Transition Programs:

Bridging the Gap

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INTRODUCTION

In New York State's continuing efforts to raise academic performance, there is renewed urgency to ensure that *all* students meet new high standards. The learning standards set forth by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) are designed to address universal goals — work, family, and personal — of students, whether K-12 or adult, urban or rural, in- or out-of-school. As such, educators of incarcerated youth and adults are faced with the challenge of guaranteeing the inclusion of their students as an important subset of the targeted population of *all* students.

Building capacity for achieving the learning standards can be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as the sharing of successful strategies. NYSED encourages all educators to share with their colleagues across the state what works, why it works, and how it fits into the learning standards. To facilitate this sharing, a peer review process for sharing learning experiences was developed and implemented statewide. As an adjunct to that work, this document is a means of sharing transition practices. Collaboration of this nature is particularly important for incarcerated youth providers (educators, transition coordinators, etc.) to counteract often-present feelings of working in isolation with little or no support.

In that education is preparing students to be contributing, productive members of society, incarcerated education is no different than any other education. All of the skills deemed necessary in the learning standards are applicable to incarcerated youth and adults. They too must achieve proficient understanding of:

Learning Standards	
	• English Language Arts • Languages Other Than English • Mathematics, Science, and Technology • The Arts • Career Development and Occupational Studies • Social Studies • Health, Physical Education, and Family and Consumer Sciences *See Appendix A for a complete listing of the Learning Standards.*

For a "typical" student, learning takes place through a series of experiences primarily within a classroom, but also in the home with families, with friends, in the library, and even at a worksite. Such learning experiences are rich in creativity and diversity, fostering higher-order thinking, exploration, and problem-solving skills in students.

Of course, the differentiating characteristic of education for incarcerated youth and adults is that their learning takes place in a unique environment — one with restrictions. This highly

prohibitive atmosphere can be frightening for students, which is hardly conducive to learning. The job of teachers and counselors, then, is to create an inviting and safe learning environment, while, at the same time, preparing students for release. Learning occurs through interesting and innovative learning experiences, and, as important, through the outside support linkages so crucial to transition. As in so many other programs, it is only when the students are ready that they will be able to learn. Incarcerated education professionals can facilitate and hasten this process of becoming ready, during which a myriad of learning standards will undoubtedly be addressed.

Inmates, then, must not only acquire said skills, they must also understand how to eventually apply them in an environment free of restrictions. For it is with these skills that their transition from correctional facility to community can be facilitated. And, statistics show that these skills *do* make a difference. A recent study of participants in 26 transition program sites throughout New York State revealed a recidivism rate of 13 percent. When contrasted with a statewide comparison group, a 71 percent greater recidivism for the comparison group was determined.

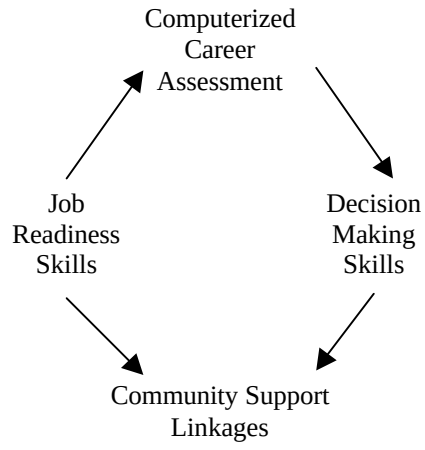
> Findings strongly suggest that the Transition Program reduced recidivisim . . . to as low a rate as 13% . . . among participants.
>
> *—Excerpted from Transition Program Research Brief prepared by The Westchester Institute for Human Services Research, Inc.*

This document, then, was developed to share the collective wisdom and experience of education professionals who have successfully guided the transition of hundreds of incarcerated youth and adults back to the community.

First, key elements of transition programs were identified in a focus group comprised of educators, transition coordinators, and other providers to incarcerated youth and adults. What occurs in a transition program? How are the activities accomplished? Responses to these questions were carefully considered at a later symposium, resulting in a sense of which transition program components are absolutely vital and what makes a transition coordinator effective. It is through such productive discussions that the success of *all* students can be ensured.

TRANSITION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Correctional Facility → → → → → → → → → → → → → → Community

Academic Program Components	Transition Program Components	Continuum of Support Services
Basic Skills (ABE) High School Equivalency Preparation English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Tutorial in High School Subjects Life Management		Employment Continuing Education Higher Education Family Education/Empowerment On-the-Job Training/Apprenticeship Social, Health, and Other Support Services Peer Support Groups Family Literacy

As depicted above, transition programs offer a comprehensive set of instructional experiences and linkages to support services to increase the social and economic self-sufficiency of individuals upon release from incarceration. These experiences are undertaken and linkages are forged well before the release date of the incarcerated individual.

NYSED, in fact, predicates its transition program model on the belief that the transition process begins the day an inmate enters the correctional facility. Similarly, the process continues well after the inmate has exited the facility. Providing follow-up support, both immediate and long-term, is essential to the continued maintenance of the client's self-sufficiency.

