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MAPPING THE UNIVERSE OF RE-ENTRY

THE NEW YORK CITY DISCHARGE PLANNING COLLABORATION
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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
Part 1. “A New Way of Doing Business”: The Risks and Rewards of Collaboration	8
Part 2. “The Culture at the Gate”: Transformation at Rikers Island	15
Part 3. “The Double Helix of Discharge Planning”: Evolution of the Collaborative	21
Part 4. “Looking at the Totality”: The FUSE Pilot	28
Part 5. “1,000 Days...1,000 Days”: Sustainability and Institutionalization	33
Appendix	38
DHS Client Population at a Glance	48
DOC Client Population at a Glance	49



The following report documents the evolution and accomplishments of the New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration. In particular, it provides an account of how this Collaboration of nearly 40 organizations came into existence, and what it has done to sustain itself in its efforts, over the past five years, to fundamentally transform the re-entry process—from one dependent on jails and shelters to one in which education, drug treatment, housing and employment become the pathways of choice. Along the way, lessons of value to policymakers, both within New York City and beyond, are highlighted.

To begin, we examine how two sides, the governmental and private sectors, came together to cooperate in a joint venture and what challenges were involved in doing so. We pay special attention to the risks involved in such cooperation, as well as what it took to overcome such risks and to create trust around issues as diverse as information-sharing, potential loss of authority, and potential competition for funding. As we shall see, among the most important conditions for creating trust was a commitment, on both sectors' parts, to show up consistently at meetings. Although simple, this was a universal signal of the effort's importance. Moreover, the unified message and coordination between the Departments of Correction and Homeless Services indicated to Collaboration members that this would truly be a systemic effort. To that end, the voiced commitment on the part of Commissioner Martin Horn and then-Commissioner Linda Gibbs signaled to collaboration members that the time was now—and the risk worth it—to try to work together collectively.

We also examine how the Department of Correction under Commissioner Martin Horn has re-organized itself to place discharge planning more centrally within its efforts. In this sense, Rikers Island will be seen as an important indication of the broad-reaching changes effected by the Collaboration, and one that lends credence to the adage that

change is meaningful only if it starts from within. The integration of discharge planning into daily life at Rikers and the sustained effort to accommodate community service providers who work on the island will be shown as proof of the Collaboration's commitment. As documented in the report, these changes have not gone unnoticed by service providers and by DOC planning staff, who readily admit their work has been made easier by the Collaborative's efforts. The lesson here was the need for a top-down vision of the role that discharge planning could play in meeting DOC goals, the willingness of managerial staff to explain that vision and its merits, and the creativity of staff in implementing such a vision with few resources. From the Commissioner to chiefs and from wardens to correction officers, the message went out that a place for discharge planning had to be made within the role played by all. In all cases, the value of discharge planning had to be directly tied to security and this link made explicit to line staff and others. In addition, the transformation of the physical environment at Rikers—through signage, posters, murals, and the eventual creation of a physical support center—was an important component in signaling the value and role of discharge planning within the entire incarceration and re-entry process. The work is not finished. Rikers remains a facility affected by a shortage of resources and deteriorated infrastructure; nor have programs and security been fully integrated. But great strides have been made and we highlight them.

Turning to the question of how the Collaboration developed over time and how it is structured, we will see that it is characterized by the interplay between two fixed rules for gaining entry but flexible growth within the parameters set by those rules. The rules, known by all members of the collaborative, were set from the top by commissioners, and mandated that membership in the collaborative required concrete contributions as well as a commitment to work together rather than pointing fingers. Particular problems to be addressed by the group have, on the other hand, emerged

organically from discussions and research. There is no governing structure with respect to what will be addressed, and interventions and pilots have been created through consensus. Moreover, as these problems have been identified, workgroups have broken off to tackle them and to design interventions, usually around a particular population facing a particular challenge to re-entry. While the group began with three committees devoted to large, theoretical issues, it now consists of seven workgroups: Benefits Continuity, Big Picture, Diversion, Drug & Alcohol, Employment, FUSE, and Housing—each an incubator of ideas and interventions and each committed to seeking system-wide, collaborative solutions to the problem of re-entry.

We will also examine the Frequent Users Service Enhancement or FUSE project, as this Collaboration pilot was singled out as the best potential model for future growth. The report seeks to understand why that is. To anticipate, the FUSE program utilizes both a unique housing model and a unique funding structure. Moreover, the clients targeted are those individuals who have shuttled back and forth between the jail and shelter systems, entering each institution on four separate occasions over the course of five years. What makes FUSE special, collaboration members believe, is that it targets such a strategically-selected, specific population with a comprehensive set of interventions from a variety of agencies and providers. In this sense, it epitomizes the collaboration's unique approach: that of having as many partners as possible to tackle a specific problem. Because FUSE targets a population seen in both institutions, it is an opportunity to address a problem that neither agency is equipped to handle on its own, yet one that affects multiple systems. By pitching together and providing housing, drug treatment, and employment services, both agencies and the Collaborative are working to break the cycle of re-entry that represents such a high cost for both. Although the future of FUSE is uncertain due to current budget constraints, a recent evaluation study

conducted by John Jay College demonstrated that the program is working: 100% of study participants avoided shelter use while 89% avoided going back to jail.

