
- Homelessness
- A history of job cycling
- Conviction of a felony¹⁶¹

Although not strictly limited to those with justice involvement, typically more than 90 percent of PE participants are returning citizens.¹⁶² The program assesses participants' life and work skills, assigns them a case manager, evaluates their other needs, and refers them for supportive services.¹⁶³ Participants attend a four-week job readiness/life skills training focusing on interviewing skills, behavior management, and basic computer literacy, and are then placed in subsidized employment for up to six months, with the possibility of a six-month extension if the participant is guaranteed an unsubsidized job at the end.¹⁶⁴ Those who have not found unsubsidized employment at the end of the subsidized period are offered up to six weeks of additional professional development and job search assistance.¹⁶⁵ Once a participant finds unsubsidized employment, retention specialists provide ongoing contact and support for up to one year.¹⁶⁶ PE has also provided retention incentives to participants, though those have been suspended in the past and it is unclear if they are currently being offered.¹⁶⁷

PE appears to be a fairly successful program. Between 2006 and 2014, roughly half of its participants found unsubsidized jobs, and, of those who did in 2014, around 70 percent kept the job for six months and around 50 percent kept the job for at least a year, results which are comparable to other subsidized employment programs.¹⁶⁸ PE does not track recidivism rates for its participants, but in 2014, CSOSA reported that only 2 percent of supervised PE participants were reincarcerated, compared to 9 percent of the general supervised population.¹⁶⁹

Despite the success of the program, there are areas for potential improvement. While it is unclear if there is currently a waiting list for the program, there has been in the past, and the District should consider expanding the program if there are more eligible applicants than program slots.¹⁷⁰ It may also be necessary to add additional staff, particularly if the program is expanded,

as caseloads can run as high as 100 per staff member.¹⁷¹ The program should consider adding formal mentoring or peer support group activities during all phases of the program, as these have been found effective in similar programs.¹⁷² Either as part of an expansion of PE, or as a similar but separate program, perhaps for participants with slightly fewer barriers to employment, the District should also consider having participants put directly on the payroll of the employers during subsidized employment, and phasing in partial subsidies over the course of subsidized employment, practices which have been successful in other programs and may make for a smoother transition to unsubsidized employment.¹⁷³

Further, research done by MDRC has demonstrated that providing formerly incarcerated people with subsidized employment was generally not enough to impact recidivism significantly.¹⁷⁴ What worked was pairing subsidized employment with skills development, mentoring, and support for tackling other reentry obstacles—like back child support and fines and fees—over many months or even years.¹⁷⁵ While PE does provide some supportive services, it appears this is mostly in the early phases of the program and it is unclear how long those services continue. If it is not already doing so, PE should consider extending supportive services even after participants have found unsubsidized employment. The program should also track more detailed data on participant outcomes, including recidivism rates; if the reductions in recidivism reported by CSOSA in 2014 were not anomalous, that alone might justify expanding the program.¹⁷⁶

In addition to PE, the new ONSE Pathways program, though not a reentry or employment program per se, appears to be a promising approach to reducing recidivism and improving employment opportunities for people with significant justice-involvement. The program takes a broad health-based approach focused on reintegration, including employment; it is currently in its beginning stages and limited to 25 participants per nine-month cycle.¹⁷⁷ The District should continue to evaluate this program, and should consider expanding it if the results are positive.

➤ **Recommendation Number 28: Encourage coordination and cooperation between criminal justice agencies and education and employment programs in the community.**

In reviewing the lessons from twenty years of funding reentry and employment programs for formerly incarcerated people, the Annie E. Casey Foundation noted that effective strategies to help people find employment upon release need to begin when they are incarcerated, but the disconnect between education and employment programs in prison and those in the community could make comprehensive release planning difficult.¹⁷⁸ Correctional facilities need to assess people's educational and skill levels and develop plans for them to take advantage of the

appropriate programming available in the facility.¹⁷⁹ For individuals to fully benefit from the programming and services they receive while incarcerated, however, they need to be connected to similar or complementary services in the community when they are released.¹⁸⁰

A perfect example of this sort of coordination currently occurring in the District is the DC Jail Work Readiness Program. This partnership between DOC and DOES allows eligible individuals to complete the job readiness/life skills portion of the PE program while incarcerated at DOC, and those who complete it can be placed in subsidized employment through PE immediately upon release.¹⁸¹ DOC also offers a program in coordination with the DC Central Kitchen, a successful community-based culinary job training program whose graduates with histories of incarceration were 91 percent less likely to recidivate compared to national averages, which presumably makes it easier for participants to enter the community-based program upon release.¹⁸² DOC should explore the possibility of additional partnerships and coordination of programming with outside agencies and community-based organizations. Similarly, BOP should consider coordinating its educational and occupational training programs for DC Code offenders with programs in the District.

Another examples of successful coordination and cooperation among criminal justice agencies and training or employment programs is PE's work with CSOSA and MORCA to recruit participants and leverage resources for returning citizens.¹⁸³ The DC Central Kitchen and CSOSA have also worked together to facilitate referrals to that program and to arrange for meetings with CSOs to be scheduled at times that would not interfere with participation in the program.¹⁸⁴ The District should encourage additional collaborative relationships like this between criminal justice agencies and training or employment programs to make the provision of services to returning citizens more efficient and productive.

➤ **Recommendation Number 29: Conduct outreach to employers based on recent national evidence of an increased willingness to hire formerly incarcerated individuals.**

The District has engaged in previous outreach efforts to employers to encourage them to hire returning citizens and to understand the concerns they have about doing so, and the Council for Court Excellence has conducted a thorough survey of employers in the District.¹⁸⁵ In the past, surveys of employers demonstrated considerable reluctance to hire justice-involved individuals. For example, a widely cited 2001 survey found that approximately 62 percent of employers definitely would not or probably would not hire someone with a criminal record, while only around 12 percent definitely would and 26 percent probably would.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, the 2011 CCE

survey of employers within the District found that only one-third had hired a previously incarcerated person or would do so if given the chance.¹⁸⁷

However, more recent national evidence shows that employers are increasingly willing to hire people with criminal records and that many major employers have had extremely positive experiences with them as employees. For example, a 2017 report from the Trone Private Sector and Education Advisory Council to the ACLU showed that major corporations like Total Wine & More, Starbucks, Home Depot, American Airlines, Koch Industries, and Under Armour had adopted hiring practices to include people with criminal records.¹⁸⁸ The report also noted that employers who had hired people with criminal records generally found them to have greater job loyalty than other workers; Total Wine & More found that annual turnover was more than 12 percent lower for employees with criminal records, while Electronic Recyclers International reduced turnover from 25 percent to 11 percent after adopting a program to recruit employees with criminal records.¹⁸⁹ The lower turnover rates allowed these companies to save significant amounts on recruitment and training.¹⁹⁰

Similarly, a 2018 survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management and the Charles Koch Institute found that only 14 percent of HR professionals and 26 percent of managers nationally were unwilling to hire someone with a criminal record, and 63 percent of HR professionals reported having already hired workers with criminal records.¹⁹¹ The survey found that 67 percent of HR professionals and 82 percent of managers felt that the “quality of hire” for workers with criminal records was as high or higher than for those without records, and 74 percent of managers and HR professionals believed the cost of hiring workers with criminal records was the same or lower than the cost of hiring workers without records.¹⁹² Additionally, this survey found that over 50 percent of both managers and non-managers were personally willing to work with people with criminal records.¹⁹³

The District should conduct an outreach campaign to local employers to inform them of this growing evidence of a greater willingness among employers to hire returning citizens and encourage them to be more open to doing so. This could be a more effective approach than simply surveying employers about hiring returning citizens, as evidence from social psychology suggests that providing information about prevalent opinions and social norms can be effective in changing beliefs and behaviors.¹⁹⁴ An outreach campaign to local employers should also make sure they are aware of existing incentives to hire people with criminal records, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Federal Bonding Program.¹⁹⁵

➤ **Recommendation Number 30: Consider adopting measures employers have already identified that would encourage them to hire returning citizens.**

Previous surveys of employers, both in the District and nationally, have already identified several factors that would make them more willing to hire returning citizens. One of the biggest and most frequently identified concerns that employers have is liability for negligent hiring lawsuits related to an employee's criminal record.¹⁹⁶ To alleviate this concern, the District should consider providing liability protection, like that provided by a number of other states, for employers who hire returning citizens.¹⁹⁷ CCE's 2011 survey of employers also found that they would be more willing to hire previously incarcerated people if some kind of "certificate of good standing" was available to justice-involved individuals who had demonstrated reliability and good character over time, similar to those provided in New York and Illinois.¹⁹⁸ CCE's recommendation that the District consider providing such certificates is still valid and should be explored further. The District should also consider providing a local tax credit to employers who hire returning citizens, similar to the federal WOTC but perhaps with a higher maximum credit, particularly as the current WOTC program is set to expire on December 31, 2019 unless reauthorized.¹⁹⁹

A recent study by the RAND Corporation provides additional support for ideas like certificates of good standing or a local tax credit. When presented with a hypothetical scenario where the maximum tax credit for hiring someone with a criminal record was raised from \$2,500 to \$5,000, the percentage of employers who would consider hiring the person went from 59 percent to 77 percent.²⁰⁰ Similarly, when presented with a hypothetical scenario when the potential employee with a criminal record was provided with a post-conviction certificate that also verified work history, the percentage of employers who would consider hiring the person went from 59 percent to 81 percent.²⁰¹

Encouraging Criminal Justice Agencies to Revise Policies and Practices

The strategic planning group has decided that reduction in rearrests, reconvictions, and reincarcerations will all be used as measures of recidivism reduction. While all three involve actions of the returning citizens, the actions and responses of criminal justice agencies to a variety of behaviors also influence recidivism, and it is important for those agencies to act to reduce recidivism. The aim of all agencies in the criminal justice system in the District should be making every returning citizen a success in maintaining a stable, law-abiding life.

Metropolitan Police Department

Recently, much of the focus in research on policing has shifted to preventive policing: spotting and learning from residents the conditions in particular places that lead to crime—whether the presence of gangs, poorly lit streets, abandoned houses used for criminal purposes, poorly maintained parks and playgrounds, empty storefronts, or simply too many young people with nothing to do. All of these encourage criminal activity, and many can be remedied with imaginative approaches to problem-solving and the cooperation and involvement of residents. But to do so, policing must be approached as a partnership, not just with other agencies, but with the residents themselves in the interests of improving the health and safety of everyone.

Considering the role of policing in reducing recidivism and ensuring public safety in the District, while also promoting the success of returning citizens, the MPD should examine how to find the proper balance between accountability and support for those citizens struggling with reentry. Decades of research, most recently by the Arnold Foundation, points to the negative impact of even a few days of detention and incarceration on an individual's risk of further offending.²⁰² This is especially true for young adults without a long criminal and/or incarceration history and for women, for whose families an arrest may have extensive collateral consequences.

As the primary law enforcement agency for the District, MPD has an important role to play in ensuring public safety. But it is also important to examine whether custodial arrests are always the best option to safeguard public safety and the health and well-being of communities and whether there might be better responses to small violations (for example, loitering, fare jumping, panhandling, soliciting, graffiti, open container, etc.) that may be more nuisance than serious crime.

➤ **Recommendation Number 31: The District should evaluate the effectiveness and public safety impact of the MPD's use of field citations.**

In the District, MPD is empowered to issue field citations for some offenses.²⁰³ Those cited may pay a fine immediately or go to court. Citations can be an extremely effective way to avoid pulling someone more deeply into the criminal justice system.²⁰⁴ It is important that the District learn more about how those citations are being used and whether it is possible to expand their use. An evaluation of the use of citations should examine the criteria used to determine eligibility; the department's practices in applying those criteria; the frequency with which the non-payment of fines imposed leads to arrest, detention, or incarceration; and the public safety outcomes for those given citations compared to those arrested for similar offenses. Based on this evaluation, the District should consider whether it is possible to expand the use of citations without

compromising public safety, and whether policy or legislative change is required to accomplish that.

- **Recommendation Number 32: Because those on supervision are not currently eligible for field citations in lieu of arrest, CSOSA and MPD should create procedures other than custodial arrest to sanction minor infractions or nuisance offenses committed by those on supervision who are classified as low risk.**

For someone on parole or mandatory supervision in the District, an arrest has immediate and sometimes serious consequences. For example, someone on supervision is not eligible for a field citation and is therefore automatically subject to a custodial arrest and detention for up to five days.²⁰⁵ CSOSA and MPD should consider whether a system of warnings might be appropriate for the most minor offenses and, perhaps in cases of other low-level offenses, immediate return to the CSOSA where the CSO could determine the response appropriate to the level of the offense. Such alternatives to arrest in these cases would not only avoid detention for up to five days for minor infractions, but would also allow the CSOs who are most familiar with the individuals under supervision to make determinations about proper sanctions in these cases rather than just making a recommendation and having the ultimate decision made by the releasing authority.

U.S. Parole Commission and Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency

The U.S. Parole Commission makes a number of crucial decisions that can affect recidivism as defined in this project. The Commission:

- decides on when a person in prison (in parole cases) will be released;
 - sets the conditions by which returning citizens have to live while on supervision;
 - decides whether those conditions have been violated seriously or often enough that an individual will be revoked to prison; and
 - sets the term/duration of the sentence to be served for the violation.
- **Recommendation Number 33: The Parole Commission should set individualized conditions of supervision in every case, based on risk and needs assessments, and should update those conditions regularly.**

The Parole Commission currently imposes numerous general conditions for everyone released to supervision.²⁰⁶ The Commission's certificates of release and Notices of Action (NOAs) require those on supervision to abide by all of these general conditions for the duration of the supervision period, regardless of their level of compliance or assessed risk. Many conditions are common sense: do not possess a firearm, for example, and, follow the instructions of your supervision

officer. Others, however, may not be particularly relevant in every case and could pose unnecessary difficulties even for those trying hard to remain compliant.

Research on correctional supervision and treatment has developed evidence-based practices to reduce reoffending and promote successful completion. These include the use of a validated risk and needs assessment, and the tailoring of conditions of release, frequency of reporting, and the types and frequency of the treatment ordered to the particular risk level and needs of the person being supervised, as too much supervision and programming have been found to be counter-productive to success for low-risk individuals.²⁰⁷ Evidence-based practices also call for regular reviews of the conditions imposed on those on supervision to ensure that they are appropriate to the individual's continuing risk and behavior, and for their reduction or increase as indicated.²⁰⁸

CSOSA has created many programs and specialized caseloads and regularly applies evidence-based practices in setting its own policies and procedures.²⁰⁹ The requirement by the Parole Commission of standard conditions in every case, however, flies in the face of such practices. The Parole Commission should set conditions of supervision in every case that are tailored to the risk level and needs of the individual.