The structure of transition programs differs tremendously. For example, programs in larger facilities in city settings may employ many individuals: a couple of teachers providing in-jail instruction, several case managers working with clients pre- and post-release, paraprofessionals providing support, and a coordinator. On the other hand, the program in a small, rurally-set correctional facility may have only one transitional professional who provides all instruction and services.

For the purposes of this document, "clients" refer to released inmates who receive the aforementioned services. Prior to release, these individuals are referred to as inmates. "Transition coordinator" refers to that person (or persons) who provides instruc-tion, case management, and community linkages.

In mentioning the disparity between facilities in rural versus urban settings, it is advisable to note that there are advantages and disadvantages to both. Programs in large cities may offer more resources, but competition for those services is also more intense, thereby impacting accessibility. And, while competition for services may not be as intense in rural areas, the availability of a wide breadth of resources is also less. Fortunately, sharing resources with neighboring jails or coordinating with other agencies can counteract this problem, if physical distances between sites are not too great. Using job-training classes conducted at Adult Centers for Comprehensive Education and Support Services (ACCESS Centers) for inmates is one example of such coordination.

Obviously, services differ greatly between programs (see box). It is agreed, however, that all effective transition programs, to some extent, provide instruction, promote job readiness, and create a supportive network for inmates. The various aspects of these three activities are further described on the following pages.

Availability of services varies, depending on:

- participant needs
- facility size
- staffing patterns
- space
- staff needs
- resources
- cooperation and support from correctional and institutional administrators

As mentioned previously, incarcerated youth and adults are in need of the same educational opportunities afforded to their nonincarcerated counterparts: namely, those academic skills that will allow them to be contributing, productive members of society. In facilities of incarceration, these needs are typically met through:

ABE	Adult Basic Education (ABE) instruction is designed for adults who are unable to read, write, and compute sufficiently well to meet the requirements of adult life in the United States.
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) instruction is designed for individuals who have limited or no proficiency in the English language. Instructional emphasis is on the ongoing development of listening and speaking skills with reading and writing skills integrated as learners gain English fluency.
GED	General Education Development (GED) is a national testing program to demonstrate high school education equivalency. The test consists of five parts: writing, social studies, science, interpreting language and arts, and mathematics. Instruction is specifically directed at assisting learners to successfully complete the GED test requirements.
Tutorial	Tutorial in high school subjects provides instruction that enables participants to return to high school upon release from incarceration.

Perhaps even more important than "reading, writing, and arithmetic," certain non-academic skills that enable clients to learn must also be mastered. These psychosocial skills include problem solving, decision making, communication, goal setting, parenting, and drug/alcohol management.

Evidence is starting to suggest that there is a very real, very direct link between good health — whether physical, emotional, mental, or social — and the ability to learn. Few educators disagree. Imagine, for example, having to learn a new language while trying to give up smoking, during the midst of a family crisis, or under unrelenting time limits! Of course, this is hardly a comparison to what many inmates are handling: drug/alcohol addiction, dysfunctional families, restrictive living environments, limited time for education, etc.

Transition, then, is an opportunity for inmates to begin "cleaning house," to address any problems that are interfering with the goals of economic and social self-sufficiency. Whether it's addiction, poor decision making, or lack of parenting skills, inmates should avail themselves of the assistance available through transition programs. Resources include family literacy, *Action*

for Personal Choice, group and individual counseling, life skills, and a combination of services for managing alcohol and other drug abuse.

Family Literacy

For parents who are incarcerated, family education/empowerment programs provide an opportunity to practice positive adult role model behavior within the jail as preparation for such behavior at home, in schools, and in other settings throughout the community. Family education programs work in conjunction with other transition programming (i.e., programs addressing the literacy and vocational needs of incarcerated adults), helping participants strengthen social skills, improve self-control, increase literacy, and strengthen esteem for self and others**.** Family literacy and empowerment programs are part of a comprehensive education program for adults and youth with children.

Action for Personal Choice

Action for Personal Choice (APC) is an action-oriented program dealing with thinking, feelings, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships. This unique program challenges students to practice taking responsibility for their own behavior by participating in exercises that:

- instill self-confidence
- revive creative imagination
- encourage active listening and open communication
- build goal-setting and decision-making skills
- provide tools for improved relationships.

Organized around the concepts of awareness, understanding, acceptance, and change, the program allows learners to examine who they are, why they are in their present situation, and what choices are available to them to better themselves. The curriculum includes educating participants about addictive behaviors and functional versus dysfunctional families.

Group and Individual Counseling

Group and individual counseling addresses client's prerelease needs, issues, and concerns. These may be of a social, cultural, emotional, familial, legal, educational, and/or occupational nature. Counseling provides a safe, nonintimidating forum in which to seek advice.

Life Skills

Functioning in today's world is a multi-faceted task. From securing food, clothing, and shelter to being a better parent, from communicating with others to managing multiple roles, inmates must cultivate those basic skills and practice those behaviors that will help them fit back into the community.