Looking ahead to the future, with a new administration set to take office in under two years, Collaboration members have begun speculating how best to institutionalize the work they have already started. We examine what institutionalization means to the group. As we shall see, members believe that they have to provide the incoming Mayor and Commissioners with a body of evidence—one that shows their efforts are paying off. A number of longer-term ideas for institutionalization are also being circulated, such as including overall discharge planning numbers in the Mayor's Management Report; fostering academic interest, research and teaching around the issue of re-entry; creating a trade association around re-entry; and conducting a public information campaign around the consequences of incarceration and shelter use. The idea is to raise the visibility of re-entry as a political issue of the first import, and one with a built-in constituency who has been working on it collectively for five years. Moreover, as the collaboration is such a constituency with a collective memory of its efforts, and a distinct culture, the hope is that this memory and culture will serve to foster the kind of commitment and creativity that have thus defined their progress. Throughout the document, the culture of the group is held up as of paramount importance, and its consequences in motivating action are examined in order to understand what might be replicable in other settings.

It is 3:45 on a Thursday afternoon and Deputy Commissioner Kathy Coughlin is having trouble ending a meeting. The problem is that the group has been at it for nearly four hours and shows no sign of stopping. Sleeves have been rolled up, jackets placed on the backs of chairs, and numerous pieces of paper, at both the northern and southern sides of the Department of Correction conference room, have been steadily filling the walls. Coughlin looks around with a smile, and asks, “What do we need to do to end this meeting?” Some one calls out in jest, “You’re in charge, just end it!” Everyone laughs. “No, I’m not,” she laughs back.¹

At one end, McGregor Smyth, of the Bronx Defenders, a civil legal defense provider, holds his marker and awaits further suggestions about a tangle of papers, concepts and diagrams slowly forming before him; at the other, Richard Cho, Associate Director of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, a nonprofit homeless advocacy group, stands and does the same. Seated between them at the table are some 10 other volunteers—individuals from various city agencies and nonprofits who have gathered on behalf of a larger collaborative of dedicated citizens known as the New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration.

In fact, Coughlin, who oversees Programs for the Department of Correction (DOC), is right. It’s not up to her to end the meeting, and for good reason: although the DOC provides administrative support and leadership, the collaborative has no particular governing structure, other than group consensus. Rather, it is up to the group itself to decide what to do, and faced with their task that day, they seem to sense how much work is to be done. The only limit on them is their energy, which, after four hours, is waning.

Begun in 2003 under the direction of Commissioner of Correction Martin Horn and then Commissioner of Homeless Services Linda Gibbs, the Collaboration now counts on the membership of such city agencies as the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Human

Resources Administration, the New York City Housing Authority, as well as membership from some of the city’s most important prisoner and homeless advocacy nonprofits, including the Corporation for Supportive Housing, The Doe Fund, Bowery Resident’s Committee, Interfaith Coalition of Advocates for Reentry and Employment, the Fortune Society, the Center for Employment Opportunities, the Vera Institute of Justice and the Women’s Prison Association—a total of 36 organizations and agencies.

The idea for a collaborative began when the two commissioners noticed the effect of each other’s client population on their own facilities. A data match revealed that thirty percent of individuals found in a DHS adult facility had at least one DOC admission whereas nearly 90% of individuals matched were in shelter after leaving the DOC, with around half entering a shelter within two months. The Collaboration was born of that match. Today it includes some 25 discharge planning programs and initiatives that affect thousands of clients coming from Rikers Island a year, support centers within two facilities at Rikers, and some 90 volunteers from a growing swathe of the city’s agencies and nonprofits. Their goal: to see that discharge planning becomes so fundamental a component of our efforts to re-integrate the formerly incarcerated and homeless, that jail and shelter become a last resort, and education, drug treatment, housing and employment the pathways of choice.

That day at the Department of Correction the group was there to stand at the board and begin mapping out their place in that particular universe of pathways, in an extraordinary moment of self-consciousness for the group. Where were they in that universe and how could they help? Who else was out there and how could contact be made with them? How many more clients could be served in that universe and at what point? What follows tells the story of how they came to be there, mapping out that universe. It is the story of one the most unique collaborative efforts in New York City history and the story of a unique moment in the history of that collaborative.

¹ New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration, “Systems Mapping Meeting,” March 23, 2007, New York City Department of Correction.

“A New Way of Doing Business”: The Risks and Rewards of Collaboration

What are the greatest challenges of convening a multi-provider, multi-agency collaboration? When asked, the majority of respondents cited two important considerations: risk and trust. After all, for the non-profit sector and government agencies to merge in a coordinated effort, is, as Commissioner Hess remarked, “an unnatural act.”²

Aside from obvious concerns about the extra time and effort required for a coordinated volunteer effort like this, nonprofits face the challenge of a new venture where success rates are relatively unknown.

This is particularly true given the Collaboration’s decision to focus efforts on the sentenced population, a population with both unique challenges and unique opportunities. On the one hand, because the release date for the sentenced population is known,

discharge plans can be created in advance. And yet, upon release, no supervision exists to ensure compliance with plans. Mindy Tarlow understands this challenge well. As the executive director of the Center for Employment Opportunities, she oversees her agency’s efforts to sign released inmates up for employment. “It’s almost a completely different thing to work with people coming home from Rikers than it is to work with people on parole,” she says, “in almost every respect.” “The primary thing is, when someone comes home on parole and we engage them early, we have a much higher engagement rate,” she explains. “With Rikers, even though they’re volunteering to come to CEO...they’re significantly harder to engage.”³

CEO is one of several providers that form the Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement (RIDE) program, begun in 2004. The Collaboration’s primary effort to enroll released inmates in community-based services, RIDE provides clients with a free shuttle service directly from Rikers Island to services identified in their

“Non-profit providers act to inspire the government with their dedication and passion. On the other hand, it can be very sobering for them to see how difficult it is to achieve things on the government’s side.”

