

Date: 02/26/2014

To: NYC Department of Correction Services.

Subject: new reentry program for prisoners and ex-convicts in New York City.

As you know, New York City suffered a big increase from the 60's until the 90's. Then, violent crimes started to decrease surprisingly fast, but now they seem to have stabilized. It is desirable for the communities and people in New York City to make violent crimes fall further, not only for the economic cost that they cause, but also to ensure the physical integrity and security of all our citizens.

Hereby, I propose to implement mentoring programs for prisoners and ex-convicts of New York City. This policy would reduce the recidivism by supplying the formerly incarcerated and those still in prison with moral support that helps them get rehabilitated. Thus, it will orient them towards a prosocial behavior.

If we let things be like they are right now, the model predicts that we will lose 167.5 billion dollars during the period 2012-2030. In case we apply the policy, we can think of three different scenarios. The worst case would be that nobody gets into the program so we spend money for nothing. In this case, we would have to pay to the people informing the prisoners and this will suppose an extra loss of 900 thousand dollars during the time aforementioned (2012-2030). The program would be cancelled probably after 2 years if no one decides to participate in, though.

In the best case scenario, all those getting out of jail will enter the program and all of them will be very unlikely to recidivate ever again. We would save 9 billion dollars (the total loss will be online 158 billion dollars) in comparison with in the period 2012-2030. However, the most likely case will be that only 50% of prisoners participate into the program and that the 50% of them successfully complete the program. Finally, from those who complete the program only a 40%<sup>1</sup> will never recidivate again. With these parameters, we obtain a net present value of almost 1 billion dollars.

In order to carry on with this project, there are several organizations that are needed. First, we need to get in contact not only with the Department of Probation and the Department of Social Services but also with the Ready4work organization who has shown to have some experience on this programs and, moreover, have conducted some of these programs by their own. Ready4work would be the organization who coordinates the program.

As for the resources, we will need some rooms in prison where to reunite all the near to release convicts and we will hire some staff that informs them about the benefits of the program. On the other hand, we will need some extra staff to coordinate the program, to recruit people and to train them. The people that they recruit will be volunteers so, in this sense, they are for free. In the same vein, we will need rooms to train and coordinate the mentors out of jail.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on research.

To implement this program correctly and get the best outcomes, we have made a list of implementation steps that must be followed and some obstacle that we may encounter:

1. You have to hire through the Ready4Work organization the staff that will show the program to the prisoners, and teach them what the program is about. A crucial feature is that mentors must be called life coaches, otherwise, the mentees (ex-convicts participating in the program) may feel that they are being treated like children. In the same vein, you must coordinate with New York City prisons and the Department of Probation to get scheduled the day and place where the presentation will take place (most likely, in the auditorium). It is important that attendance is made compulsory.
2. Prisoners who are about to be released or are on probation may also apply to this program. The Department of Probation and the Department of Correction services must facilitate that mentor and mentee talk on the phone and the mentor may visit the mentee once every week for one hour.
3. At the same time, you shall start doing some advertisement to obtain volunteers for mentoring. According to the literature, many people from houses of worship (churches, temples and the like) are very likely to help in this kind of programs. When trying to recruit in the houses of worship, it is compulsory to get the buy-in from the spiritual leader. In this sense, the volunteers should meet the following criteria:
  - a. They must be over 21 years-old. The older the best because older people tend to reject advice from the youngest.
  - b. They must have a driving license in order to be able to go to other areas of the city.

- c. A minimum time requirement. Mentors should meet (or contact by telephone and talk with the mentee), at least once per week for 2 hours. They can meet even more if both mentor and mentee want to (this is desirable).
  - d. Persons who have been previously incarcerated and are completely rehabilitated (they are currently working and have not had any new criminal record from 7 years ago until now) may participate in this program. In fact, they are among the best candidates to be mentors because the mentees will feel more understood by them than by any other person.
  - e. Mentor contract. The mentors should sign an agreement so that they know which are their roles and responsibilities, including the confidentiality policies. These policies are done to avoid feelings of mistrust who may fear that the mentor tells something to the police.
4. During the information sessions, we must calculate the number of mentors needed depending on how many people are willing to do the program. Then, we should start hiring mentor coordinators on demand to cover. Some mentor coordinators may need training but we should try to get people with some experience in these kinds of programs.
  5. By this time, some people will have probably answered to the ad and will be willing to be mentors. We can start to match mentors and mentees. We should always try that they have some interests in common.
  6. The program will have a duration a 6 months, but we should encourage that the mentor and the mentee keep up the friendship.
  7. Even if it is impossible for the mentor and mentee to meet, mentor coordinators should encourage that they talk on the phone. Research shows that this also

happens to be effective. It would be especially advisable when the mentee is still in jail or has a job.

Following these steps, we will make sure that everything goes as smoothly as it can and we will save millions of dollars, only requiring the first year of the program around 2 million dollars since the number of prisoners is still high. This initial quantity of money will be less and less every year (the average is around 800 thousand dollars per year).Moreover, this policy has the potential to adapt to any quantity of money given (adjusting the number of mentor coordinators and consequently the mentors), but this would reduce the outcomes of it.