Substance Abuse

Most people think of recovery from alcoholism or drug abuse as an event that happens rather than as a lifelong process that can be interrupted or changed at any time. Abstinence from alcohol and other drugs is only the first step in the recovery process. The diseases of alcoholism or drug dependency develop over a long period of time; true, meaningful recovery takes place throughout a person's entire life.

Recovery means living without alcohol and other drugs, as well as learning new skills to manage life as a sober person. Essential aspects of recovery are exploring sober value systems and developing integrated and balanced ways of life. This is not an easy process for anyone, much less for a person who has been using chemicals over a long period of time. New skills include:

- finding new ways of problem solving
- utilizing different kinds of reasoning
- developing effective thinking patterns
- cultivating an understanding of the self.

As alcoholism/addiction is a disease, recovery can only occur through treatment. According to one source, treatment is *all* interventions intended to short-circuit alcoholism or drug addiction and to introduce the alcohol- or drug-addicted person to sobriety or living without the use of alcohol/drugs. There are many types of treatment and very often a person will go through several of them in the course of his/her recovery from alcoholism or addiction. Treatment might include:

Detoxification Detoxification, or removing the poison or poisonous effect of alcohol and other drugs from one's system, usually occurs in a hospital setting.

Counseling Counseling, which may be of an individual, family, vocational, or spiritual nature, involves a series of meetings to define problems and look at possible solutions.

Education

Education can include reading materials, classes, or being part of individual counseling. Clients learn:

- facts about alcoholism and other addictions
- how abstinence from alcohol and other drugs can change behaviors that have caused so many problems in life
- responsibility for one's actions
- that he/she is not alone, and that others have similar problems and feelings.

Group Therapy

Group therapy allows inmates the opportunity to share problems and talk about feelings in a group led by a professional counselor.

Self-help Groups

Self-help groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Al-Anon, etc., are safe forums in which to share problems and learn more about alcoholism and other addictions. Professional counselors do not lead groups; group members are there to help each other with common problems.

As recovery is a process, so too is relapse. Although most people tend to view relapse as an event of drinking or drugging, it is instead a process that can be changed or interrupted at any time. The first step in preventing relapse is a true understanding of recovery as a long-term program of change in:

- identifying self-defeating personality styles
- changing self-defeating personality styles
- integrating a new, healthier style
- leading a balance life compatible with society
- generating serenity and peace of mind
- maintaining peace of mind.

This section on substance abuse was adapted from "Alcohol and Other Drugs: Realities for You and Your Family" in *Health Promotion for Adult Literacy Students: An Empowering Approach* with permission from the Hudson River Center for Program Development, Inc. (Albany, NY: The University of the State of New York, 1994)

Many incarcerated youth and adults have little or no legal work experience and, so, don't recognize the many rewards — in addition to a paycheck — that gainful employment can offer. An enhanced sense of self-esteem, independence, pride in performance, and networking opportunities are just a few benefits of securing and keeping a job. In the quest for economic and social self-sufficiency, job readiness is an undeniably important ingredient.

Job readiness has been described as a "work socialization process," beginning with an exploration of personal abilities and preferences and evolving into the acquisition of technical skills necessary for a career of choice. The New York State Department of Education has set forth a series of learning standards to describe this process. Entitled *Career Development and Occupational Studies* (CDOS), the standards are:

CDOS
CDOS

CDOS
CDOS

Standard 1: Career Development
Students will be knowledgeable about the world of work, explore career options, and relate personal skills, aptitudes, and abilities to future decisions.

Standard 2: Integrated Learning
Students will demonstrate how academic knowledge and skills are applied in the workplace and other settings.

Standard 3a: Universal Foundation Skills
Students will demonstrate mastery of the foundation skills and competencies essential for success in the workplace.

Standard 3b: Career Majors
Students who choose a career major will acquire the career-specific technical knowledge/skills necessary to progress towards gainful employment, career advancement, and success in postsecondary program.

In layman's terms, clients must answer "What's in it for me?". They must know how to apply their "book learning" to their jobs. They must recognize the value of promptness, responsibility, and other attributes in keeping a job. And, of course they need the "know-how" to get the job done. (These standards will be the focus of a supplement, currently in progress, to the *Adult Education Resource Guide and Learning Standards*.)

Job-skills building can be accomplished through a variety of work-based activities such as on-the-job training, internships, and/or other programs such as Job Corps.

Job Corps

Job Corps, a residential training program, is available not only as a support service upon release, but also as an alternative to incarceration. Administered and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, the program provides academic, vocational, and social skills training to youth (ages 16 to 24) with limited financial resources. In New York State, Job Corps works with the State Education Department to allow direct placement of inmates from county correctional facilities to Job Corps, regardless of income requirements. Transition coordinators can assist youth in filling out the application form.

Youth accepted into Job Corps, which is a voluntary program, receive academic education, vocational instruction, social skills training, and counseling. Academic education may involve obtaining a GED or taking ESOL classes. Students also learn what is necessary for finding and keeping an-entry level job. This includes not only the skills associated with a particular trade (see box for the variety of training offered by Job Corps), but also a sense of work ethic. They learn about personal accountability, reliability, the importance of a neat appearance, and good manners. Complementing this vocational training is a host of social skills training, such as decision making, leadership, self-esteem, time and resource management, and thinking creatively. Clearly, the Job Corps staff of instructors, counselors, and coaches is dedicated to training the "whole person."