[Martin Horn]

² Author Interview with Robert V. Hess, Commissioner, New York City Department of Homeless Services, March 29, 2007.

³ Author interview with Mindy Tarlow, Center for Employment Opportunities, March 30, 2007.

discharge plan, such as housing, substance abuse treatment programs, and employment programs. In the case of CEO, clients are taken to a two-day employment-training program called “Steps to Success.” As Mindy explains, the key to such a pilot is to focus efforts on carefully selecting clients who have a chance and will to succeed, rather than aiming for high volume. To do so requires that one temper expectations with a realistic sense of the outcome: “[You have to] allow yourself to acknowledge that as a fact, that there’s going to be a very wide funnel [from entrance to retention]...When we actually get down to the people who really want to work, we’ve been successful, [with 600 people placed in full-time jobs over 3 years]. That’s a lot.”⁴ Overall, in the last year, RIDE providers have confirmed enrollment in transitional work services for more than 1,600 clients and have provided discharge planning services to more than 2,000 clients.⁵ Their efforts are paying off: initial findings from a John Jay evaluation of the RIDE program found that in the one year following completion of the of the RIDE program, 29% fewer of those completing had returned to jail, as compared to a comparison group of non-completers.

In addition to concerns about success, both sectors, private and public, risk exposing their “underbellies” to each other, particularly around information sharing, procedural norms and decision-making. Alison O. Jordan, the executive director for transitional health services at Rikers Island, explains the mindset of government agencies at the outset: “These were people who, in some cases, have sued us, who have said you’re doing a bad job. There is a natural hesitancy up front with sharing information.”⁶ And yet, as she is quick to add, because of a shared desire to address the problem of re-entry, both sides were willing to take the risk. Indeed, the creation over the years of a unique culture has blurred the distinction between the two sectors, placing

emphasis on a common goal for shared clients. Information sharing is now one of the most remarkable and vital components of the entire enterprise.

In some sense, the two sectors were mindful of performing their roles in front of each other and of exposing their limitations. In government’s case, these limitations included revealing both how limited funding was and how slowly particular bureaucratic processes could move, particularly when hierarchies frustrated the advance of a particular goal. Moreover, for the Department of Correction and the Department of Homeless Services to open up a direct and formalized process of criticism was a novel enterprise. As Deputy Commissioner Coughlin explains: “The way government usually works, and I’m a government person, is that you protect yourself from those people [nonprofits], because they’re going to tell you that you’re doing it wrong, they’re going to criticize you.”⁷ In inviting assistance and critique, the perception was that a consequent loss of authority could occur.

The strongest example of this hesitancy can be found in the involvement of the Bronx Defenders, perhaps the most literal of former adversaries, and yet, as everyone in the collaboration readily acknowledges, an integral participant. When McGregor Smyth first approached Commissioner Horn about joining the collaboration, after seeing Horn speak about it at a conference, there was a natural wariness about letting public defenders join the group. “I think it took a little work on both of our sides to come to an agreement about getting involved,” McGregor explains.⁸ “We both followed up after the meeting and met up privately about figuring out what the contribution could be and fairly quickly got involved.” In effect, Smyth was able to demonstrate to the Commissioner that the involvement of defenders would be essential

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Numbers derived from FY2007 invoices for payment from the Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement contracted providers: Women’s Prison Association, Samaritan Village, Osborne Association, the Fortune Society, Vera Institute for Justice and the Center for Employment Opportunities.

⁶ Author interview with Alison O. Jordan, Bureau of Transitional Health Care Coordination, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, April 18, 2007.

⁷ Author interview with Deputy Commissioner Kathy Coughlin, New York City Department of Correction, March 14, 2007.

⁸ Author interview with McGregor Smyth, Bronx Defenders, March 8, 2007.

to any alternative to incarceration programs that the collaboration might envision, since defenders are uniquely positioned to make their clients and judges aware of the advantages of such alternatives. They were not there to point figures, he assured Horn, they were there to help address the problem, and they have since proven to be among the most energetic partners in the entire enterprise.

Finally, for both sectors, there is the challenge of compromise. Government agencies must be willing to listen to the concerns of nonprofits, which can

sometimes lead them to consider paths beyond the purview of their particular department. And nonprofits must realize that their suggestions have to be both politically realistic and actionable, suggestions that

Commissioners can actually sign off on. In fact, the two are often related, constituting one of the core processes of exploration for the collaboration. For as the private sector challenges the public to think beyond agency jurisdiction, the latter often reports back on the systematic barriers to their authority. This not only gives nonprofit providers a unique view of the challenges that government faces, it also allows the two sides to explore barriers together, barriers such as state eligibility requirements, city legislation and Federal mandates. As JoAnne Page, Executive Director of the Fortune Society explains, joint exploration helps the group avoid simple pandering to the least common denominator among them, which she likens to avoiding “simple muzak” in favor of something genuinely creative. “I think we’re really synthesizing,” she affirms.⁹

Almost everyone interviewed acknowledged that risks were undertaken and hesitations

overcome because of the trust that has emerged within the collaboration, a trust that has by now become the foundation of the group’s unique culture. But what did each side have to do to gain that trust? The answer is both simple and surprising; both sides had to keep showing up. There is near unanimity that this, in and of itself, is an extremely rare occurrence in private-public partnerships.