Further, while new risk assessments are conducted every six months, or in response to a life changing event or rearrest, it is unclear whether any of those required general conditions can ever be lifted, and any change to the conditions of supervision must be approved by the Parole Commission. While Vera understands that there is an expedited procedure to request changes to supervision conditions, interviews with some stakeholders suggested that there can be lengthy delays before the Parole Commission acts on such recommendations. The Parole Commission should give CSOs the authority to change the conditions of supervision as warranted by updated risk assessments, changes in circumstances, or extended periods of compliance.

➤ **Recommendation Number 34: The Parole Commission should be transparent about its guidelines for sentencing following an arrest and should give CSOs more authority to decide whether revocation is appropriate.**

CSOSA automatically submits an Alleged Violation Report (AVR) to the Parole Commission in response to every arrest of someone on supervision and has discretion to submit an AVR for a violation of conditions not involving a new arrest. Some of the stakeholders interviewed informed Vera that the Parole Commission routinely issues warrants regardless of the outcome of the arrest, the seriousness of the charge, or the assessed risk level of the person in question. Vera was also informed that the Parole Commission ordered revocation in the majority of cases, even those

involving only technical violations and not a new arrest. Vera did not have access to data on warrants or revocations and could not determine whether this was accurate or not. If true, however, both of these practices run counter to research on what policies and practices are most likely to help those on supervision succeed, as well as the experience of jurisdictions that have recently achieved great success in reducing recidivism among probationers and parolees.²¹⁰

Vera was also unable to determine how often the Parole Commission follows the recommendations of CSOs regarding warrants, revocations, or other sanctions. But those CSOs are the ones with the direct experience of assessing the risk and needs of those they are supervising and of overseeing their overall compliance with conditions and their progress in achieving a stable, law-abiding life. Because of this greater understanding of the situation of the individual under supervision, the Parole Commission should grant CSOs more authority to impose appropriate sanctions on their own, even in response to new arrests, and only submit AVRs in cases where they believed revocation might be warranted.

Bureau of Prisons

In 2016, the Congressionally-chartered Charles Colson Task Force on Federal Corrections issued a 132-page report with six categories of recommendations for improving the BOP's operations to increase public safety after its prisoners are released.²¹¹ Several recommendations spoke to the need for closer collaboration with local agencies and a more seamless hand-off to community supervision agencies. Having reviewed all of their recommendations, we can merely agree with them and urge that they be followed. Implementing the Task Force's recommendations on expanding available programming, particularly educational and occupational programming, using risk and needs assessments to determine the appropriate programs and services, and focusing on comprehensive reentry planning, would be of particular importance for efforts to reduce recidivism in the District.²¹²

Conclusion

This report is intended to provide information and recommendations that will assist the District in its efforts to reduce recidivism, but it should be viewed as merely one step in an ongoing process. It may not be possible, or even advisable, to attempt to implement all of the recommendations immediately. While some may be easier to adopt in the short term, others will require longer term planning and work.

As part of continuing process of strategic planning for recidivism reduction, the District should determine which of the recommended measures ought to be pursued, their relative priority, and whether they should

be considered as short-, medium-, or long-term efforts. Based on those determinations, specific work plans can be produced to set out the necessary steps towards implementation, timelines, and the agencies or groups that will be responsible for undertaking each step toward implementation. Vera hopes that this report will be used to enhance the already considerable work the District has done to provide services and support to improve the reentry experience, and to help returning citizens in finding a path that allows them to avoid future involvement in the criminal justice system.

APPENDIX

September 14, 2018

Exploring Recommitment in the District of Columbia's FY2015 Department of Corrections Release Cohort

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Exploring Recombitment in the District of Columbia’s FY2015 DOC Release Cohort

INTRODUCTION

The District of Columbia (D.C.) is well aware of the importance of recidivism in its response to the justice-involved population it serves. The District uses information about recidivism to identify and channel resources for programs and policies, as well as to communicate with stakeholders about public safety and detainee wellbeing. The goal of the quantitative research presented in this report is to provide empirical evidence to guide planning for recidivism initiatives in D.C.

The District of Columbia has undertaken past analyses of recidivism to guide recidivism reduction efforts. In 2012, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) commissioned a study to assess recidivism in the District. It focused on three outcomes: rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration. The study found that among those individuals released from the D.C. DOC in FY2007, 62 percent were rearrested, 36 percent were reconvicted, and 36 percent were reincarcerated over a three-year follow up period.¹ These rates are similar to those found in two previous studies by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). A BJS study that tracked releasees from prisons in 11 states in 1983 found that 63 percent were rearrested, 47 percent were reconvicted and 41 percent were reincarcerated within three years of release.² A second BJS study that followed releasees from prisons in 15 states in 1994 found a 68 percent rearrest rate, 47 percent reconviction rate and 25 percent reincarceration rate within three years of release.³

The specific aims of this study are to:

1. Estimate rates of recommitment in a recent D.C. Department of Corrections release cohort.
2. Examine demographic, health and justice factors associated with recommitment.
3. Estimate rates of recommitment and factors associated with recommitment among two sub groups of interest: women and young adults.

¹ Kiminori Nakamura and Douglas Weiss, *Measuring Recidivism in the District of Columbia*, (Washington, DC: Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, 2012), <https://cjcc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cjcc/publication/attachments/CJCC%204%204%202011%20Recidivism%20Study.pdf>.

² Allen Beck and Bernard Shipley, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983*, (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997).

³ Patrick A. Langan and David J. Levin, *Recidivism of prisoners released in 1994* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rpr94.pdf>.

METHOD

Data and sample

The current study examines recommitments to DOC in a FY2015 DOC release cohort over a follow-up period of 33 to 44 months. The study sample is drawn from the District of Columbia Custodial Population Study, which included both individuals sentenced to DOC and those detained pretrial.⁴ DOC provided post-release justice, socioeconomic, and health data through the end of May 2018 for the study sample.

The full sample is referred to as the DOC release cohort (N=7,744). Two sub samples were identified because they hold current interest for recidivism mitigation initiatives in D.C. The first is females (N=982) and the second is young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years (N=1,942). Analyses were conducted on each of the three samples.

Variables

The outcome variable of interest was a dichotomous measure of recidivism that indicates recommitment to DOC during the post-release observation period of 33 to 44 months.

Covariates of interest were constructed from available demographic, socioeconomic, health and justice data.

Demographic information about releasees was self-reported. These variables include

- Sex: male, female
- Age at index release: 18-24, 25-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50+ years
- Race-ethnicity: Black, Hispanic, Asian, White, other race
- Birthplace: DC born, born outside DC

Information about the socioeconomic status (SES) at index arrest was also self-reported. SES variables include

- Education: years of schooling
- Employment: full-time, part-time, unemployed, welfare

Health information was derived from multiple sources. The physical health variable was based on self-reports. The substance use variable was based on releasees' voluntary requests for related services. The mental health variable was based on diagnoses provided by providers (psychiatrists or licensed practitioners). These assessments were made using DSM-IV or ICD9 criteria based on symptoms presented by the individual at the time of examination and/or prior responses to mental health screening questions. Detainees could be referred for assessment by any staff member or provider at any

⁴ Shawn M. Flower, *District of Columbia Custodial Population Study: Seeking Alignment between Evidence Based Practices and Jail Based Reentry Services* (Washington DC: Justice Research and Statistics Association & The Moss Group, Inc. Sept. 2017).

point during contact with DOC. The three dichotomous health indicators described below do not represent estimates of rates of disease, mental illness and substance use. It should be kept in mind that individuals often hide their illness because of stigma and fear. Further, the lack of a diagnosis *during* contact with DOC does not mean that an individual was not diagnosed prior to agency contact or that he or she is not experiencing distressing symptoms. Therefore, the prevalence of mental illness was likely considerably higher than suggested by this data.

- Physical condition: yes, no
- Mental health condition: yes, no
- Substance use condition: yes, no
-

Justice information was derived from administrative data. The typology for most serious offense at the arrest connected with the index release was provided by DOC. The violent/dangerous variable indicates the releasees were charged with a crime specified by the DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501. The gang affiliation variable is based on self-reports or determinations by DOC staff.

- Most serious offense at arrest of index release: serious person crimes, tangible object crimes, violation of law or authority, white collar or misdemeanors, external jurisdiction inmate.
- Length of stay from index arrest to release: 0-7 days, 8-31 days, 2-3 months, 4-6 months, 7-9 months, 10-12 months, 13+ months
- Violent/dangerous: yes, no
- Gang affiliation. yes, no

Analytic strategy

The release from DOC occurred in FY2015 and the post-release follow up period ranged from 33 to 44 months (970 to 1,320 days). For those with more than one release in FY2015, the analysis was based on the person's first release in that year, defined as the index release.

Basic descriptive statistics were used to report cohort characteristics and recommitment rates over the follow up period based on analyses of the data provided by DOC. Kaplan-Meier survival models stratified by key characteristics were used to estimate differences in the cumulative proportion of those who were recommitted to DOC over the post-release observation period. Cox proportional hazard models with tests for the proportionality assumption were used to examine demographic, socioeconomic, health and justice factors associated with recommitment.

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in three sections. The first set of findings is based on the full FY2015 DOC release cohort. The second section is based on the female release cohort and the third section on those less than 25 years of age at release referred to as the young adult release cohort.

1. FY2015 DOC release cohort

1.1 Release cohort characteristics

The characteristics of the FY2015 DOC release cohort (n=7,744) are presented in Table 1. Most releasees were male (87 percent). The mean (\pm SD) age at release was 35 (\pm 12) years. Black releasees comprised the largest race-ethnic component of the cohort (91 percent). Two thirds of the release cohort was born in DC. Regarding socioeconomic status, the mean (\pm SD) years of schooling for the release cohort was 11 (\pm 2). Less than one third of the cohort was employed full-time at arrest (31 percent) and almost one half was unemployed (46 percent).

Results for health conditions indicate that more than one quarter of the release cohort had a physical condition (27 percent) while a small minority experienced mental health (5 percent) and/or substance use (3 percent) conditions. The relatively low percentages for mental health and substance use conditions may be partially explained by several factors. Substance indicators were based on voluntary requests for related services and mental health indicators were derived from diagnoses provided by providers (psychiatrists or licensed practitioners) at any time during contact with DOC. In general, individuals often hide their illness because of stigma and fear. Consequently, some detainees may experience psychological distress that goes undiagnosed. Therefore, the prevalence of mental illness is likely considerably higher than suggested by this data.

Justice information indicates that the most prevalent charge category among releasees was serious person crimes (49 percent), followed by tangible object crimes (23 percent). The median (q1, q3) length of stay from arrest to release was 24 (4, 112) days. One third of the release cohort was charged with an offense which is considered violent/dangerous according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501. A small minority of the release cohort was designated as gang affiliated (4 percent).

Table 1. FY2015 DOC release cohort characteristics (n=7,744)

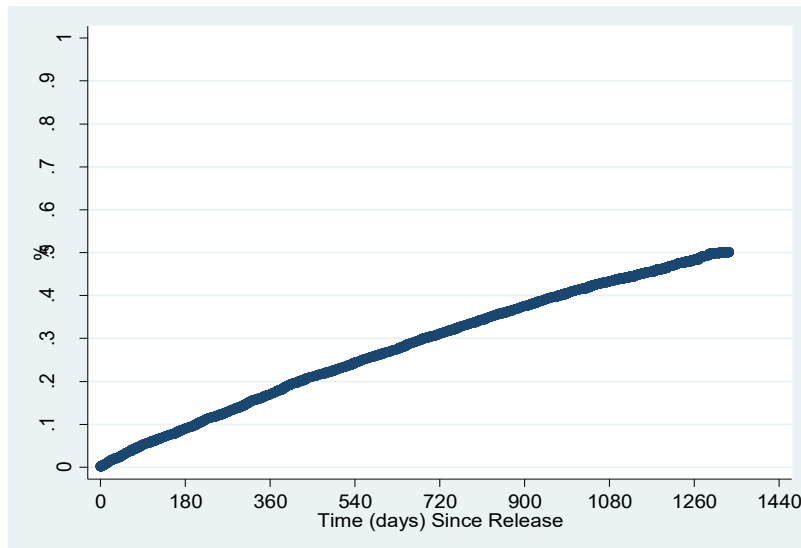
	percent	n
Demographics		
SEX		
Male	87	6,762
Female	13	982
AGE AT RELEASE		
18-24	25	1,942
25-29	16	1,252
30-39	25	1,950
40-49	16	1,269
50 and up	17	1,331
Mean	35 years	
RACE		
Black	91	7,012
White	4	306
Hispanic	4	317
Asian	0	22
Other	1	59
BIRTHPLACE		
DC	66	5,121
Non-DC	34	2,623
Socioeconomic status		
EDUCATION		
Mean years of schooling	11 years	
EMPLOYMENT		
Employed full-time	31	2,371
Employed part-time	2	126
Unemployed	46	3,596
Welfare	0	10
Missing	21	1,641
Health		
PHYSICAL		
Yes	27	2,098
No	73	5,646
MENTAL		
Yes	5	370
No	95	7,374
SUBSTANCE		
Yes	3	250
No	97	7,494
Justice		
MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE AT INDEX RELEASE		
Serious Person Crimes	49	3,778
Tangible Object Crimes	23	1,815
Violation of Law or Authority	18	1,375
White Collar or Misdemeanors	9	683
External Jurisdiction Inmate	1	93
LENGTH OF STAY ARREST TO RELEASE		
0-7 days	35	2,747
8-31 days	19	1,448
2-3 months	17	1,283
4-6 months	15	1,123
7-9 months	7	524
10-12 months	4	274
13+ months	4	345
mean LOS	101 days	
VIOLENT/DANGEROUS		
Yes	33	2,565
No	67	5,177
GANG AFFILIATION		
Yes	4	299
No	96	7,445

1.2 Release cohort: Recommitment to DOC

Figure 1 shows that 10 percent of the FY2015 DOC release cohort was recommitted to DOC within six months of release (180 days) and about half of releases were recommitted after 3 ½ years (1,260 days). The median time to recommitment after release was 259 days. Concerning number of recommitments over the post-release period (at least 970 days), 23 percent of releasees experienced one re-commitment, 13 percent experienced 2 re-commitments, and 16 percent experienced three or more recommitments to DOC.

By comparison, the CJCC study referenced above found that in the FY2007 D.C. DOC cohort, 36 percent were reconvicted and 36 percent were reincarcerated over a three-year follow up period. The relatively high rate of recommitment in the current study may be partly explained by the fact that many people return to DOC as pretrial detainees and are not sentenced at release.