Job Corps is about academic achievement and training. It is not therapy, treatment, nor recovery. However, in its quest to train the whole person, full medical and mental health services, including access to self-help groups, are provided.

Such support services are key to the success of Job Corps participants. While on campus, students receive room and board, work clothing, cash allowance, and recreational opportunities. Some Job Corps centers also offer childcare services for single parents. Upon graduation from the up-to-two year program, students receive an allowance that can be used for start-up rent, insurance, transportation, or other expenses. Job Corps also provides placement services to help students find jobs.

Job Corps Trades

The following is a sample of the many trades for which entry-level training is offered:

auto repair technician
bricklayer
building maintenance
business clerical
carpenter
cement mason
computer operator
cook apprentice
data entry specialist
diesel mechanic
electrician
home health aide
landscape technician
nursery school attendant
office clerk
painter
plumber
retail sales clerk
welder

For more information on Job Corps,
call 1-800-733-JOBS
or (TDD): 1-800-326-2577

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE NETWORK

Transition programs are about moving on, about strategies for moving from correctional facility to home schools and higher education, to employment and career choices. The plethora of decisions inherent with this process can be overwhelming, particularly for someone leaving an environment in which all decisions are made *for* him/her. To complicate matters further, clients might also be returning to the very same neighborhoods, families, and situations in which they first ran into trouble.

Post-release is a very tenuous time, a time that often requires even more support than what was available while incarcerated. For this reason, job and community development services are drawn upon to create a supportive network for individuals to obtain further education, training, employment, social, health, and other services after release.

A variety of support service agencies, usually coordinated by the transition coordinator, work together to meet the needs of clients. Broadly defined, these agencies include:

- school districts
- Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)
- colleges
- community-based organizations
- Job Corps centers
- local departments of labor
- drop-in centers
- local departments of social services
- service delivery areas
- mental health agencies
- court-related agencies
- advisory boards to incarcerated education programs
- substance abuse treatment resources
- ACCESS centers.

Peer Support Groups

In terms of engaging individuals, several programs have discovered the value of peer groups as an important source of support. After all, individuals in similar age groups and circumstances can "talk the talk" of their peers. They know what makes each other tick, what to say and what not to say, what buttons to push. In fact, one program retains a couple of adolescents on staff precisely to keep youthful clients coming back. "We had trouble getting clients to come to us," explains the program director, "but the peer leaders get them in. They have a network among themselves."

This ability to communicate with one another is helpful both outside and inside of the correctional facility. Individuals in transition programs tend to be naturally involved in a peer support group in that they are helping one another by:

- providing informal or formal tutoring
- discussing emotional issues that they will face when they leave the facility
- brainstorming strategies for anger management when faced with people, places, and things that are "triggers."

This group of inmates knows one another pretty well before they are even released. A network has been formed that inmates can tap into when they are back in the community.

While it's true that clients are more or less a captive audience while incarcerated, transition coordinators find that clients recognize the worth of the peer support groups. Once released, a conditional release does not prompt them to attend; they come of their own volition. A majority of clients voluntarily return again and again to the sessions. Although clients may not choose or be able to attend every session, it is important that it is available when they do seek the support of the group. Consistency is vital.

The Adolescent Employability Skills Plus Program, Inc. (A.E.S.P.P.) in Albany, NY is an example of peer support that seems to work. It has found that membership in a self-help group displaces the street group and develops into a healthy alternative peer culture. For more information on this program, call (518)462-2215.

Drop-in Centers

Drop-in centers are a safe place for former inmates to seek post-release services, which can range from providing shelter to providing job-readiness training. Whether looking for housing or looking to update resumes, inmates receive the support so necessary for making a go of it in the "outside" world.

With on-going monitoring and counseling to ensure compliance with referrals and completion of treatment or educational plans, drop-in centers ensure client involvement. Participants may be given training in job readiness, conflict resolution, alternatives to violence, and life skills training. They may also be provided opportunities to reach out to their peers in the community.

Clearly, there are many — schools, community based agencies, peers, etc. — involved in achieving the multiple goals of transition programs, *i.e*., providing instruction, promoting job readiness, and creating a supportive network. With so many goals, activities, and resources to juggle, *how* does it all happen? A flowchart of a sample transition program is included as Appendix B, but more importantly, a discussion of the key role of the transition coordinator in bringing it all together follows in the next section.

THE EFFECTIVE TRANSITION COORDINATOR

Transition coordinators play a key role in the success of incarcerated education programs as they are the main link between the inmates and the community. This link has tremendous potential to effect change on a client level and on a systems level. Although specific responsibilities vary between programs, there are common characteristics of transition coordinators who successfully facilitate change.

MEETING THE CLIENT'S NEEDS

If you were to ask an experienced transition coordinator for a job description, expect quite a kaleidoscopic account. Not only are the transition coordinator's responsibilities many, but they also constantly change. On any given day, the transition coordinator may be serving as instructor, court liaison, headhunter, mediator, public relations director, and good will ambassador! And, at all times, the transition coordinator serves as a positive role model for his/her clients facing transition to life outside of incarceration.