When asked what it took for the DOC and DHS to gain her trust, Debbie Pantin of Palladia, Inc, a nonprofit provider, was quick to answer:

As part of their leadership and vision, Horn and Gibbs made a decision at the outset that has since become central to the collaboration’s success: they laid down two explicit rules. [...First, in order to participate, each member had to contribute something concrete. The second: everybody who participates is there to work together on achievable goals, not to point fingers or to complain.]

“When they called a meeting, they were there, they didn’t flip-flop with the meetings. They sent out meeting minutes. They followed-up on things they said they were going to do, which to me, said that they were serious.”¹⁰ Moreover, she was impressed that at meetings, the DOC and DHS had clearly come prepared with a single, coordinated voice, a signal that the

collaboration was high up on their list of priorities. This coordination did not go unnoticed by others. Thus, Mindy Tarlow: “I think that inspired me initially, that two agencies were actually sitting down together to collaborate. It happens very rarely. Just the fact that she [Linda] and Marty were putting themselves out there to do something together was inspiring.”¹¹

For Linda Gibbs, Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services, collaboration between the two agencies was a natural outgrowth of the vision of governance articulated by Mayor Bloomberg when he came into office. “[The Mayor] really encouraged progressiveness in terms of what we think about agencies,” she explains. “And then he also said that when you go about doing your job, you don’t step on other people’s toes. So making your outcomes better is not good enough if it makes somebody else’s outcomes worse. So [we had to] think beyond our four

⁹ Author interview with JoAnne Page, Director, The Fortune Society, March 21, 2007.

¹⁰ Author interview with Debbie Pantin, Palladia Incorporated, March 13, 2007.

¹¹ Mindy Tarlow interview.

walls. For both Marty and I...that was music to our ears."¹² In effect, the Mayor's mandate created the right kind of political environment, one in which the Commissioners could set their own agenda and visions for cooperation. And, as Correction now falls under the purview of Health and Human Services, Gibbs is in an unprecedented position to nurture the collaboration's growth and synthetic thinking.

Indeed, members of the collaboration, from both the public and private sectors, are unanimous in the belief that a vision from the top was exceedingly important. "I can't think of a strong enough word," Deputy Commissioner Coughlin says of this top-down vision of collaboration. "None of this would have happened without it."¹³ In fact, many attributed Martin Horn's dedication and effort as the single most important factor in the creation and duration of the collaborative. Echoing those sentiments, Robert Hess, Commissioner Horn's counterpart in the Department of Homeless Services, remarked, "Marty has a passion for this that causes him to carve the time to keep this a priority. And I think that's probably the single biggest reason it's moved along as far and as fast as it has."¹⁴ Interestingly, when asked what he thought made the collaboration successful, Commissioner Horn answered without hesitation: "There's no doubt that it's the dedication of the collaboration members and all the work they put into it."¹⁵

As for what nonprofits had to do to show they were serious, Joel Copperman, CEO of the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES), puts it succinctly: "We have to show that we are there to do the work."¹⁶ That includes not just attendance

at workgroup meetings and retreats, but volunteering to chair workgroups, providing inputs—including assistance with writing concept papers, analyzing data, sharing contacts, and even, in a gesture of solidarity, offering to stand at the conference room board and take notes—no small thing when one considers that the note-taker is often the Executive Director of a large nonprofit, sometimes with 20 years of experience under their belt. And yet they do it. In their meetings and retreats, collaboration members, both government and private, show a genuine willingness to take turns standing at the board.

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As part of their leadership and vision, Horn and Gibbs made a decision at the outset that has since become central to the collaboration's success: they laid down two explicit rules. Indeed, these rules help constitute the group's sense of identity, as evidenced by the fact that they are constantly repeated by collaboration members, both in recounting the history of their involvement, and when dealing with members who have recently joined. The first of the commissioners' explicit rules: in order to participate, each member had to contribute something concrete. The second: everybody who participates is there to work together on achievable goals, not to point fingers or to complain.

But even trust requires that a common goal bind the various players involved, ensuring that they subsume their particular motivations for the purposes of achieving a social good. Without that, the strategic value of partnering would be lost. Nearly everyone who joined the collaboration from the private side had this social goal in view: they had worked on behalf of prisoners and the homeless for years. They knew the challenges. They had the dedication and the experience. What was new, for many, was to

¹² Author interview with Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services Linda Gibbs, April 27, 2007, City Hall.

¹³ Kathy Coughlin interview.

¹⁴ Author interview with Commissioner Robert V. Hess, New York City Department of Homeless Services, March 29, 2007.

¹⁵ Author interview with Commissioner Martin Horn, New York City Department of Correction & Probation, March 26, 2007.