Figure 1. Release cohort re-commitment rates (N=7,744)



1.3 Release cohort: Differences in recommitment to DOC by key characteristics

Survival analyses were conducted to examine sub group differences in recommitment. The survival curves visually demonstrate that the release cohort is not a homogenous group. Kaplan-Meier survival estimates show the cumulative proportion of those who are recommitted to DOC over the post-release period. The number of days since release is displayed on the horizontal x axis while the probability of survival (0 to 1) is shown on the vertical y axis, i.e. the probability of not experiencing recommitment. The shaded areas on each side of the lines show 95% confidence intervals, which can be interpreted as the range of values consistent with the data in this study. Sub groups represented by lower lines in the

charts have a lower probability of surviving re-commitment, which means a higher probability of experiencing recommitment to DOC.

Figures 2 and 3 below display the survival probability of recommitment for the FY2015 release cohort stratified by sex and age, respectively. These key characteristics correspond to the identified sub groups of interest. Figure 1 shows that males had a higher probability of recommitment than females. Similarly, Figure 2 shows that young adults 18-24 years of age had a higher probability of recommitment compared to people aged 25 or older.

Survival curves in Figures 4, 5 and 9 to 11 suggest that the following sub groups had a higher probability of re-commitment:

- Black releasees compared to Whites, Hispanics, Asians and other race-ethnic groups (Figure 4).
- Releasees with part-time employment, those who are unemployment and welfare recipients compared to those with full-time employment (Figure 5).
- Releasees with a 2- to 3-month length of stay have the highest probability of recommitment while those with 0 to 7 days length of stay have the lowest probability (Figure 9).
- Releasees charged with a crime considered violent/dangerous according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501 (Figure 10).
- Those designated as affiliated with a gang (Figure 11).

Figures 6 to 8 suggest that the experiences of those with and without health problems (physical, mental, substance) are similar.

Figure 2. Release cohort survival probability since release by sex: females v. males

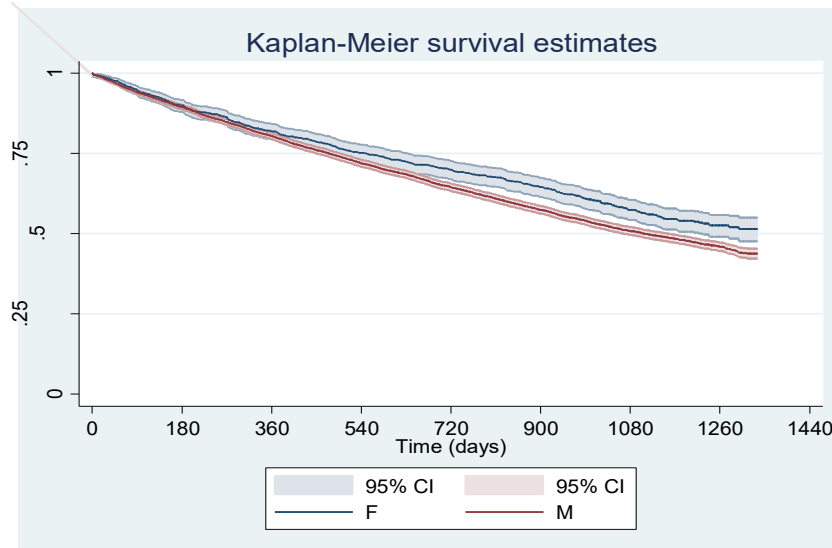


Figure 3. Release cohort survival probability since release by age: young adults < 25 years v. 25+ years

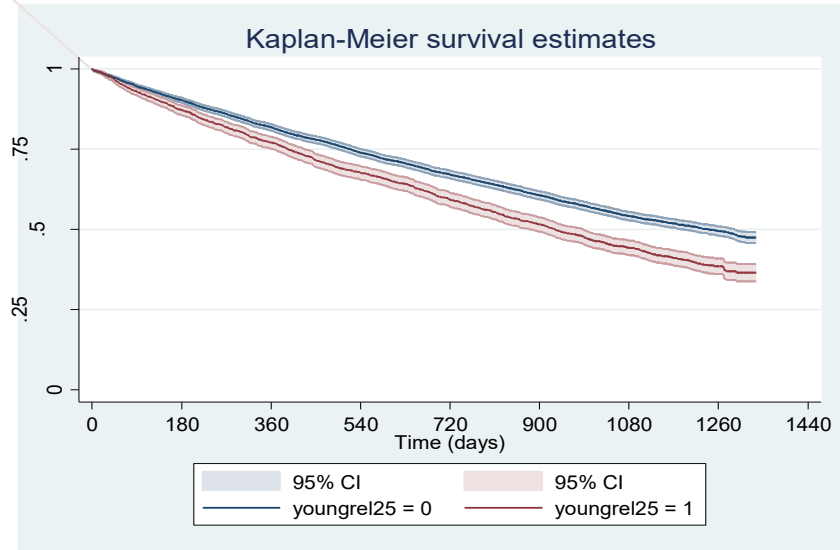


Figure 4. Release cohort survival probability since release by race-ethnicity: Asian, Hispanic, White, Black, other race-ethnicity

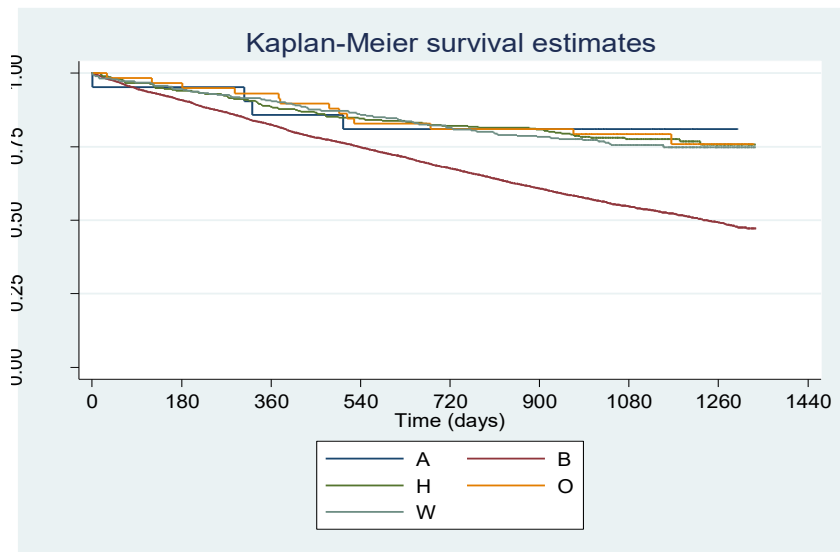


Figure 5. Release cohort survival probability since release by employment status: employed full time, employed part time, unemployed, welfare

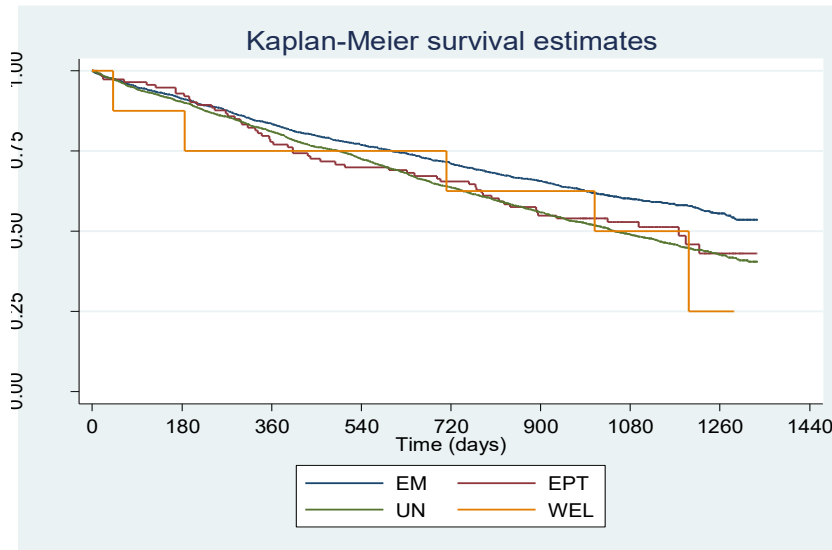


Figure 6. Release cohort survival probability since release by health status: physical problem (1) v. none (0)

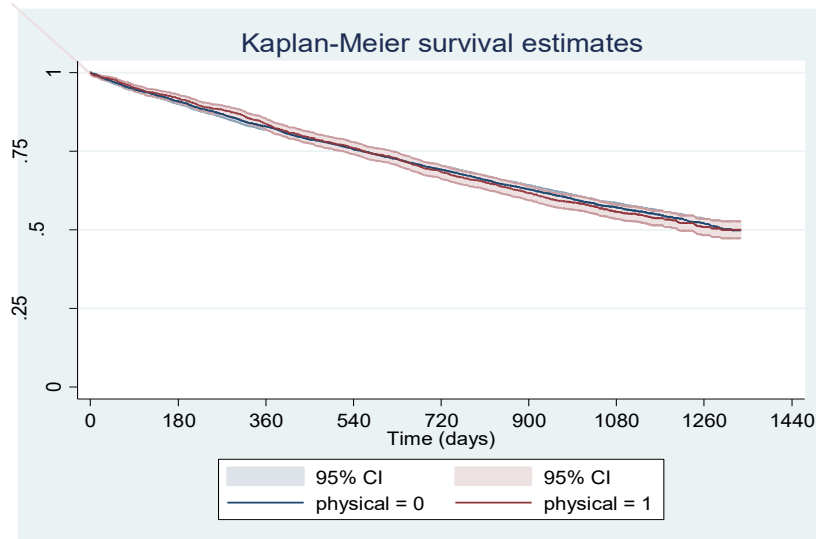


Figure 7. Release cohort survival probability since release by mental health status: mental health problem (1) v. none (0)

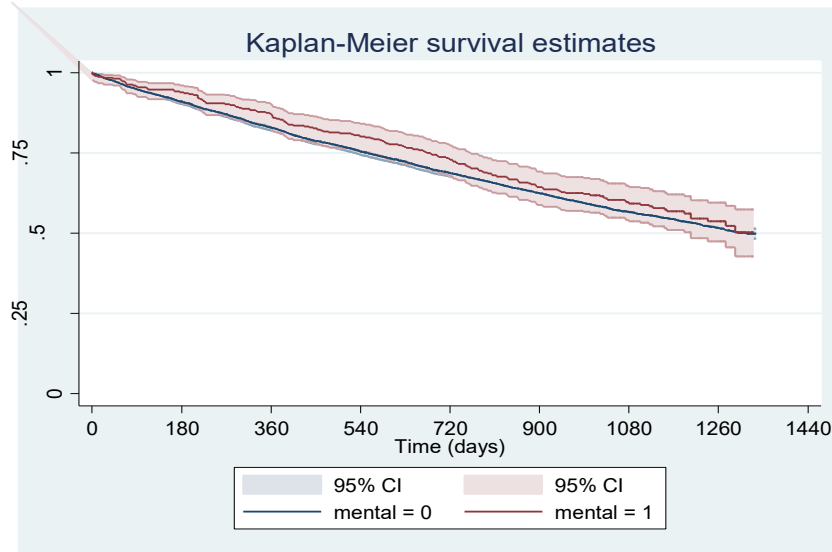


Figure 8. Release cohort survival probability since release by substance use status: substance use problem (1) v. none (0)

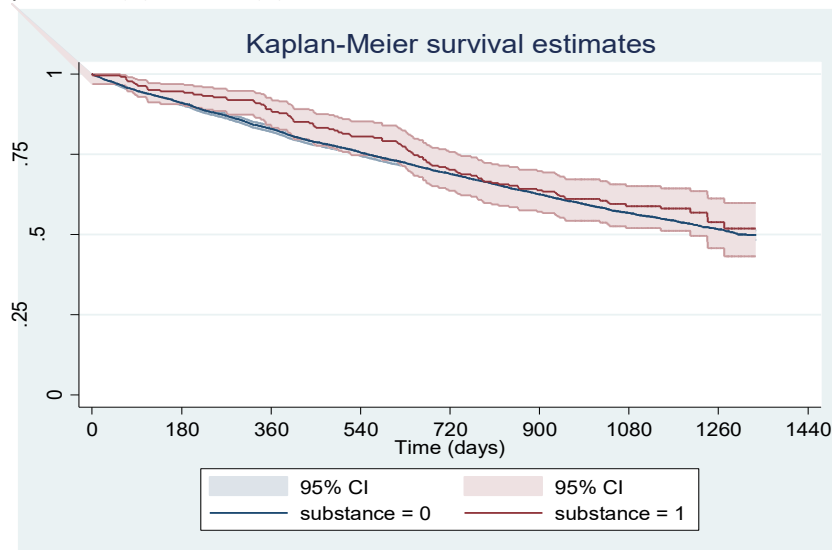


Figure 9. Release cohort survival probability since release by length of stay from arrest to release: category 1) 0-7 days, category 2) 8-31 days, category 3) 2-3 months, category 4) 4+ months

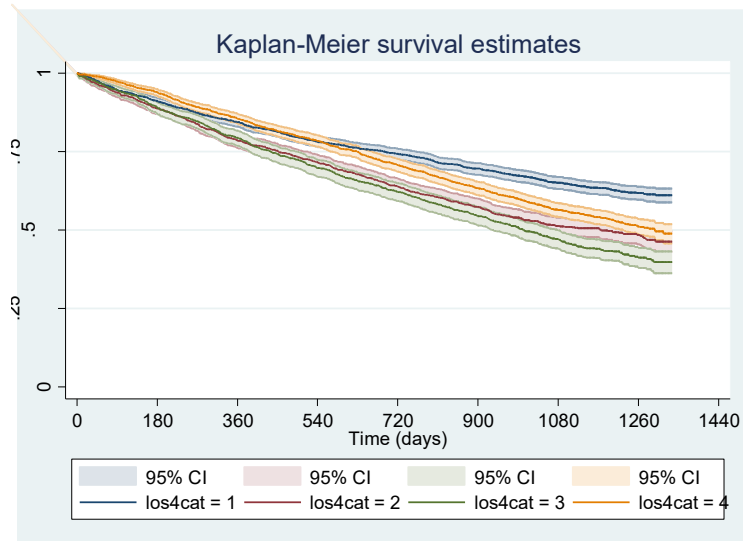


Figure 10. Release cohort survival probability since release by violent/dangerous status according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501: violent/dangerous (1) v. not violent/dangerous (0)