Release from incarceration is more than "getting out." It is a major adjustment — from the culture of the prison to the culture "outside." Transition programming, available to those identified by intake and screening procedures, is an opportunity to prompt inmates' thoughts about making that adjustment.

Regardless of the length of sentence, whether release time is next week or in 30 weeks, transition coordinators should start the transition process by encouraging inmates to start addressing the following questions:

- When do I start planning for my transition? — when I'm close to release? —now?
- What brought me here?
- What will I need to get out?
- What resources will I need when I get out?
- How can I better myself while I'm in so that I can be successful when I'm out?
- What must I change while I'm here?
- What choices do I have?

It is through such self-examination that inmates can discover their strengths and weaknesses. And, through formal and informal assessments (including computerized career assessment), clients' needs and interests — academic, training, occupational, and supportive services — are made clear to the transition coordinator. All of this information is important in

the transition process because it allows the counselor to determine what kind of help is most needed to achieve the inmate's self-identified goals. Individualized transition/employment plans and strategies can then be developed.

Case Management

One of the transition coordinator's goals is to ensure that each client leaves the facility with a personalized, attainable plan for success on the outside. Case management is a client-centered, goal-oriented process for assessing the needs of an individual for particular services and assisting the client to obtain those services.

To begin, the transition coordinator completes a personal background information sheet for each client. At a minimum, information should include:

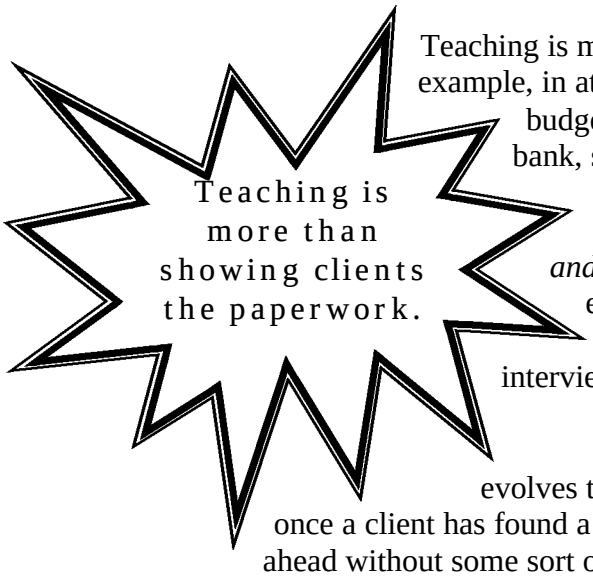
- name
- date of birth
- living arrangements
- social security number
- address
- dates of incarceration and release.

Extensive assessments of the client's family, legal, educational, and substance abuse histories should be completed. Does the inmate get along with his/her family? Is he/she involved with programs like JTPA, VESID, adult education, etc.? All of this information will help the transition coordinator learn why the inmate is there and what he/she would like to do when released.

Understanding the inmate's goals is the key to case management. Understanding how to accomplish the goals — accessing resources, networking — follows. Neither of these will be clear if the counselor does not take the client's perspective into account. After all, an inmate has a very different perspective on his/her current situation than the counselor does. Somehow, these two individuals with very different ideas have to come to a middle ground, a place where they can work together cooperatively. (Effective communication is addressed later, in the section entitled "Meeting Community Needs.")

Clear communication will help transition coordinators track inmate participation in the wide variety of programs that are available. These include: GED, life skills (e.g., *Action for Personal Choice*, anger and stress management), computer instruction, vocational education, job readiness, library services, etc.

Case management *is* tracking participation, *is* networking, *is* accessing resources. An informal survey of experienced transition coordinators revealed, however, that although numerous contacts are important, their job can not be successfully carried out "from a Rolodex.™" In other words, it is not enough to provide a client with names and numbers of potential resources. For once agreement on the transition plan by both client and transition coordinator has been secured, it is then that "real" teaching and advocacy can begin.



Teaching is more than showing clients the paperwork. For example, in attending to basic life skills, such as setting up budgets, teaching may be accompanying the client to the bank, supporting inquiries about setting up accounts, and helping fill out applications. In securing employment, clients must learn skills *and* networking tips: what one's abilities/preferences are, who to talk to within personnel departments, how to conduct oneself in an interview, and what to expect of the work world.

The transition coordinator's teaching role often evolves to one of advocacy. In the employment example, once a client has found a job, it may be difficult for him or her to move ahead without some sort of formal training. The transition coordinator, in this case, may work with the employer and a training agency to allow the client to not only retain the position while acquiring the training, but also to pay for the training over a manageable period of time, rather than in a lump sum.

Clearly, transition coordinators must have good working relationships with numerous agencies and individuals to be effective. Developing extensive service networks will pay off in ways both obvious and hidden. The most obvious benefit is that a lot of inmates are unaware of the resources available to them in the community. They may have the motivation to address their multitude of needs, but lack the strategies. The transition coordinator provides these strategies: access to educational opportunities, referrals to alcoholism/substance abuse or other outpatient services, connections to resources for basic survival (food, shelter), etc. Regular meetings of incarcerated youth providers will unearth a host of connections.