¹⁶ Author interview with Joel Copperman, Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services, April 19, 2007.

hear the Commissioner of Correction articulate that he had a goal in common: to ensure that inmates leaving the city's jails were given the tools to ensure that they did not come back. For many, it was the first indication that a new day had dawned. Georgia Lerner's organization, the Women's Prison Association, had worked for years on Rikers Island. She recounts what made Horn's orientation to their work so different. "When Marty came in, and I remember the first meeting we had...he sat down with the discharge planning providers and started out by saying, 'Two-thirds of the people who are here come back within a year and this a waste of our resources. Let's stop the revolving door.'"¹⁷ Nick Freudenberg, a professor of urban health at Hunter College agrees, commenting that Horn and Gibbs's presence opened a floodgate of interest in the issue: "There were a lot of people who had been

the benefits to be gained by working apart from each other. The trust they had was, in part, borne of necessity. Once a common goal was publicly articulated, concerns were outweighed by the opportunity to conjoin the strengths of the two sectors. "The short-term reward that you might get from a blurb in the paper, isn't worth the risk," Alison O. Jordan explains. "That's why I think it's about mutual goals and it takes a while for both parties to understand that this trust is really based on the mutual objective...Everybody who is there isn't in it for self-aggrandizement, they're in it because they want to help solve this problem."¹⁹ Nick Freudenberg agrees: "I think there's a belief that the people in the room, whatever their limitation, there's some common ground of wanting things to be better, and that is the bond holding us together."²⁰

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working on these issues for 5, 10, 15 years, and to have a city official with some authority say, 'I want to work on these issues too and I want to listen to you,' was just such a dramatic change from anything that had happened before."¹⁸

That it is a new day is an oft-repeated phrase within the collaboration. It is said at meetings, when providers and city employees reminisce about what Rikers used to be like. It is mentioned in interviews and at retreats, when collaboration members look around the room and see the variety of partners who have come together to collectively address this problem. It seems to serve as a reminder of the unique—and perhaps limited—window of opportunity they have all been given. Indeed, members of both sectors understand very well just how unique an opportunity this is, for it outweighed

As Debbie Pantin explains, this unique opportunity has ushered in a new way of doing business: "You would sit at an agency and say, how can I affect policy and it might mean going to ten million meetings and waiting for 20 years down the road...The collaboration to me does the same thing, because you are affecting policy, but it takes a lot more work in a shorter time period...So I do feel that it's a new way of doing business from a CBO's perspective."²¹ This kind of rational calculation, implicit as it may be, shapes many providers' perspectives on the value of collaborating. They realize the demands that are placed on them, but it is worth it because of the unique chance to effect change for their clients and gain more direct access to government, in the form of information and assistance.

A recent meeting of the Benefits Continuity workgroup illustrates this point. Marshall Green of Legal Aid, a newcomer to the collaboration, happened to mention during a workgroup meeting an issue that had arisen among his clients: some were entitled to child support

¹⁷ Author interview with Georgia Lerner, Women's Prison Association, March 28, 2007.

¹⁸ Author interview with Nicholas Freudenberg, Hunter College, March 19, 2007.

¹⁹ Alison O. Jordan interview.

²⁰ Nicholas Freudenberg interview.

²¹ Debbie Pantin interview.

money and would be able to access it upon leaving jail, if there was a review process in place by the courts. Sarah Gallagher shot up, explaining to Green that his timing was perfect. The DOC was about to have a discussion with the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) and a review process was precisely the kind of issue that could be jointly addressed: it was a procedural matter with potential impact for re-entry. “Could you email that example and I can send it so that it’s part of the discussion with Child Services?” Within a minute, several members at the meeting began directing Green to the right personnel within city agencies to talk to about these clients. (“Don’t go to that person, he’s way over here, you need to go to someone else,” someone offered. “I have her number, Marshall, I can give it to you, she’s the person you want to contact,” said another.)²²

If it’s a special opportunity for non-profits, so too is it an opportunity for city employees to work across agency lines, something which many of those interviewed considered a refreshing and surprising change of pace. Thus, Ed Dejowski, Director of Policy Research for the HRA’s Office of Policy and Program Development: “It’s very rare anywhere to have this happen and to have it happen as a collaboration between social services and the corrections department is really quite a feat. It’s just a very cooperative group of people who are willing to get the job done.”²³

Reflecting on the collaboration, Commissioner Horn cites the complementarity of the two sectors, each of whose particular strengths and experiences informs the other: “Non-profit providers act to inspire the government with their dedication and passion. On the other hand, it can be very sobering for them to see how difficult it is to achieve things on the government’s side.”²⁴ It is this duality, a subtle interplay of administrative sobriety and inspiration, which seems to generate the group’s unique momentum. In a sense, government provides the armature for that passion and energy, not unlike nerves conducting an impulse for the achievement of a particular action. Joel Copperman agrees, adding that the

framework provided by the collaboration helps nonprofits to do their jobs better: “We are the people who deliver services and [they] pay us to deliver services that [they] are responsible for delivering...More importantly we need this kind of vehicle, this framework to deliver those services.”²⁵

Copperman should know: like several of the not-for-profit providers, the collaboration has enhanced the work his organization was already doing, leading to the creation of an important pilot program. It is just one of many examples of synergy the group strives for. In Copperman’s case, synergy came in the form of a unique alternative to incarceration (ATI) known as The Day Custody Program. The program was conceived in 2004, when Copperman’s organization was looking to start a new pilot. Around that same time the Collaboration’s Diversion Workgroup, of which Copperman is a member, was looking to implement a pilot to begin diverting inmates from short stays on Rikers. Without the vehicle of the workgroup, Copperman concedes, it would have been much more difficult to get anything off the ground. In consultation with workgroup members, who included both DOC employees, and the Criminal Justice Coordinator’s office, a target population was chosen and resources and leadership provided by both the Coordinator’s Office and the DOC. The program began operation in September of 2005 at the Manhattan Criminal Court, and has enrolled around 500 clients, all of whom had at least 3 prior short stays. As part of the program, clients perform community service for 8 hours a day for three days, in lieu of an additional non-productive stay on Rikers. They also receive a needs assessment, treatment readiness counseling, and referrals to community-based providers.