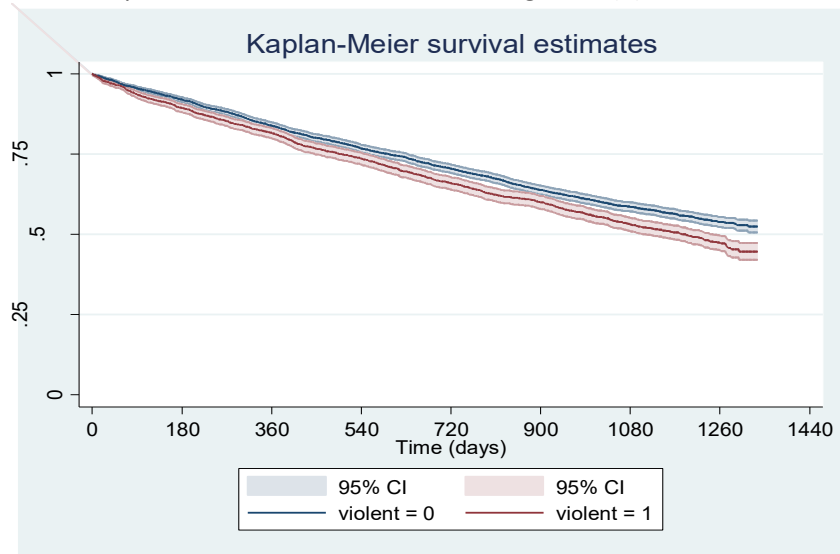
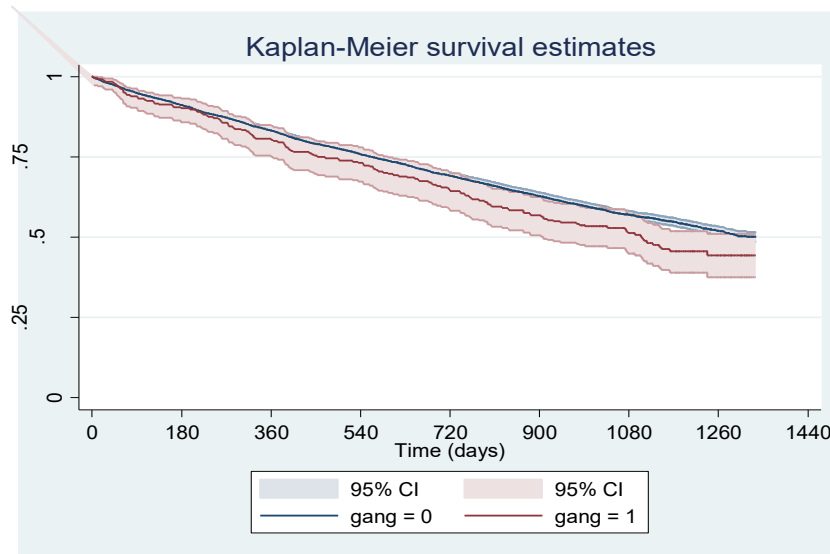


Figure 11. Release cohort survival probability since release by gang affiliation designation: gang affiliated (1) v. not gang affiliated (0)



1.4 Release cohort regression analysis

The survival analyses above suggest that there was variation in the post-release experiences of those in the FY2015 DOC release cohort. The next set of analyses examines whether these differences were due to chance (statistical significance) or they could be explained, at least partially, by other factors for which data is available (covariates). Cox proportional hazard models were used to identify statistically significant factors ($p < .05$) that were associated with recommitment while controlling for the impact of other variables. All covariates were tested to ensure that they did not violate the proportionality assumption. Hazard ratio estimates, adjusted for covariates, are interpreted as the ratio of the hazard of recommitment for a 1-unit change in the corresponding covariate.

Table 2 displays the recommitment adjusted hazard ratios (AHR) for the FY 2015 DOC release cohort for recommitment. Most subgroup differences in the probability of recommitment in the FY2015 DOC release cohort persisted even after accounting for the influence of demographic, socioeconomic, health and justice factors.

Younger releasees were more likely to be recommitment. Each year increase in age was associated with a 2% decrease in the recommitment hazard (AOR 0.98, $p < .001$).

The recommitment hazard for Black releasees was more than twice as high compared to each of the other race groups. For example, the recommitment hazard for Whites was about half that of Blacks (AHR 0.49, $p < .001$). However, as discussed at the end of this section, more research is required to reveal

the pathways behind this finding, particularly the influence of neighborhood effects and structural-level factors such as employment rates and racial discrimination that can help inform evidence-based policy and programmatic decisions.

Each additional year of schooling was associated with a 3 percent reduction in the recommitment hazard (AHR 0.97, $p < .001$). This finding gives further weight to arguments for the value of positive spillover effects of investments in educational attainment.

Releasees with mental health problems had a lower recommitment hazard (AHR 0.76, $p = .004$). This result is interesting given the substantial efforts in D.C. to link seriously and persistently mentally ill persons to community-based care and resources.

Table 2 also shows that those charged with tangible object crimes (AHR 1.73, $p < .001$) and violations of the law or authority (AHR 1.61, $p < .001$), compared to violent crimes, had higher recommitment hazards, as did those charged with a crime specified as violent/dangerous by the DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501 (AHR 1.48, $p < .001$).

Importantly, the higher probability of recommitment for males compared to females was explained, at least partially, by the influence of socioeconomic factors. Sex differences in re-commitment decreased in size and were no longer statistically significant after accounting for the impact of education (AHR 0.98, $p = .906$). Therefore, years of schooling was a significant moderator of sex differences in re-commitment risk. This study demonstrates that educational attainment is a protective factor for recidivism, especially among males, giving further weight to arguments for the value of the indirect positive effects of investments in education. This finding strongly points to the potential value of ensuring male releasees access to education as well as to the supports they need to attain their educational goals.

Table 2. Release cohort: Recidivism adjusted hazard ratio estimates from Cox proportional hazard models

	AHR	P value
Demographics		
FEMALE	0.98	.906
AGE AT RELEASE	0.98	<.0001
RACE		
Black	~	~
White	0.49	<.0001
Hispanic	0.40	<.0001
Asian	0.38	.091
Other	0.45	.020
Socioeconomic status		
YEARS OF SCHOOL	0.97	<.0001
Health		
PHYSICAL	1.09	.088
MENTAL	0.76	.004
Justice		
MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE AT RELEASE		
Serious Person Crimes	~	~
Tangible Object Crimes	1.73	<.0001
Violate Law or Authority	1.61	<.0001
White Collar or Misdemeanors	0.91	.339
External Jurisdiction Inmate	0.76	.219
VIOLENT / DANGEROUS	1.48	<.0001
GANG AFFILIATION	0.93	.403

Regarding factors associated with recidivism, key findings those in the 2012 CJCC study, including higher rates of recidivism among males, black releasees, and younger people. Further research is needed to examine the mechanisms behind these findings. For example, while the communities with the highest rates of recidivism are also primarily African American communities (Wards 7 and 8, and some parts of Ward 5), perhaps it is factors such as living in neighborhoods with high rates of unemployment and low levels of educational attainment, and being young with a prior history of arrest or incarceration, as well as structural factors such as racial discrimination, that contribute to the high risk of re-commitment among Black people. Nonetheless, the findings from the current study provide general guidance about where to focus recidivism efforts and how to target resources.

The findings for the female release cohort are presented in the next section.

2. FY2015 DOC female release cohort

Women were identified as one of two sub groups of releasees of particular interest to the District of Columbia justice system. This section presents the results of analyses drawn from the female cohort released from DOC in FY 2015. DOC provided post-release justice data for this cohort through May 2018, a period of up to 44 months.

2.1 Female release cohort characteristics

The characteristics of the FY2015 DOC female release cohort (n=982) are presented in Table 3. The mean (\pm SD) age at release was 36 (\pm 11) years. Black releasees comprised the largest race-ethnic component of the female cohort (91 percent). Just over half of the female cohort was born in DC. Regarding socioeconomic status, the mean (\pm SD) years of schooling was 11 (\pm 2). A small minority of the female cohort had either full-time (four percent) or part-time (one percent) employment at arrest.

Results for health conditions indicate that about one third of the female release cohort had a physical condition while a small fraction experienced mental health (two percent) and/or substance use (one percent) conditions. The relatively low percentages for mental health and substance use conditions may be partially explained by several factors. Substance indicators were based on voluntary requests for related services and mental health indicators were derived from diagnoses provided by providers (psychiatrists or licensed practitioners) at any time during contact with DOC. Generally, individuals are known to hide their illness because of stigma and fear. Consequently, some detainees may experience psychological distress that goes undiagnosed. Therefore, the prevalence of mental illness is likely considerably higher than suggested by this data.

Justice information indicates that the most prevalent charge category among female releasees was serious person crimes (53 percent), followed by tangible object crimes (22 percent). The median (q1, q3) length of stay from arrest to release was 8 (3, 49) days. One third of the female cohort was charged with an offense which is considered violent/dangerous according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501. Only one woman was designated as gang affiliated.

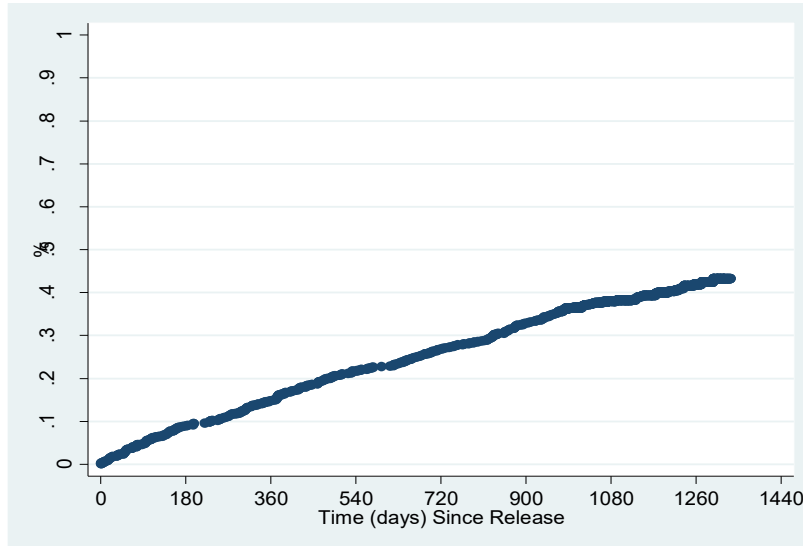
Table 3. FY2015 DOC female release cohort characteristics (n=982)

	percent	n
Demographics		
AGE AT RELEASE		
18-24	20	196
25-29	16	161
30-39	27	263
40-49	20	193
50 and up	17	169
Mean	40 years	
RACE		
Black	91	892
White	7	64
Hispanic	2	16
Asian	0	2
Other	0	3
Missing	1	5
BIRTHPLACE		
DC	54	532
Non-DC	46	450
Socioeconomic status		
EDUCATION		
Mean years of schooling	11 years	
EMPLOYMENT		
Employed full-time	4	44
Employed part-time	1	10
Unemployed	21	202
Welfare	0	0
Missing	74	726
Health		
PHYSICAL		
Yes	32	317
No	68	665
MENTAL		
Yes	2	23
No	98	959
SUBSTANCE		
Yes	1	7
No	99	975
Justice		
MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE AT INDEX RELEASE		
Serious Person Crimes	53	517
Tangible Object Crimes	22	220
Violation of Law or Authority	13	125
White Collar or Misdemeanors	12	117
External Jurisdiction Inmate	0	3
LENGTH OF STAY ARREST TO RELEASE		
0-7 days	49	479
8-31 days	19	191
2-3 months	14	139
4-6 months	11	105
7-9 months	3	34
10-12 months	2	22
13+ months	1	12
mean LOS	53 days	
VIOLENT/DANGEROUS		
Yes	32	311
No	68	671
GANG AFFILIATION		
Yes	0	1
No	100	981

2.2 Female release cohort: Recommitment to DOC

Figure 12 shows that about 10 percent of the female FY2015 DOC release cohort was re-committed to DOC within six months of release (180 days); over 40 percent were re-committed after 3 ½ years (1,260 days). The median time to re-commitment after release was 246 days. Concerning number of re-commitments over the post-release period (at least 970 days), 19 percent of female releasees experienced one re-commitment, 10 percent experienced 2 re-commitments, and 17 percent experienced three or more recommitments to DOC.

Figure 12. Female release cohort recommitment rates



2.3 Female release cohort: Differences in recommitment to DOC by key characteristics

Survival analyses were conducted to examine sub group differences in recommitment among women. The figures below visually demonstrate that the female release cohort is not a homogenous group. Kaplan-Meier survival estimates show the cumulative proportion of those who are re-committed to DOC over the post-release period. The number of days since release is displayed on the horizontal x axis while the probability of survival (0 to 1) is shown on the vertical y axis, i.e. the probability of not experiencing re-commitment. The shaded areas on each side of the lines show 95% confidence intervals, which can be interpreted as the range of values consistent with the data from this study. Sub groups represented by lower lines in the charts have a lower probability of surviving re-commitment, which means a higher probability of experiencing re-commitment to DOC.

Figures 13 to 15, 19 and 20 suggest that the following sub groups had a higher probability of recommitment:

- Young women 18 to 24 years of age compared to those aged 25 years or older (Figure 13).
- Those identified as Black compared to Whites, Hispanics, Asians and other race-ethnic groups (Figure 14).
- Those who were unemployed at arrest compared to those with full- or part-time employment (Figure 15).
- Female releasees with a 2- to 3-month length of stay had the highest probability of recommitment. Those with 0 to 7 days length of stay had the lowest probability (Figure 19).
- Those charged with a crime considered violent/dangerous according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501 (Figure 20).

Figures 16 to 18 suggest that the experiences of female releasees with and without health problems (physical, mental, substance) are similar.