The more hidden benefit to making plenty of personal contacts is that one never knows what will come in handy when. If a client is ready and willing to work but has no transportation, the transition coordinator may remember a past conversation with a business owner whose downtown factory is directly on the city bus line. The transition coordinator could arrange an interview for the client, possibly including bus passes to the interview. This particular example is illustrative of the role transition coordinators play: respecting the client's independence, but offering a "boost" when needed.

Knowing the particulars of inmates' situations, such as lack of transportation, is part of the hard-to-define responsibility of transition coordinators to "be there." Anticipating clients' unspoken needs is as important as addressing the more apparent needs of day-to-day living outside of the incarcerated environment. Hold their hands a little bit — remember *your* first-job nervousness? Show that you'll go the extra mile by driving your client to his or her starting day on the job.

Going that extra mile might also mean giving clients contact numbers, throwing transition graduations, or visiting homes. Of the latter, transition coordinators will not only

demonstrate their care, but will also reap the benefits of learning about the client's home life. Is there a healthy family welcoming the client's arrival? Will he or she be supported by family members that want to be involved in the transition process?

Many experienced transition coordinators have expressed their firm belief in the power of the family in making or breaking the client's transition to life in the community. Too often, that family support is not in place or the home environment is otherwise unhealthy, so other arrangements — such as encouraging involvement in peer support groups — must be made.

Parental and Family Involvement

Although some incarcerated individuals may have "burned the bridges" linking them to their families, many have children, parents, spouses, and other family members who are or can be powerful positive influences. When loved ones show interest and concern, the transition coordinator should tap into family life as a catalyst for learning and success in the transition program.

Family should be involved in the transition process as early as possible. With permission of the client, the transition coordinator can employ numerous techniques to involve the family. This will most likely enrich the learning experiences for the client and create an awareness of the transition process for the family.

- To encourage family involvement, periodic **phone calls from counselor to family members**, updating them on progress and achievements, can have a tremendously positive effect. Parents, in particular, will probably be relieved to get a phone call about their child that's not a bad report. For incarcerated individuals with children, this strategy is also very successful for engaging spouses or outside caregivers.

- Family members can be encouraged to **attend special events** (both pre- and post-release), thereby meeting counselors and observing the environment.

- **Sending newsletters** which highlight current events, activities, and programs to families institutes an avenue for regular communication.

- Special achievement certificates as well as reports can be sent to the family and promoted in **presentation ceremonies** to generate pride in accomplishment. Special events and achievement certificates for outside family members are other strategies for engaging families.

- **Mail-back forms** actively enlist family participation.

- **Open houses and speaker nights** provide opportunities for family members and youth to interact in a social environment.

By involving family in the transition process, the counselor is essentially opening the door of communication to an inmate's support network. Family members now have an opportunity to express their concerns about the ex-offender returning home. Counselors can alleviate such fears and doubts by pointing out the inmate's strengths and explaining how the program builds on these strengths to help them make the transition, i.e., to find a job, strengthen the family relationship, get into school, and find other appropriate resources.

Building on strengths bolsters an inmate's sense of self-esteem and worth, essential ingredients for *anyone* facing change. If inmates know that their families are concerned about their future, many will push themselves onward and attempt to meet expectations. One way to show concern is to act as advocates. Transition coordinators might encourage parents to contact lawyers or other professionals on behalf of their children to make sure their education and work rights are met. Coordinators may also encourage outside family members to become partners in the incarcerated individual's success by becoming involved in programs and services themselves.

Counselors can also reinforce positive parenting for inmates who are parents. (Approximately 70 percent of incarcerated individuals are said to be parents.) It is important for parenting inmates to have a connection with their children. Family education/empowerment programs can provide opportunities for inmates, spouses or outside caregivers, and their child(ren) to come together for a developmentally appropriate activity: playing, book reading, etc. In an incarcerated facility, parent and child would meet in the visitor's room, cafeteria, or other child-friendly, inmate-secure space.

Another useful strategy for fostering the connection between inmate and child involves voice recordings. The incarcerated parent reads a book aloud and tapes the story. The taped voice is then sent to the children at home. A personal message on tape is a reminder to the children that Mom or Dad cares and thinks about them. For inmates who may be at a lower reading level or uncomfortable with reading, picture books or drawings can be used. This strategy involves the child, the outside caregiver, and the incarcerated individual in a literacy activity.

Communication among all levels of family structure involving the inmate/client can make a difference in the degree of success achieved while incarcerated and once released. For both counselor and client, knowledge of and communication with families can facilitate the transition process.

Certainly at the client level, the transition coordinator can have a tremendous impact on the transition process. Does this also hold true on a larger scale — at, perhaps, a systems level? Input from experienced transition coordinators and other experts in the field suggests that this is indeed the case. As a result of the day-to-day work done in the correctional facility or in the community, transition coordinators affect policy changes by:

- the statistics they present to funders
- the advocacy they undertake on behalf of clients
- bringing the correctional facility to the community and vice versa.