It is one thing to recognize an opportunity, overcome risk and begin developing trust. It is, of course, another thing entirely to lay the foundations for a lasting partnership. One of the most important developments in the process of memorializing its shared commitment occurred for the group on October 6, 2006. On that

²² New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration, Benefits Continuity Workgroup meeting, April 17, 2007, 60 Hudson Street.

²³ Author interview with Edmund Dejowski, New York City Human Resources Administration, March 21, 2007.

²⁴ Commissioner Martin Horn interview.

²⁵ Joel Copperman interview.

day, at a retreat held in the Picnic House in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, collaboration members signed off on a vision statement. It reads:

"We envision a City in which every person who is incarcerated or in shelter leaves better prepared to become a law-abiding, productive and healthy member of society. We envision a city that uses jails and shelters as a last resort and offers a wide range of other interventions. We seek a coordinated and comprehensive public-private partnership which offers people leaving jail and shelter viable pathways to housing and employment as well as services including, drug treatment and education."

Not only did the group collectively sign off, they actually wrote and edited the document together at the retreat, a process that took several hours and revisions. This did not pass without some disagreement, as collaboration members attempted to articulate a shared understanding of the adverse consequences of incarceration and homelessness. In the end, the discussion led them to agree that while the consequences were real, they were the result of uncoordinated policies and procedures, rather than the neglect of any one agency. JoAnne Page of the Fortune Society led the effort, in both morning and afternoon sessions. To the group she posed a fundamental consideration: the question of their range or visionary reach. "That's what we want to do here. We want you to think big enough that we're talking systems, big enough that you're talking about bringing small interventions to scale, big enough that you are responding to the question, 'Have we made any real difference to the majority of people coming through either of these systems?' I want us to focus on the middle, on how things could be, on how things should be."²⁶

In particular, through Page's discussion of the scale of action to be undertaken, they have signed on to a concrete strategy, a middle way of policy change. They have also fashioned a means of charting their progress as they guide themselves through their new "business." It remains to be seen how much they can translate that vision into action and where within the entire

system of policies, procedures and institutions they can do it. In the sections that follow, we will begin to see the deep and lasting transformations that have already taken place, starting with perhaps the most significant place of all: from within the Department of Correction itself.

Lessons Learned:

- 1. Each sector—governmental and nonprofit—faces unique risks in collaborating that have to be borne in mind. Articulating these risks and limits—to authority, funding, and information—can be a useful exercise in jointly exploring barriers that face the common goal of the project or initiative.**
- 2. A vision from the top is essential to signal the importance of the initiative and sets an example that a transformation in one's own role—to include discharge planning—is possible.**
- 3. For those agencies that take the lead, consistently showing up to meetings with a coordinated agenda is crucial and signals respect and dedication, helping to build trust.**
- 4. All sectors need each other—and making that explicit can open a floodgate of interest. Within a collaborative network, nonprofits can benefit from the administrative support provided by government agencies, not to mention contact with other nonprofits, research institutions and, advocacy organizations. Government agencies can improve efficiency by contracting out to nonprofits. The point is to create an armature that mobilizes the strengths of all partners.**
- 5. Information-sharing is crucial and helps build the kind of trust that can compel collaboration members to forgo short-term individual objectives in the service of longer-term collective goals.**

²⁶ New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration Retreat, October 6, 2006, Prospect Park Picnic House.

“The Culture at the Gate”: Transformation at Rikers Island

As one approaches Rikers Island from the long causeway that connects the facility to the borough of Queens, one is struck by a set of letters large enough to be visible from the crest of the bridge. The letters are painted in white onto the side of a squat and otherwise ordinary building. They spell out the word R-I-D-E. From that distance, it is the first indication of just how much Rikers Island, and the Eric M. Taylor Center (EMTC) in particular, has changed since Martin Horn took up the helm as Commissioner of Correction.

“Security and programs actually work together, because if people are working on things, if they’re in programs and they’re more occupied, then they’re less likely to be violent.”

[Sarah Gallagher, Executive Director of Discharge Planning]

Entering the facility, just inside the sally port, a sign on the outside wall directs released inmates to call 311, the city’s information hotline, where they can access discharge planning services simply by dialing. The hotline service is one of the seemingly simple, yet effective changes that have emerged from the collaboration’s work.

Once inside the intake area of the EMTC, the eyes and mind are reminded again and again to begin thinking about the day of release—in the form of fliers for RIDE and the Center for Employment Opportunities. These compete with a huge sign that asks of inmates a basic, and preparatory question. “What Are You Doing When You Get Out?” it reads.

Moving on, one enters the facility’s gymnasium, which serves as the programs orientation area for inmates. Here they first learn of the work opportunities and other programs offered at the facility. Here they are encouraged, upon entry, to begin thinking and planning for their life after jail. All around the walls, bright banners alert inmates to the various collaboration providers who are there to assist: the Osborne Association, Samaritan Village, and The Fortune Society. Huge letters on the wall read “The 3 Corner Stones to Success: Sobriety—Employment—Housing.” Sarah Gallagher, Executive Director of Discharge Planning for the Department of Correction, explains that the idea was to create an environment where “you can’t go anywhere without seeing a sign or a program.”