Figure 13. Female release cohort survival probability since release by age: young adults <25 years v. 25+ years

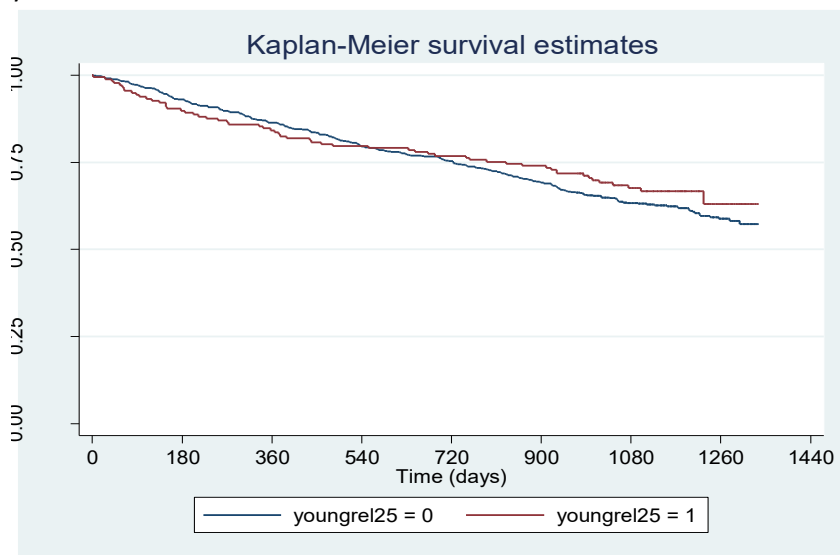


Figure 14. Female release cohort survival probability since release by race-ethnicity: Asian, Hispanic, White, Black, other race

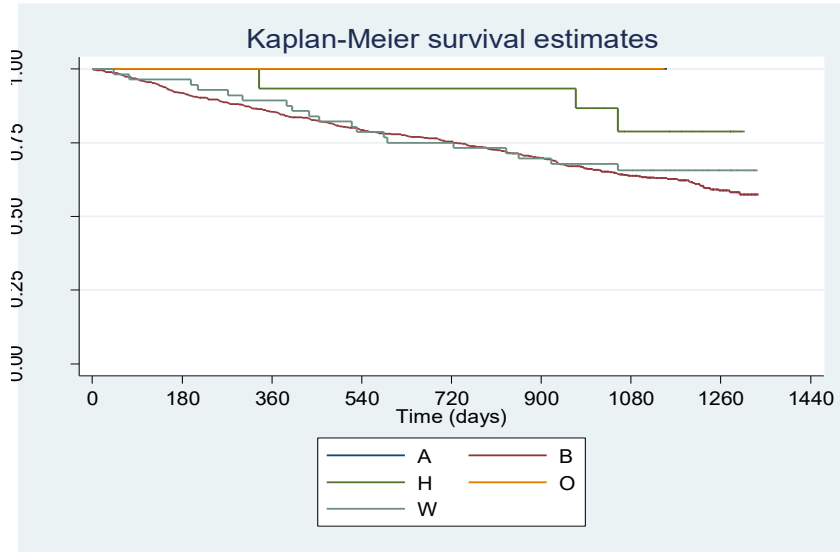


Figure 15. Female release cohort survival probability since release by employment status: employed full time, employed part time, unemployed, welfare

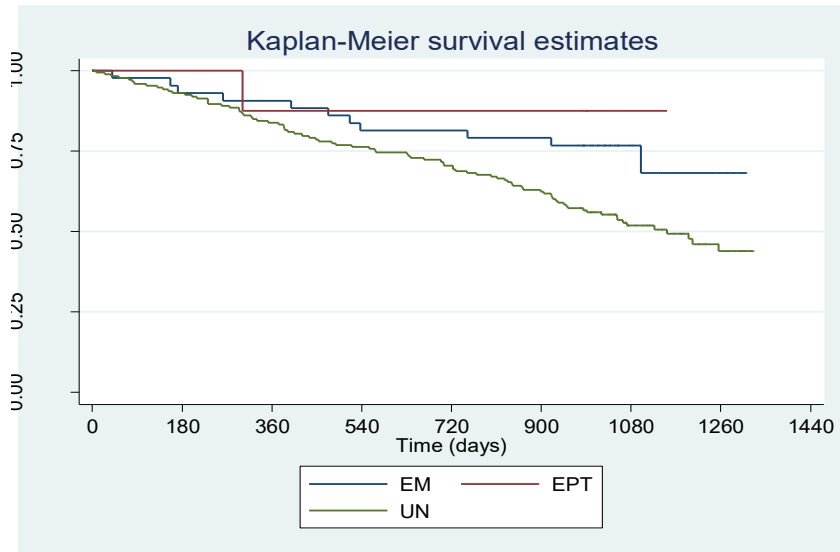


Figure 16. Female release cohort survival probability since release by health status: physical problem (1) v. none (0)

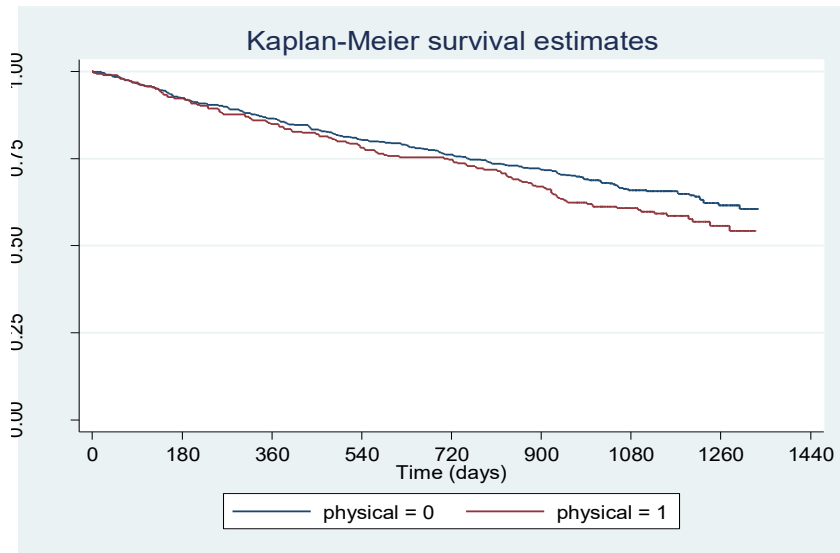


Figure 17. Female release cohort survival probability since release by mental health status: mental health problem (1) v. none (0)

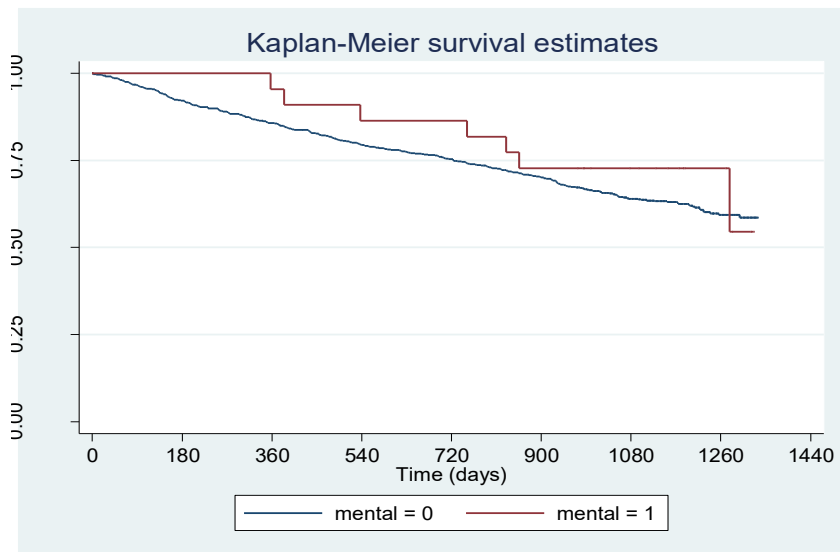


Figure 18. Female release cohort survival probability since release by substance use status: substance use problem (1) v. none (0)

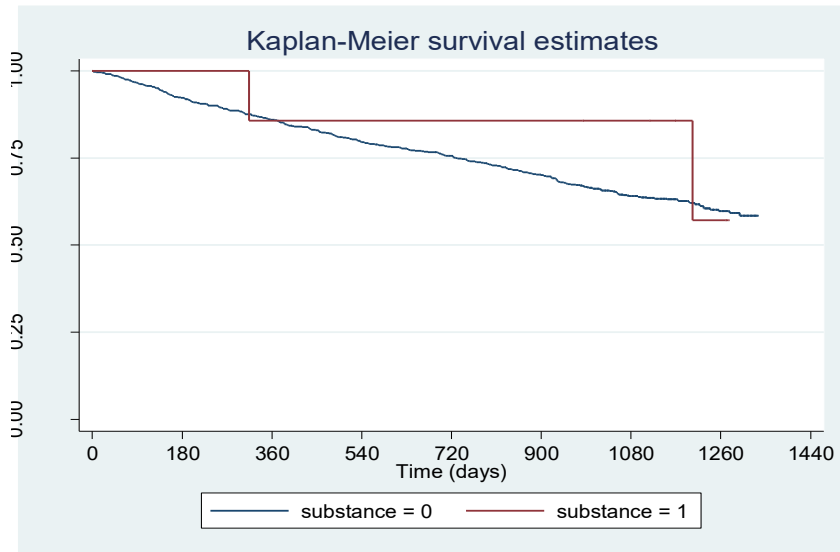


Figure 19. Female release cohort survival probability since release by length of stay from arrest to release: category 1) 0-7 days, category 2) 8-31 days, category 3) 2-3 months, category 4) 4+ months

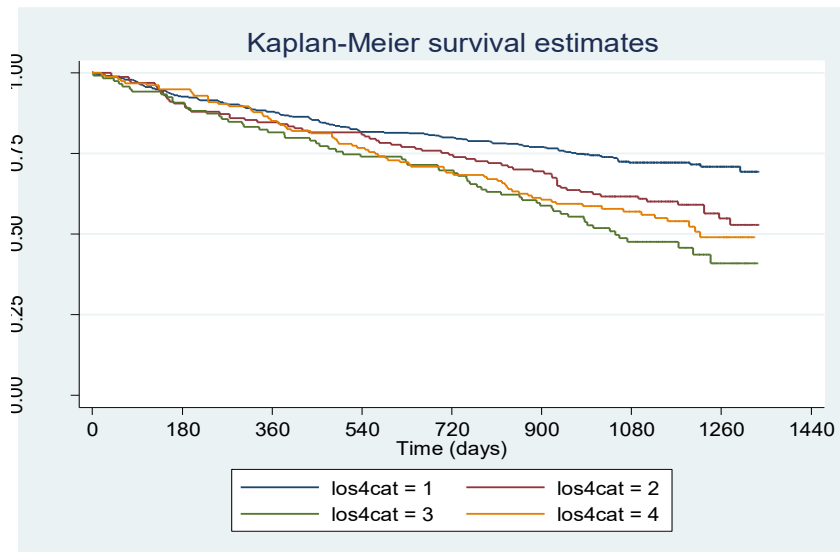
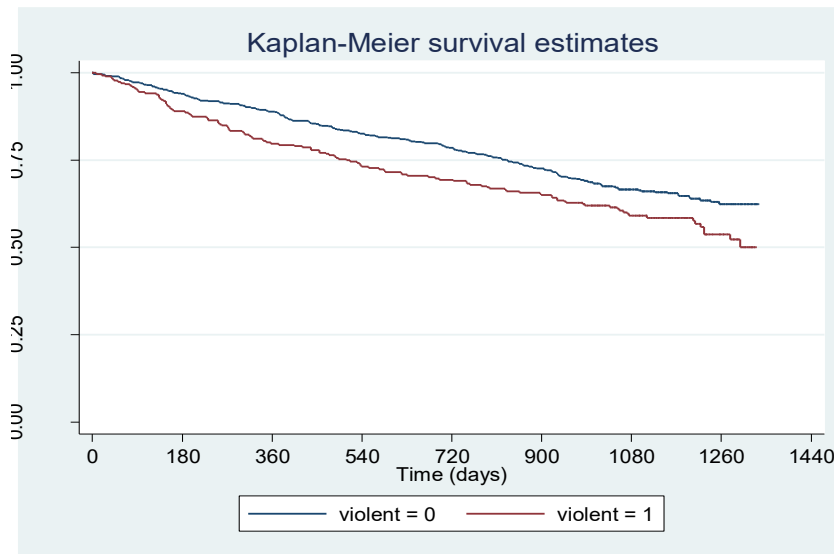


Figure 20. Female release cohort survival probability since release by violent/dangerous status according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501: violent/dangerous (1) v. not violent/dangerous (0)



2.4 Female release cohort regression analysis

The survival analyses above suggest that there was variation in the post-release experiences of women in the FY2015 DOC release cohort. The next set of analyses examines whether these differences were due to chance (statistical significance) or they could be explained, at least partially, by other factors for which data is available (covariates). Cox proportional hazard models were used to identify statistically significant factors ($p < .05$) that were associated with recommitment while controlling for the impact of other variables. All covariates were tested to ensure that they did not violate the proportionality assumption. Hazard ratio estimates, adjusted for covariates, are interpreted as the ratio of the hazard of recommitment for a 1-unit change in the corresponding covariate.

Table 4 displays the recommitment adjusted hazard ratios (AHR) for the female FY 2015 DOC release cohort. Several subgroup differences in the probability of recommitment persisted after accounting for the influence of demographic, socioeconomic, health and justice factors. Full-time employment reduced the re-commitment hazard for female releasees by 64 percent (AHR 0.36, $p = .008$). Females with physical health problems had a lower re-commitment hazard (AHR 0.63, $p = .046$). Concerning length of stay, women who were at DOC for one week or less had the lowest re-commitment hazard. For example, the hazard of recommitment for those who stay two to three months was more than twice that of those that stay up to seven days (AHR 2.13, $p = .017$). A larger sample is needed to draw inferences about associations between gang affiliation and recidivism.

Notably, other subgroup differences in the probability of recommitment among females were explained, at least partially, by the influence of socioeconomic factors. For example, the higher

probability of recommitment for younger compared to older releasees was reduced in size and no longer statistically significant after accounting for the impact of education and employment (AHR 0.99, *p*.140). These findings strongly point to the potential benefits of ensuring that younger female releasees have access to education and full-time employment that pays a living wage, as well as the supports they need to attain their educational goals and maintain long-term employment.

Table 4. Female release cohort: Recombitment Adjusted Hazard Ratio Estimates from Cox Proportional Hazard Models

	AHR	<i>P</i> value
Demographics		
AGE AT RELEASE	0.99	.140
RACE		
Black	~	~
White	1.14	.834
Hispanic	0.00	<.0001
Socioeconomic status		
YEARS OF SCHOOL	0.96	.437
EMPLOYED FULL TIME	0.36	.008
Health		
PHYSICAL	0.63	.046
MENTAL	1.40	.511
Justice		
MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE AT INDEX RELEASE		
Serious Person Crimes	~	~
Tangible Object Crimes	1.49	.320
Violation of Law or Authority	1.30	.518
External Jurisdiction Inmate	1.19	.700
LOS ARREST TO RELEASE		
0-7	~	~
8-31	1.75	.095
2-3 months	2.13	.017
4+ months	1.79	.075
VIOLENT/DANGEROUS	1.44	.295
GANG AFFILIATION	6.40	<.0001

3. FY2015 DOC young adult release cohort

Young adults were identified as one of two sub groups of releasees that hold particular interest for the District of Columbia justice system. This section presents the results of analyses drawn from the young adult cohort age 18 – 24 years released from DOC in FY 2015. DOC provided post-release justice data for this cohort through May 2018, a period of up to 44 months

3.1 Young adult release cohort characteristics

The characteristics of the FY2015 DOC young adult release cohort (n=982) are presented in Table 5. The mean (\pm SD) age at release was 21 (\pm 2) years. The vast majority were male (90 percent). Black releasees comprised the largest race-ethnic component of the young adult cohort (93 percent). Almost three quarters was born in DC. Regarding socioeconomic status, the mean (\pm SD) years of schooling for the young adult release cohort was 11 (\pm 2). Over half of young adults were unemployed at time of arrest (52 percent).