To effect change at a systems level, the role of community cannot be overstated. The needs of the community in relation to the transition process must be met. As in meeting the client's needs, counselors are teaching, advocating, developing service networks, and "being there" to meet the community's needs.

For purposes of this document, a working definition of community is all those entities with whom the inmate will be interacting upon release from the correctional facility. This includes family and friends, service providers, employers, and the correctional facility itself. For all community members, education is a universal need. What role will they play in the inmate's transition? Transition coordinators play a key role in helping community members identify their roles.

Family & Friends

Family and friends can be approached during Family Days or at other such events in the facility. As stated earlier, it is prudent to involve the family when possible. Transition coordinators can even refer clients to various programs, such as EvenStart, to strengthen the family component. Support groups can also be convened for family members to share their concerns. Again, a ready supply of service providers and knowledge of area resources is vital.

Service Providers

A dual role exists for the transition coordinator in reaching out to service providers in the community. The first is that transition coordinators must network from the correctional facility to the community by way of referrals. Second, community services must be brought into the correctional facilities. One idea is to regularly invite community groups into the correctional facility to present descriptions of their programs to the inmates.

The transition coordinator's job is to link inmates into the outside community *and* to link services into the correctional facility so that inmates have an idea of what is available to them. Each community is different, with its own riches, resources, and pitfalls, so making the connection from both directions is critical for an effective service network.

Employers

Employers may need to be encouraged to accept former inmates as employees. Transition coordinators can advise them of special incentives they might receive for hiring ex-offenders. Employers should also be made aware of the services transition coordinators provide and how they can be contacted.

Correctional Facility

Other advocacy efforts of the transition coordinator include raising the awareness of corrections staff within the facility. If correctional staff understand the aim of transition/education programs, they will be more likely to assist in achieving the goals set by the programs.

Fostering positive relationships with correctional staff is a must for several reasons. First, administrators and personnel of the correctional facility can serve as key resources to counselors. Second, and perhaps most importantly, the correctional facility determines policy and implementation of all programs including transitional programming. Counselors must be aware of restrictions against services, etc., set forth by the facility. Forming linkages with corrections staff will ease day-to-day operations, thereby promoting transition objectives.

With so many "bosses" to answer to, it is no wonder that flexibility is a key word in the transition coordinator's job description. Effective transition coordinators are flexible enough to "change hats" at a moment's notice. They are flexible enough to distinguish inmates who are ready to be helped from those who are not. And, they are flexible enough to teach, advocate, network, and "be there" for a wide range of audiences.

The trick to working with such an incredible array of personalities is to not only recognize, but also respect and honor, the diversity presented by this unique work environment. And, the diversity is indeed multifold: ethnic, socio-economic, geographic, developmental, gender-based, etc. It is particularly true that while transition coordinators play an enormously important role in motivating their primary clients (i.e., inmates in transition programs), the fact remains that the two players can be seemingly worlds apart: different ages, different lifestyles, different priorities and values, etc.

Oftentimes, inmates think that counselors are snoops or spies. When asked a lot of seemingly personal, private questions, inmates may naturally become defensive and uncooperative. The counselors are actually asking questions pertinent to the transition process, but the opposing perspectives of the two players disallows effective verbal communication.

To circumvent this communication breakdown, transition coordinators should consider examining their own prejudices, biases, and/or limitations. "Do I have an unfounded dislike of certain people, based solely on the color of their skin?" "Do I subscribe to stereotypes because of my own limited experiences?" Honestly addressing such questions may shed light on why counselors are having difficulty communicating with their clients, as well as serve as a role model for clients to examine *their* beliefs and behaviors.

Prejudice
suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred of other races, creeds, etc.

Racism
believing, with no scientific support, that racial differences assert superiority of one race over another

Sexism
discrimination against people on the basis of sex

One oft-overlooked factor in how people treat one another is gender. Women are treated differently than men. This is true in society and in its microcosm, facilities of incarceration. For example, substantiated evidence is beginning to accumulate that women are incarcerated for different reasons. The nature of their crimes is different than that of men. Also, significant anecdotal evidence suggests that women are in need of distinct programming and transitional services. Until definitive research is carried out, it is important that counselors ensure their sensitivity to these differences.

If transition coordinators expect to engage their clients, respect is necessary from the very beginning. Clients cannot feel as if they are being changed into something they are not. Rather, they should be made to feel special. The transition coordinator should make clear that, "Great things are expected from you [the inmate], but you don't have to do it on your own. I'm offering my hand — let's do this together." Yes, inmates must invest in their own future, but such support can make a significant difference.

A transition coordinator can be highly effective in helping an inmate reach educational and job preparation goals while in the facility and achieve job success when released. However, it is important that counselors recognize their limits, especially when the needs seem so great. Be clear about the actual expectations of your particular job and identify the resources. Don't hesitate to turn to the specialists, such as people specifically trained to deal with the complexities of the alcohol and drug abuse system, when appropriate. Acknowledge the reality that not all of your clients will make a successful transition.