Indeed, signs can be found all along the walls of the EMTC: “PLAN YOUR RELEASE NOW,” they read; “PLAN TODAY FOR TOMORROW”, “LET THE RE-ENTRY PROCESS BEGIN.” They seem to grow in size and urgency as one approaches what could be considered the very heart of the transformation at Rikers: the Support Center. Dedicated to one of the collaboration’s most steadfast members, Paul N. Dynia, the support center officially opened on September 15, 2006, with Paul’s wife and son in attendance. Together with the women’s support center opened in February of 2007, the Support Center has changed the way discharge planning is done for Rikers’s sentenced population. Yet, like so many things in the collaboration’s history, the idea began as a barrier.

Within what used to be known as the Interagency Committee, now called the Benefits Continuity workgroup, the suggestion was made to provide inmates with assistance in signing up for Medicaid, which, in turn, could assist clients in accessing drug treatment services aimed at breaking the cycle of addiction and arrest. It was to be, the group thought, simple enough. Through a data match provided by the Human Resources Administration, the workgroup first identified the population to be served: the 30% of inmates that lost their Medicaid benefits upon entry to Rikers. Enrollment could then begin under the auspices of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s Transitional Health Services. The first snag: as employees of the Human Resources Administration reluctantly pointed out, once a Medicaid applicant admitted to a drug or alcohol problem, Medicaid eligibility requirements mandated that they have a CASAC assessment. The problem with this, the group soon learned: such assessments had to be done by qualified personnel at an office in Manhattan. “Of the 200 applications that we filled out,” Debbie Pantin explains, “80% were dead in the water, because they had to go to 16th street.”²⁷ The workgroup went back to the drawing board and requested

that committee members from HRA ascertain whether the assessment could be done on the island. After nine months of work, HRA came back with a reply: it could be done. All that was needed was a space in which to do it. Could the Department of Correction provide such a space on the island? They could, Commissioner Horn gave word. At the time, an unused inmate housing area was available but the site would require a good deal of work to become functional. The second snag: the total amount to renovate the center was estimated at some two million dollars, a prohibitive cost.

Not so, volunteered Chief Frank Squillante, then warden of the EMTC. “Basically I told the Commissioner, ‘Look, we don’t need a whole lot of funding, I just need a couple of people to work overtime twice a week and I need some supplies and I’ll take care of it.’”²⁸ And so he did. Built in three months, using available labor and materials, the Support Center today serves as an integrated service site, complete with a large conference room where black and white photos by the DOC’s Freddie Wallace-Rakis line the walls, the neat black frames fashioned by Rikers maintenance staff. Separate offices have been constructed for The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Facilitated Medicaid Enrollment, The Robinhood Foundation’s Single Stop, HRA/NADAP, Transitional Health Services, and the Veterans Administration. A video conferencing booth allows inmates to conference with probation officers and community-based

“I think the biggest thing is that we changed. I changed. And unless you get the uniformed people involved, it will just be numbers.”
[Frank Squillante, Assistant Chief, Special Operations]

providers. By clustering functions under one roof, says Carleen Scheel, Project Director of the Rikers Island Single Stop²⁹, the center acts as “a single point of access identifying all housing and mental health issues.” Moreover,

²⁷ Debbie Pantin interview.

²⁸ Author interview with Chief Frank Squillante, April 25, 2007, New York City Department of Correction.

²⁹ Administered by the Center for Urban Community Services.

Squillante explains, having a physical location means that inmates have more routine and more facilitated access to providers. And that access and face time are an important component of making sure that inmates continue with services once they leave, Gallagher says: "If people have actually met someone here, they have a face they can come back to and are more likely to continue with that service provider once they leave." Looking back over the process of getting the center built, Squillante, a 23-year veteran of the Department, says: "It took a little creativity

The idea [for the murals and signs] was to create an environment where "you can't go anywhere without seeing a sign or a program."

[Sarah Gallagher, Executive Director of Discharge Planning]

and a decision from the commissioner to say, do it. That's all we needed."³⁰ Such creativity is essential: Rikers is an aging facility, with limited space and, in some cases, deteriorated infrastructure that can frustrate the best efforts at discharge planning.

And of course, actually operating the center requires integration with security procedures, and that can be challenging, says Merle Lefkowitz, who oversees the RIDE programs and discharge planning for both the Eric M. Taylor and Rose M. Singer facilities. As she explains, the greatest obstacle is time: because of daily inmate counts, mandated services, work schedules, etc., discharge planners at Rikers Island have a very small window of opportunity throughout the day to work with clients, usually around an hour and a half in the morning, and at most three hours in the afternoon. When asked what it takes to get clients to come to the support center and to sign up for services, she responds with a smile, her eyes beaming: "You talk your little heart out. Yesterday I went into one of the housing areas where Samaritan Village has their guys and I was trying to do

some recruitment for Medicaid. Once you start, you can't stop and there are so many people who want to talk to you...You just have to be willing to be there. If you have the right people that believe in the program, and that believe people can change, that's how you work at getting to them."³¹

For Sarah Gallagher, Executive Director of Discharge Planning for the DOC, the key to navigating security procedures is to have uniform staff and civilian staff working together, and for that to happen, the value of programs

has to be tied to security:

"Security and programs actually work together, because if people are working on things, if they're in programs and they're more occupied, then they're less likely to be violent. People

are starting to see the value of the two working together."³² A recent mural in the EMTC bears this message out: it reads "Good Programs Equal Good Security."