Results indicate that only a small minority experience health problems. Twelve percent of the young adult cohort had physical, 5 percent mental health and 3 percent substance use conditions. As mentioned previously, the relatively low percentages for mental health and substance use conditions may be partially explained by several factors. Substance indicators were based on voluntary requests for related services and mental health indicators were derived from diagnoses provided by providers (psychiatrists or licensed practitioners) at any time during contact with DOC. Individuals are generally known to hide such illnesses because of stigma and fear. Consequently, some detainees may experience psychological distress that goes undiagnosed. Therefore, the prevalence of mental illness is likely considerably higher than suggested by this data.

Justice information indicates that the most prevalent charge category among young adult releasees was serious person crimes (63 percent), followed by tangible object crimes (23 percent). The median (q1, q3) length of stay from arrest to release was 16 (3, 104) days. Almost one half of the young adult cohort was charged with an offense which is considered violent/dangerous according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501 (44 percent). A small minority was designated as gang affiliated (7 percent).

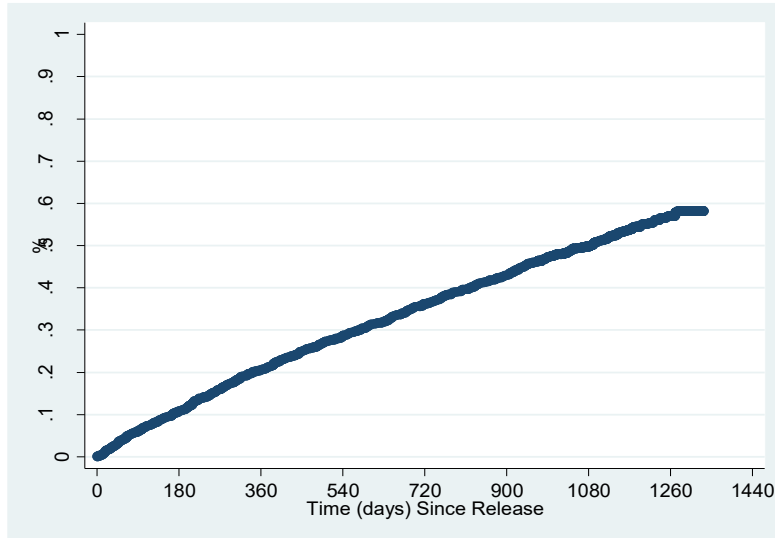
Table 5. FY2015 DOC young adult age 18-24 release cohort characteristics (n=1,942)

	percent	n
Demographics		
MEAN AGE	22 years	
SEX		
Male	90	1,746
Female	10	196
RACE		
Black	93	1,811
White	1	24
Hispanic	5	91
Asian	0	0
Other	1	9
BIRTHPLACE		
DC	71	1,387
Non-DC	29	555
Socioeconomic status		
EDUCATION		
Mean years of schooling	11 years	
EMPLOYMENT		
Employed full-time	23	440
Employed part-time	1	29
Unemployed	52	1,006
Welfare	0	1
Missing	24	466
Health		
PHYSICAL		
Yes	12	236
No	88	1,706
MENTAL		
Yes	5	101
No	95	1,841
SUBSTANCE		
Yes	3	58
No	97	1,884
Justice		
MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE AT INDEX RELEASE		
Serious Person Crimes	63	1,219
Tangible Object Crimes	23	443
Violation of Law or Authority	9	183
White Collar or Misdemeanors	4	79
External Jurisdiction Inmate	1	18
LENGTH OF STAY ARREST TO RELEASE		
0-7 days	41	795
8-31 days	18	344
2-3 months	14	274
4-6 months	13	259
7-9 months	6	112
10-12 months	3	65
13+ months	5	93
mean LOS	100 days	
VIOLENT/DANGEROUS		
Yes	44	853
No	56	1,089
GANG AFFILIATION		
Yes	7	131
No	93	1,811

3.2 Young adult release cohort: Recommitment to DOC

Figure 21 shows that 10 percent of the young adult cohort age 18 to 24 years was recommitted to DOC within six months of release (180 days) and about 60 percent were recommitted after 3 ½ years (1,260 days). The median time to re-commitment after release was 246 days. Concerning number of re-commitments over the post-release period (at least 970 days), 25 percent of young adult releasees experienced one re-commitment, 15 percent experienced two re-commitments, and 18 percent experienced three or more recommitments to DOC.

Figure 21. Young adult release cohort recommitment rates



3.3 Young adult release cohort: Differences in recommitment to DOC by key characteristics

Survival analyses were conducted to examine sub group differences in recommitment among young adults. The following figures visually demonstrate that the young adult release cohort is not a homogenous group. Kaplan-Meier survival estimates show the cumulative proportion of those who are re-committed to DOC over the observation period. The number of days since release is displayed on the horizontal x axis while the probability of survival (0 to 1) is shown on the vertical y axis, i.e. the probability of not experiencing re-commitment. The shaded areas on each side of the lines show 95% confidence intervals, which can be interpreted as the range of values consistent with the data in this study. Sub groups represented by lower lines in the charts have a lower probability of surviving re-commitment, which means a higher probability of experiencing re-commitment to DOC.

Figures 22 to 24 and 28 to 30 suggest that the following sub groups of young adults had a higher probability of recommitment:

- Males compared to females (Figure 22).
- Those identified as Black compared to Whites, Hispanics, Asians and other race-ethnic groups (Figure 23).
- Those who were unemployed at arrest compared to those with full- or part-time employment (Figure 24).
- Young adults with a 2- to 3-month length of stay had the highest probability of re-commitment (Figure 28). Those with 0 to 7 days length of stay had the lowest probability of re-commitment.
- Those charged with a crime considered violent/dangerous according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501 (Figure 29).
- Those considered to be gang affiliated (Figure 30).

Figures 25 to 27 suggest that the experiences of young adult releasees with and without health problems (physical, mental, substance) are similar.

Figure 22. Young adult release cohort survival probability since release by sex: females v. males

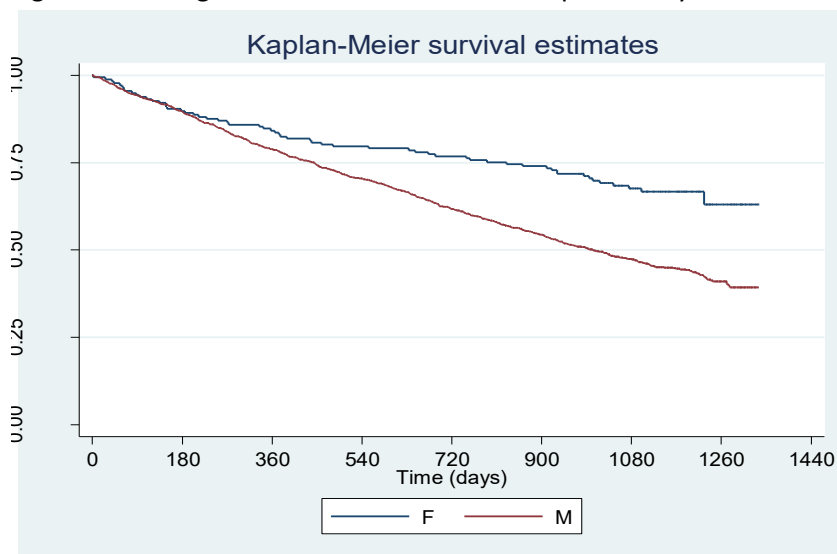


Figure 23. Young adult release cohort survival probability since release by race: Asian, Hispanic, White, Black, other race-ethnicity

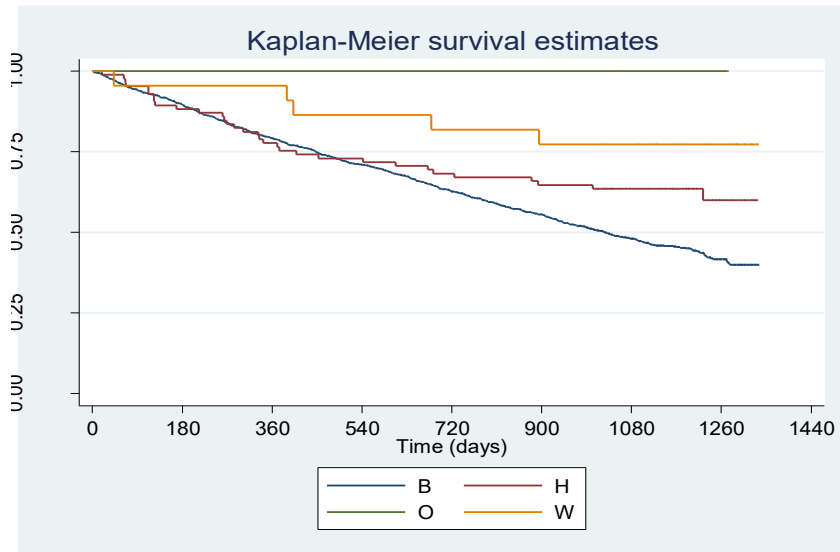


Figure 24. Young adult release cohort survival probability since release by employment status: employed full time, employed part time, unemployed, welfare recipient

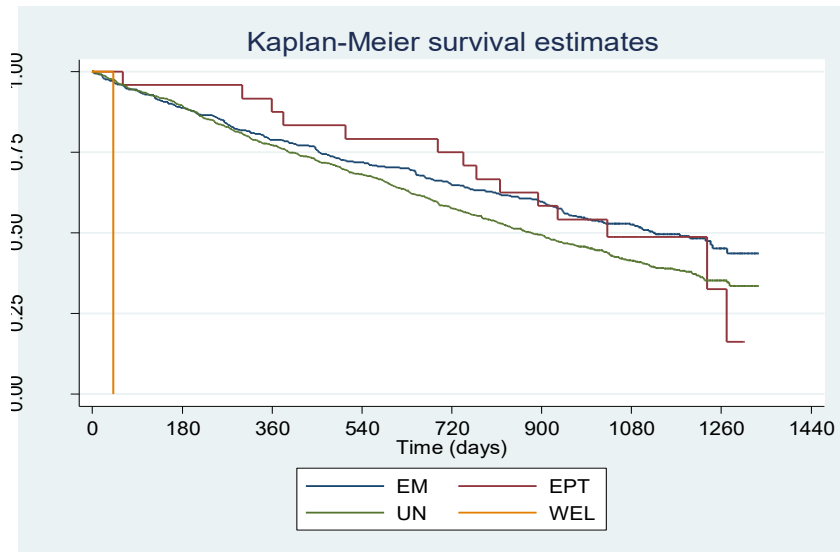


Figure 25. Young adult release cohort survival probability since release by health status: physical condition (1) v. none (0)

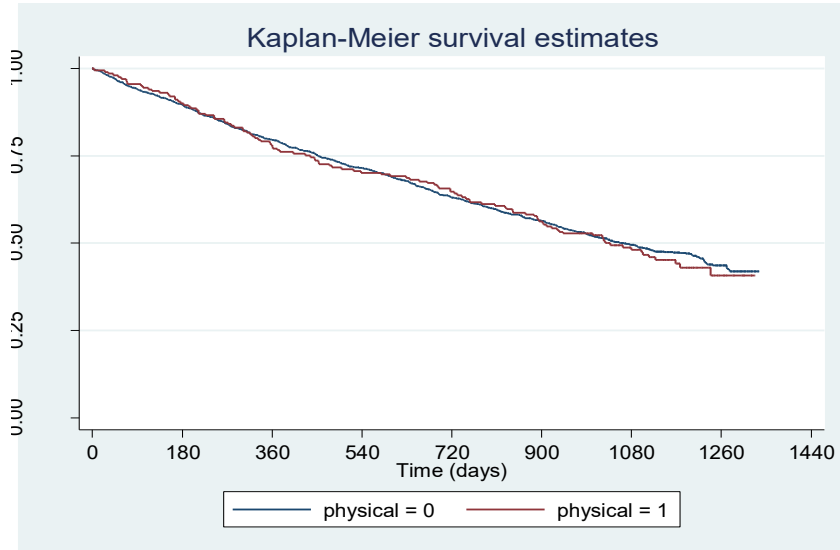


Figure 26. Young adult release cohort survival probability since release by mental health status: mental health condition (1) v. none (0)

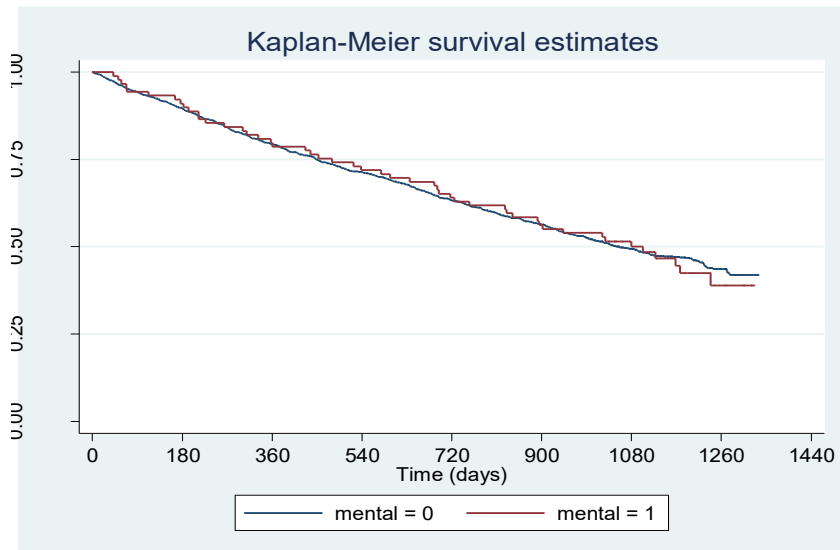


Figure 27. Young adult release cohort survival probability since release by substance use status: substance use problem (1) v. none (0)