None-the-less, *all* clients should be tracked to see if any additional services are needed. The transition coordinator, whose job description should also include stick-to-itiveness, should not write off clients who are unsuccessful the first time. Regular follow-up should be established, perhaps at one week, one month, six months, and one year post-release. Working with the same counselor both in and out of the correctional facility will reassure the client, fostering more trust and openness.

CONCLUSION

All of the hats that transition coordinators wear are a function of the goal of transition, i.e., to promote the successful re-entry of incarcerated individuals into a supportive community. This is a "two-way street" in that individuals are being prepared to re-enter the community *and* the community is being prepared to welcome those individuals. As such, transition coordinators are in fact, addressing the needs of both the incarcerated individual and the community. At the risk of gross oversimplification, effective transition coordinators address the needs of both client and community through teaching, advocating, developing service networks, and by "being there."

Undeniably important is the skill and disposition a transition coordinator brings to a program; so too is the triangular relationship between counselor, inmate/client, and community. The combined efforts of this triumvirate facilitate the acquisition of skills so necessary for a successful transition. Research supports the strength of this model in terms of a lower recidivism rate, solid educational achievement, and a positive return on investment. And, not coincidentally, these skills dovetail with the rigorous learning standards set forth for *all* students through which work, family, and personal goals can be realized.

ACRONYMS GLOSSARY

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
ABE	Adult Basic Education
ACCESS	Adult Centers for Comprehensive Education and Support Services
AESPP	Adolescent Employability Skills Plus Program
APC	Action for Personal Choice
BOCES	Boards of Cooperative Educational Services
CDOS	Career Development and Occupational Studies
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
GED	General Education Development
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act
NA	Narcotics Anonymous
NYSED	New York State Education Department
VESID	Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities

APPENDIX A: LEARNING STANDARDS

Mathematics, Science, and Technology

Standard 1: Analysis, Inquiry, and Design

Students will use mathematical analysis, scientific inquiry, and engineering design, as appropriate, to pose questions, seek answers, and develop solutions.

Standard 2: Information Systems

Students will access, generate, process, and transfer information using appropriate technologies.

Standard 3: Mathematics

Students will understand mathematics and become mathematically confident by communicating and reasoning mathematically, by applying mathematics in real-world settings, and by solving problems through the integrated study of number systems, geometry, algebra, data analysis, probability, and trigonometry.

Standard 4: Science

Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment and recognize the historical development of ideas in science.

Standard 5: Technology

Students will apply technological knowledge and skills to design, construct, use, and evaluate products and systems to satisfy human and environmental needs.

Standard 6: Interconnectedness: Common Themes

Students will understand the relationships and common themes that connect mathematics, science, and technology and apply the themes to these and other areas of learning.

Standard 7: Interdisciplinary Problem Solving

Students will apply the knowledge and thinking skills of mathematics, science, and technology to address real-life problems and make informed decisions.

English Language Arts

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Students will listen, speak, read, and write for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will:

- collect data, facts, and ideas;
- discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and
- use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

Standard 2: Language for Literacy Response and Expression

Students will:

- read and listen to oral, written, and electronically produced texts and performances from American and world literature;
- relate texts and performances to their own lives; and
- develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent.

As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language for self-expression and artistic creation.

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Students will listen, speak, read, and write for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues represented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language to present, from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues.

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Students will listen, speak, read, and write for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

Languages Other Than English

Standard 1: Communication Skills
Students will be able to use a language other than English for communication.

Standard 2: Cultural Understanding
Students will develop cross-cultural skills and understanding.

The Arts

Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts
Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theater, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts.

Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles.

Standard 3: Responding To and Analyzing Works of Art
Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

Standard 4: Understanding Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts
Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

Health Education, Physical Education, and Family and Consumer Sciences

Standard 1: Personal Health and Fitness

Students will have the necessary knowledge and skills to establish and maintain physical fitness, participate in physical activity, and maintain personal health.

Standard 2: A Safe and Healthy Environment

Students will acquire the knowledge and ability necessary to create and maintain a safe and healthy environment.

Standard 3: Resource Management

Students will understand and be able to manage their personal and community resources.

Social Studies

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

Standard 2: World History

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

Standard 3: Geography

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live — local, national, and global — including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth's surface.

Standard 4: Economics

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and non-market mechanisms.

Standard 5: Civics, Citizenship, and Government

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the United States and other nations; the United States Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

Career Development and Occupational Studies

Standard 1: Career Development

Students will be knowledgeable about the world of work, explore career options, and relate personal skills, aptitudes, and abilities to future decisions.

Standard 2: Integrated Learning

Students will demonstrate how academic knowledge and skills are applied in the workplace and other settings.

Standard 3a: Universal Foundation Skills

Students will demonstrate mastery of the foundation skills and competencies essential for success in the workplace.

Standard 3b: Career Majors

Students who choose a career major will acquire the career-specific technical knowledge/skills necessary to progress toward gainful employment, career advancement, and success in postsecondary programs.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE TRANSITION PROGRAM