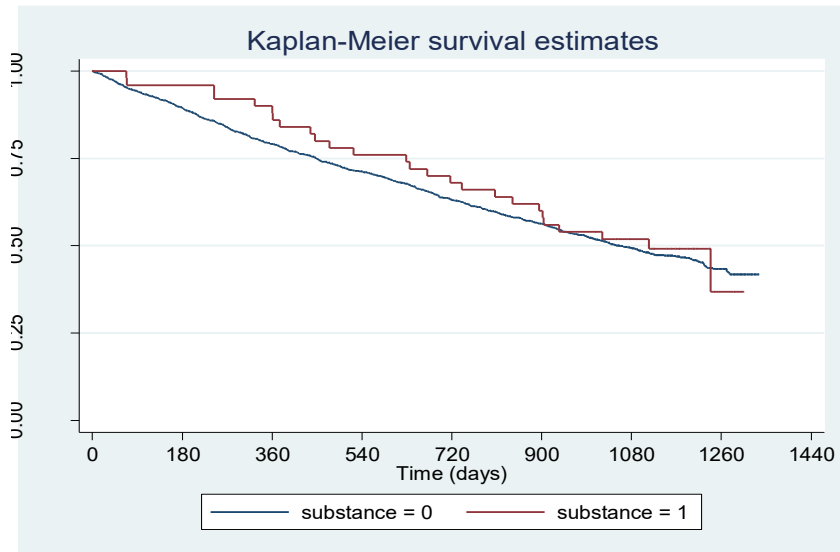


Figure 28. Young adult release cohort survival probability since release by length of stay from arrest to release: category 1) 0-7 days, category 2) 8-31 days, category 3) 2-3 months, category 4) 4+ months

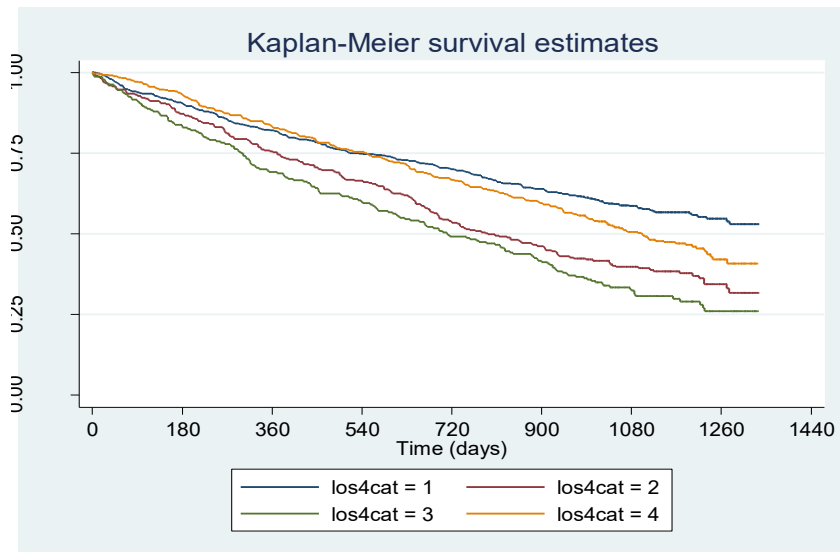


Figure 29. Young adult release cohort survival probability since release by violent/dangerous status according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501: violent/dangerous (1) v. not (0)

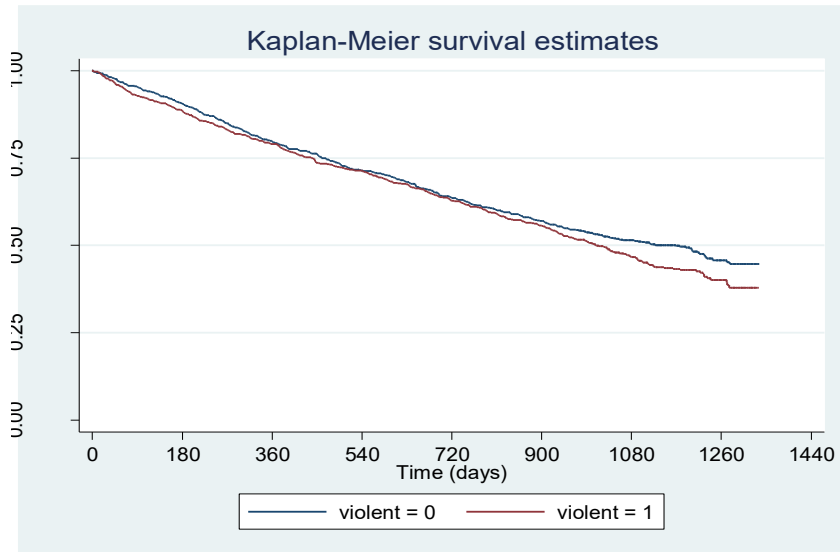
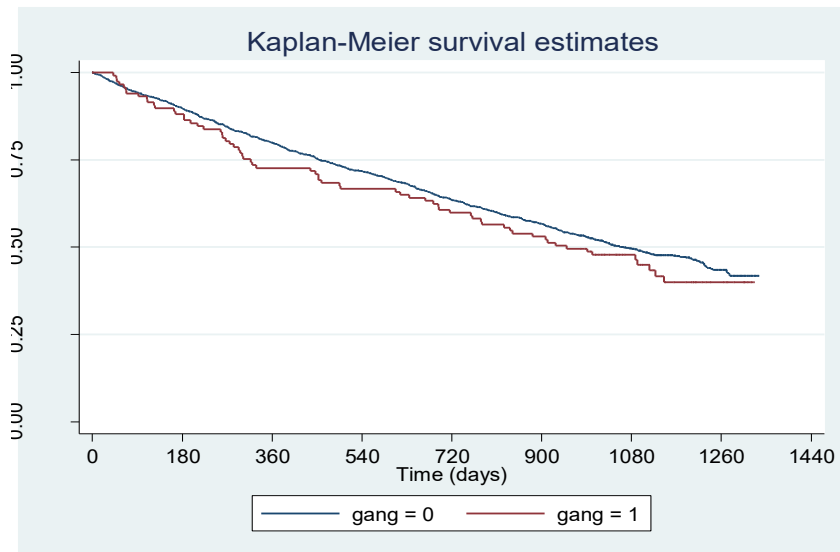


Figure 30. Young adult release cohort survival probability since release by gang affiliation designation: gang affiliation (1) v. not (0)



3.4 Young adult release cohort regression analysis

The survival analyses above suggest that there was variation in the post-release experiences of young adults in the FY2015 DOC release cohort. The next set of analyses examines whether these differences were due to chance (statistical significance) or they could be explained, at least partially, by other factors for which data is available (covariates). Cox proportional hazard models were used to identify statistically significant factors ($p < .05$) that were associated with recommitment while controlling for the impact of other variables. All covariates were tested to ensure that they did not violate the proportionality assumption. Hazard ratio estimates, adjusted for covariates, are interpreted as the ratio of the hazard of recommitment for a 1-unit change in the corresponding covariate.

Table 6 displays the recommitment adjusted hazard ratios (AHR) for the young adult FY 2015 DOC release cohort. Most subgroup differences in the probability of recommitment persisted after accounting for the influence of demographic, socioeconomic, health and justice factors. The recommitment hazard for females was less than half of that for males (AHR 0.48, $p = .063$). Whites (AHR 0.18, $p = .021$) and Hispanics (AHR 0.67, $p = .049$) had lower hazards of recommitment than Blacks. Full-time employment reduced the re-commitment hazard for young adult releasees by 23 percent (AHR 0.77, $p = .003$). Compared to young adults charged with serious person crimes, those charged with tangible object crimes or violations of the law or authority had greater hazards of recommitment while external jurisdiction inmates had lower hazards. Concerning length of stay, young adults who were at DOC for 8 days to 3 months had the highest re-commitment hazards. For example, the hazard of recommitment for young adults who stay two to three months was over 50 percent greater than that of those that stay 7 days or less (AHR 1.57, $p < .001$).

Notably, sex differences in the probability of recommitment among young adults were partially explained by the influence of socioeconomic factors. Among young adults, the higher probability of recommitment for men (compared to women) was reduced considerably, although still statistically significant, after accounting for the impact of employment. This finding points to the potential benefits of male young adult releasees having access to full-time employment that pays a living wage, as well as to the supports they need to maintain long-term employment.

Table 6. Young adult release cohort: Re-commitment Hazard Ratio Estimates from Cox Proportional Hazard Models

	AHR	P value
<i>Demographics</i>		
FEMALE	0.48	.063
RACE		
Black	~	~
White	0.18	.021
Hispanic	0.67	.049
Other	0.32	.266
<i>Socioeconomic status</i>		
YEARS OF SCHOOL	0.99	.535
EMPLOYED FULL TIME	0.77	.003
<i>Health</i>		
PHYSICAL	1.05	.746
MENTAL	0.84	.393
<i>Justice</i>		
MOST SERIOUS OFFENSE AT INDEX RELEASE		
Serious Person Crimes	~	~
Tangible Object Crimes	1.28	.093
Violation of Law or Authority	1.39	.030
White Collar or Misdemeanors	0.84	.470
External Jurisdiction Inmate	0.09	.017
LOS ARREST TO RELEASE		
0-7	~	~
8-31	1.39	.003
2-3 months	1.57	<.0001
4+ months	0.96	.716
VIOLENT/DANGEROUS	1.07	.586
GANG AFFILIATION	0.90	.459

SUMMARY

This study finds that about half of the FY2015 release cohort from DOC were recommitted after 3 ½ years. This result generally aligns with those from previous studies, in particular prior research on a 2007 DOC release cohort.

The current analyses uniquely examine the relation between recidivism and a) socioeconomic status; b) health conditions; and c) justice information. The findings point to a need to focus recidivism reduction efforts on younger releasees, males, those identified as race-ethnic minorities, and releasees with lower levels of education. Generally, employment and shorter lengths of stay are protective factors for recidivism. In contrast, being charged with a crime specified as violent/dangerous according to DC Code Chapter 22 Section 4501 and gang affiliation are risk factors for recidivism.

The current study also examines two sub groups that are of particular interest to recidivism reduction initiatives in the District of Columbia. Among female releasees, the rate of re-commitment to DOC was greater than 40 percent after three years. The findings suggest that it may be fruitful for recidivism reduction efforts to focus on specific sub groups such as younger women, those identified as Black, those with longer lengths of stay at DOC, and those with less than full-time employment.

Among young adult releasees, the rate of re-commitment to DOC was 60 percent after 3 ½ years. The findings point to focusing recidivism reduction efforts on males and young adults identified as Black, as well as those who experience longer lengths of stay and those with less than full-time employment.

In conclusion, it is notable that sub group differences in the probability of recommitment were explained, at least partially, by the influence of socioeconomic factors. For example, the risk of recommitment for younger compared to older female releasees was reduced in size and no longer statistically significant after accounting for the impact of education and employment. Similarly, the risk of recommitment for young adults compared to older releasees was moderated after accounting for the impact of employment. These findings clearly highlight the potential benefits of ensuring that releasees have access to education and full-time employment that pays a living wage, as well as the resources required to meet their educational goals and to sustain employment.

NOTES

¹ Marilyn Sinkewicz, Yu-Fen Chiu, Leah Pope, and Jim Parsons, *Exploring Re-Commitment in the District of Columbia's FY 2015 Department of Corrections Release Cohort* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2018).

² Kiminori Nakamura and Douglas Weiss, *Measuring Recidivism in the District of Columbia*, (Washington, DC: Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, 2012), <https://cjcc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cjcc/publication/attachments/CJCC%204%204%202011%20Recidivism%20Study.pdf>.

³ Allen Beck and Bernard Shipley, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997).

⁴ Patrick A. Langan and David J. Levin, *Recidivism of prisoners released in 1994* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rpr94.pdf>.

⁵ Shawn M. Flower, *District of Columbia Custodial Population Study: Seeking Alignment between Evidence Based Practices and Jail Based Reentry Services* (Washington DC: Justice Research and Statistics Association & The Moss Group, Inc., 2017).

⁶ Results from survival analyses are based on Kaplan Meier survival estimates that show the cumulative proportion of those who were re-committed to DOC over the post-release observation period. Cox proportional hazard models were used to report adjusted hazard ratios at the 95% confidence level. A complete description of the analytic strategy, statistical models and results is Appendix. See note 1.

⁷ Zhen Zeng, *Jail Inmates in 2016*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ji16.pdf>; E. Ann Carson, *Prisoners in 2016*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p16.pdf>.

⁸ Flower (2017), *supra*, note 5, p. 20; and Council for Court Excellence, *Beyond Second Chances: Returning Citizens' Re-Entry Struggles and Successes in the District of Columbia*, (Washington DC: Council for Court Excellence, 2016), p. 84, <http://www.courtexcellence.org/uploads/File/BSC-FINAL-web.pdf>.

⁹ Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, Community Supervision Program, "Congressional Budget Justification and Performance Plan/Report Fiscal Year 2019," p.6.

¹⁰ Langan and Levin (2002), *supra*, note 4.

¹¹ Matthew R. Durose, Alexia D. Cooper, and Howard N. Snyder, *Recidivism of prisoners released in 30 states in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rprts05p0510.pdf>.

¹² Mariel Alper, Matthew R. Durose, and Joshua Markman, *2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005-2014)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice

Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018),

<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/18upr9yfup0514.pdf>.

¹³Beth M. Huebner, Christina DeJong, and Jennifer Cobbina, "Women Coming Home: Long-Term Patterns of Recidivism," *Justice Quarterly*, 27, no. 2, (2009), 225-254, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07418820902870486>.

¹⁴Kim Steven Hunt and Robert Dumville, *Recidivism Among Federal Offenders: A Comprehensive Overview*, (Washington, DC: United States Sentencing Commission, 2016), https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/research-publications/2016/recidivism_overview.pdf

¹⁵Nakamura and Weiss (2012), *supra*, note 2.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, Community Supervision Program, "Congressional Budget Justification and Performance Plan/Report Fiscal Year 2019," pp.6, 20.

¹⁸Huebner, DeJong, and Cobbina (2009), *supra*, note 13; Nancy G. La Vigne, "Female D.C. Code Felons: Unique Challenges in Prison and at Home," Statement to the House of Representatives Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia, July 27, 2010, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/29641/901367-female-d-c-code-felons-unique-challenges-in-prison-and-at-home.pdf>; and Rachelle Ramirez, *Reentry Considerations for Justice Involved Women*, (Silver Spring, MD: National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women, 2016), <http://cjininvolvedwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Reentry-Considerations-for-Justice-Involved-Women-FINAL.pdf>.

¹⁹Lauren E. Glaze and Laura M. Maruschak, *Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>.

²⁰Jennifer Bronson, Jessica Stroop, Stephanie Zimmer, and Marcus Berzofsky, *Drug Use, Dependence, and Abuse Among State Prisoners and Jail Inmates, 2007-2009*, (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2017), p.3 table 2, <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/dudaspio709.pdf>.

²¹Jennifer Bronson and Marcus Berzofsky, *Indicators of Mental Health Problems Reported by Prisoners and Jail Inmates, 2011-12*, (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2017), p.4 table 2, <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/imhprpji1112.pdf>.

²²Doris J. James, *Profile of jail inmates*, 2002, (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004), p. 10, table 17, <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pji02.pdf>

²³Council for Court Excellence (2016), *supra*, note 8.

²⁴La Vigne (2010), *supra*, note 18.

²⁵James (2004), *supra*, note 22, p. 9; and Kamala Mallik-Kane and Christy Ann Visser, *Health and prisoner reentry: How physical, mental, and substance abuse conditions shape the process of reintegration*, (Washington, DC: Urban Institute Justice Policy Center, 2008), p. 14, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/31491/411617-Health-and-Prisoner-Reentry.PDF>.

²⁶Nancy G. La Vigne, Lisa E. Brooks, and Tracey L. Shollenberger, *Women on the Outside: Understanding the Experiences of Female Prisoners Returning to Houston, TX*, (Washington, DC: Urban Institute Justice Policy Center, 2009), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/30401/411902-Women-on-the-Outside->

[Understanding-the-Experiences-of-Female-Prisoners-Returning-to-Houston-Texas.PDF](#); James (2004), *supra*, note 22; La Vigne (2010), *supra*, note 18; and Sarah Callahan, Leonard A. Jason, and LaVome Robinson, "Reducing Economic Disparities for Female Offenders: The Oxford House Model," *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2016): 292-302, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5004742/pdf/nihms806027.pdf>.

²⁷La Vigne (2010), *supra*, note 18.

²⁸Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, *D.C. Women in Prison: Continuing Problems and Recommendations for Change*, (Washington, DC: Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, 2016), http://www.washlaw.org/pdf/dc_women_in_prison_report.pdf.

²⁹Most literature asserts maintaining strong family ties positively impacts recidivism rates, though analyses remain largely quantitative and superficial. See Stephanie Covington, "A Woman's Journey Home: Challenges for Female Offenders," in Jeremy Travis and Michelle Waul, Eds., *Prisoners once removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families, and Communities*, (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2003), <http://stephaniecovington.com/assets/files/3.pdf>; Andrea M. Leverenz, *People, Places, and Things: The Social Process of Reentry for Female Ex-Offenders*, (National Institute of Justice Document No. 215178, 2006), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/215178.pdf>; Andrea M. Leverenz, "The love of a good man? Romantic relationships as a source of support or hindrance for female ex-offenders," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 43, no. 4 (2006): 459-488, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0022427806293323>; and Karen De Claire, and Louise Dixon, "The Effects of Prison Visits from Family Members on Prisoners' Well-Being, Prison Rule Breaking, and Recidivism: A Review of Research Since 1991," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 18, no. 2 (2017): 185-199, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26330175>.

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³¹La Vigne (2010), *supra*, note 18, p. 5.

³²La Vigne, Brooks, and Shollenberger (2009), *supra*, note 26.

³³Ramirez (2016), *supra*, note 18.

³⁴Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (2016), *supra*, note 28, pp.45-46. See also Angelina N. Chambers, "Impact of forced separation policy on incarcerated postpartum mothers," *Policy, Politics, & Nursing Practice* 10, no. 3 (2009): 204-211; and Melissa Goodman, Ruth Dawson, and Phyllida Burlingame, *Reproductive Health Behind Bars in California*, (San Francisco: ACLU of California, 2016), 18, <https://www.aclusocal.org/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Reproductive-Health-Behind-Bars-in-California.pdf>.

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³⁷D.C. Department of Corrections, *Pathways to Progress 2018*, p.9.

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¹⁴² See, Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2018), *supra*, note 87; and Coalition for Juvenile Justice, *Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice: Opportunities for Collaboration and Impact*, (Washington, DC: Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2016).

¹⁴³ Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2018), *supra*, note 87, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Gretchen Ruth Cusick, Mark E. Courtney, Judy Havlicek, and Nathan Hess, *Crime during the Transition to Adulthood: How Youth Fare as They Leave Out-of-Home Care*, (Chicago: Chapin Hall, 2011).

¹⁴⁷ Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2018), *supra*, note 87, p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, "FY 2019 Budget Request Summary Statement & Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)," February 12, 2018, p.38.

¹⁴⁹ D.C. Department of Corrections, "Facts and Figures, June 2018," <https://doc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doc/publication/attachments/Q3Dashboards.pdf>.

¹⁵⁰ Marina Duane, Emily Reimal, and Mathew Lynch, *Criminal Background Checks and Access to Jobs: A Case Study of Washington, DC*, (Washington, DC, Urban Institute, 2017), p.7.

¹⁵¹ Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, Community Supervision Program, "Congressional Budget Justification and Performance Plan/Report Fiscal Year 2019," p. 65.

¹⁵² Jeffrey Anderson, "Repeat Job Seekers With Arrest Records Find Holes in D.C.'s 'Ban the Box' Law," *Washington City Paper*, October 19, 2017, <https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/loose-lips/article/20979818/repeat-job-seekers-with-arrest-records-find-holes-in-dcs-ban-the-box-law>.

¹⁵³ Council For Court Excellence (2016), *supra*, note 8, p. 55.

¹⁵⁴ See, Harry J. Holzer, "Sector-based training strategies: The challenges of matching workers and their skills to well-paying jobs," *Future of Work Paper Series* (2015): 48, https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/Future_of_work_sector_based_training_strategies.pdf.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. See also, Sheila Maguire, Joshua Freely, Carol Clymer, and Maureen Conway. "Job Training That Works: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study," *P/PV In Brief* Issue 7 (May 2009), <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/3263/3263.pdf>.

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¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ See D.C. Adult Career Pathways Task Force, *Career Pathways in the District of Columbia: Strategic Plan* (2015). On the similarities and differences between sector-based training and the career pathways model, see Holzer (2015), *supra*, note 154.

¹⁵⁹ Holzer (2015), *supra*, note 154; and Maguire, et al, (2009), *supra*, note 155.

¹⁶⁰ Sheila Maguire, Joshua Freely, Carol Clymer, Maureen Conway, and Deena Schwartz, *Tuning in to Local Labor Markets: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study*, (Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 2010), p. 73, <http://ppv.issuelab.org/resources/5101/5101.pdf>. See also, Sheila Maguire, Laura E. Johnson, and Angelique Jessup, *Supporting Second Chances: Employment Strategies for Reentry Programs*, (Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 2013), pp. 15-18, <http://ppv.issuelab.org/resources/14719/14719.pdf>.

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¹⁶⁴ IMPAQ International (2015), *supra*, note 162, pp. 18-22; Lazere, (2015), *supra*, note 162, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ IMPAQ International (2015), *supra*, note 162, p. 23.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁶⁸ Lazere, (2015), *supra*, note 162, p. 10.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁷¹ IMPAQ International (2015), *supra*, note 162, p. 37.

¹⁷² Ibid, pp. 34, 43, 51.

¹⁷³ IMPAQ International (2015), *supra*, note 162, pp. 41, 51; Lazere, (2015), *supra*, note 162, pp. 2, 11.

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¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ IMPAQ International (2015), *supra*, note 162, pp. 28, 51; Lazere, (2015), *supra*, note 162, pp. 3, 13-14.

¹⁷⁷ Vera Interview with ONSE, May 31, 2018; D.C. Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, “ONSE Programs,” <https://onse.dc.gov/page/onse-programs>.

¹⁷⁸ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Reentry and Barriers to Employment: Lessons From Casey’s Investments*, (Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016), <https://www.aecf.org/resources/reentry-and-barriers-to-employment/>.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

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¹⁸² D.C. Department of Corrections, “Services Offered to Persons Housed in DC DOC Facilities,” <https://doc.dc.gov/page/services-offered-persons-housed-dc-doc-facilities>; DC Central Kitchen, *A Strategy that Matters: DC Central Kitchen Annual Impact Report Fiscal Year 2017*, (n.d.), <https://dcentralkitchen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Annual-Report-17-PDF.pdf>.

¹⁸³ IMPAQ International (2015), *supra*, note 162, pp. 12, 42, 44; Lazere, (2015), *supra*, note 162, pp. 6, 9.

¹⁸⁴ Council For Court Excellence (2016), *supra*, note 8, pp. 51-52.

¹⁸⁵ Council for Court Excellence, *Unlocking Employment Opportunity for Previously Incarcerated Persons in the District of Columbia*, (Washington DC: Council for Court Excellence, 2011); Reentry Steering Committee meeting notes, August, 20, 2018; Vera Interview with CSOSA, May 9, 2018.

¹⁸⁶ Harry J. Holzer, Steven Raphael, and Michael A. Stoll, “Will Employers Hire Exoffenders? Employer Checks, Background Checks, and Their Determinants,” Berkeley Program on Housing and Urban Policy, Working Paper No. WO1-005, (2001).

¹⁸⁷ Council for Court Excellence (2011), *supra*, note 185, p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ Trone Private Sector and Education Advisory Council to the ACLU, *Back to Business: How Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Job Seekers Benefits Your Company*, (New York: ACLU Foundation, 2017), https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/060917-trone-reportweb_o.pdf.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p.8.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Society for Human Resource Management and the Charles Koch Institute, “Workers with Criminal Records,” May 17, 2018, <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Pages/Second-Chances.aspx?ga=2.175382818.1023170665.1536078864-1928394282.1535462200>.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ See, e.g., Dale T. Miller and Deborah A. Prentice, “Changing Norms to Change Behavior,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 67 (2016): 339-361, and, Rob Henderson, “The Science Behind Why People Follow the Crowd,” *Psychology Today*, May 24, 2017.

¹⁹⁵ Council for Court Excellence (2011), *supra*, note 185, pp. 25-26; Trone Private Sector and Education Advisory Council to the ACLU (2017), *supra*, note 188, p. 14; Annie E. Casey Foundation (2016), *supra*, note 178, p.15.

¹⁹⁶ Council for Court Excellence (2011), *supra*, note 185, pp. 15-17; Trone Private Sector and Education Advisory Council to the ACLU (2017), *supra*, note 188, pp. 13-14; Society for Human Resource Management and the Charles Koch Institute (2018), *supra*, note 191, Figure 3.

¹⁹⁷ Council for Court Excellence (2011), *supra*, note 185, pp. 15-17; Trone Private Sector and Education Advisory Council to the ACLU (2017), *supra*, note 188, 13-14.

¹⁹⁸ Council for Court Excellence (2011), *supra*, note 185, pp. 17-20.

¹⁹⁹ See Council For Court Excellence (2016), *supra*, note 8, p. 49; Annie E. Casey Foundation (2016), *supra*, note 178, p.15. The WOTC provides for a maximum credit of \$2,400 for employers who hire someone with a felony record and that person works at least 400 hours.

²⁰⁰ Priscillia Hunt, Rosanna Smart, Lisa Jonsson, and Flavia Tsang, *Breaking Down Barriers: Experiments into Policies That Might Incentivize Employers to Hire Ex-Offenders*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2142.html.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² See, e.g., Christopher T. Lowenkamp, Marie VanNostrand, and Alexander M. Holsinger, *The Hidden Costs of Pretrial Detention*, (Laura and John Arnold Foundation, 2013).

²⁰³ Vera Telephone Interview with MPD, May 17, 2018.

²⁰⁴ International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Citation in Lieu of Arrest: Examining Law Enforcement's Use of Citation Across the United States*, (Alexandria, VA: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2016), <http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/o/documents/pdfs/IACP%20Citation%20Final%20Report%202016.pdf>.

²⁰⁵ Comments submitted by CSOSA on an earlier draft of this report questioned whether all those under supervision were categorically ineligible for field citations. But Vera was informed by MPD that the use of citations is governed by Section 23-584 of the DC Code. Subsection (b)(2)(ii) of that statute seems clearly to prohibit the use of citations for anyone who is subject to detention before trial under Section 23-1322. Section 23-1322 applies to everyone on parole, probation, or supervised release under local, state, or federal law and appears to require that such people be detained for up to five days. After reviewing these two statutes it seems clear that such a categorical ban does exist.

²⁰⁶ It has been surprisingly difficult to determine the exact number of the general conditions. Based on initial interviews, Vera believed there were 16. Comments submitted by CSOSA on an earlier draft of this report, however, suggested there were 20. In response to a recent request for this information from the Parole Commission, Vera was referred to 28 CFR § 2.204, which appears to contain 19 general conditions that apply to all persons under supervision. To further complicate matters, though, two to three of those 19 conditions would seem to apply only to persons convicted of certain offenses.

²⁰⁷ See, e.g., Christopher T. Lowenkamp, and Edward J. Latessa, "Understanding the risk principle: How and why correctional interventions can harm low-risk offenders" *Topics in Community Corrections*, (2004): 3-8; and, Christopher T. Lowenkamp, Jennifer Paler, Paula Smith, and Edward J. Latessa, "Adhering to the risk and need principles: Does it matter for supervision-based programs?" *Federal Probation* 70 (2006): 3.

²⁰⁸ See, e.g., Vera Institute of Justice, *The Potential of Community Corrections to Improve Safety and Reduce Incarceration*, (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2013), https://storage.googleapis.com/vera-web-assets/downloads/Publications/the-potential-of-community-corrections-to-improve-safety-and-reduce-incarceration-configure/legacy_downloads/potential-of-community-corrections.pdf.

²⁰⁹ Vera Interview with CSOSA, May 23, 2018

²¹⁰ See National Reentry Resource Center, *Reducing Recidivism: States Deliver Results* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, National Reentry Resource Center, 2017), <https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Reducing-Recidivism-State-Deliver-Results-2017.pdf>. States such as Arizona, Colorado, and Georgia saw significant reductions in recidivism by incentivizing probation offices to reduce revocations, and requiring consideration of alternatives to revocation for nonviolent new offenses and technical violations.

²¹¹ Charles Colson Task Force on Federal Corrections, *Transforming Prisons, Restoring Lives: Final Recommendations of the Charles Colson Task Force on Federal Corrections* (2016), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/77101/2000589-Transforming-Prisons-Restoring-Lives.pdf>.

²¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 32-36, 50-54.