Chief Squillante points out that the requirement for uniform and civilian staff to work together began the very first time that Commissioner Horn met with the staff at Rikers. "We were all sitting in the GMDC," he says, recalling that day, "all the uniform staff on one side, sitting in rank order in our uniforms, and all the civilian staff on the other side, in their suits. The first thing Commissioner Horn said was, 'I want everybody to get up, and mix. I want Chiefs sitting next to RIDE providers, and RIDE providers sitting next to wardens...We need to realize that we are all part of the same team, and we all have the same goal.'"³³

As Sarah and Merle recognize, providing programs in a setting like Rikers takes a good deal of patience and ingenuity. Speaking about the reality of service provision, Sarah stops to applaud the providers and discharge planners for the hard work they put in every

³⁰ Chief Squillante interview.

³¹ Author interview with Merle Lefkowitz, June 7, 2007, New York City Department of Correction.

³² Author interview with Sarah Gallagher, May 31, 2007, New York City Department of Correction.

³³ Author interview with Chief Squillante, June 7, 2007, New York City Department of Correction.

day. As the liaison between the collaboration workgroups and the staff at Rikers, she perhaps knows better than anyone the challenges of translating collaboration ideas into functioning programs. “Every movement that we take for granted in a community-based program,” Sarah explains “is just watched and tracked and there are twelve more logistical steps.”³⁴ Just dealing with the logistics of programming can be challenging enough; for that reason, she is there to serve as a reminder of the larger goal that the collaboration is trying to achieve and to make sure that communication exists between the theoretical and practical, or policy and programmatic, sides of the collaboration. The greatest challenge in that, she says, is “looping back” new programs and initiatives to ensure they are coordinated and seamless, especially since the success of the collaboration has meant a growth in the number of programs. Clearly it is working: in the last fiscal year, nearly 20% of eligible inmates received discharge plans, some 5,400 clients were served by RIDE and more than 500 clients have either been newly enrolled in Medicaid or have been informed that they already have active Medicaid through the Facilitated Enrollment program. And with the recently-opened Single Stops, funded by the Robin Hood Foundation, even more clients will be able to obtain support services, such as benefits counseling, rap sheet clean-up, civil legal advice, and credit counseling.

The changes on Rikers have not gone unnoticed by the providers who have worked there for years. “Rikers is a lot different,” Debbie Pantin says of the island. “Rikers almost feels like a community-based provider for us, which was not the feeling before.”³⁵ Georgia Lerner concurs, adding that in many cases, there were simple steps that the Department of Correction was now willing to take under Horn’s leadership, in order to provide “thoughtful” solutions to barriers. She illustrates with an example. “People used to be released from jail on Friday afternoon and these were people who were supposed to be connecting to a drug treatment program.

And a lot of drug treatment programs are kind of rigid, they don’t really take admissions on a Saturday or after 8 o’clock on a Friday. If anybody has rules they are going to stick with, it’s a going to be a drug treatment program... We always wanted to drive women off of the island and were never allowed.”³⁶ Instead, released inmates would have to wait to be admitted until the following Monday, offsetting treatment during a critical moment of their transition back into society, thereby increasing the possibility of a relapse and recidivism.

As Lerner points out, with the collaboration in place, providers not only had better access to a new administration, they had DOC staff on their side willing to listen and to reason through procedures and practices on the island. Lerner explains by describing Deputy Commissioner Coughlin’s approach. “Kathy came in with a totally different attitude,” she says, “which was, ‘Okay, I hear you’re telling me that that’s the way it’s done, but you’re not telling me why we can’t try another way.’” And she really pushed people to try new things.”³⁷ Indeed, if one had to single out the collaboration’s third, albeit implicit, rule it would be: having done something a particular way in the past is not reason enough to continue doing it. As a result of this partnership, RIDE clients are now released in the morning to allow time to get to community programs, and provider vehicles take them to the after jail destination as agreed on in their discharge plan.

As Coughlin explains, in many instances, a change in atmosphere at the facility was made possible by adjusting one’s viewpoint and assuming a different perspective. By way of example, she explains how important it was to experience Rikers Island from the viewpoint of providers. “We had people under contract with us, and we couldn’t get them in and they were waiting hours and the culture at the gate was, these are civilians, it doesn’t matter when they get in... It was one of those things, where, I didn’t have a problem getting in, so I didn’t even think it was an issue... They’re not waiting anymore!”³⁸

³⁴ Sarah Gallagher interview.

³⁵ Debbie Pantin interview.

³⁶ Georgia Lerner interview.

³⁷ Georgia Lerner interview.

³⁸ Author interview with Deputy Commissioner Kathleen Coughlin, March 14, 2007, New York City Department of Correction.

In effect, the collaboration itself provides members with a new way of thinking, a collective mindset and vantage point borne of their unique interaction with one another. Sometimes it is as simple as being in the same room and alerting one another to these problems. Other times, the case is more complicated and involves a review of past assumptions. Given the extraordinary concern for security in a correctional facility, an aversion to change is prevalent, as Coughlin well understands. But as she explains with another example, examining assumptions can reap unforeseen rewards. In 2004, the collaboration implemented Form 983, used to collect discharge planning information from inmates upon intake. The form asks a battery of questions related to drug addiction, housing and mental health needs and employment history. As Coughlin explains,

As Coughlin explains, in many instances, a change in atmosphere at the facility was made possible by adjusting one's viewpoint and assuming a different perspective.

when the collaboration first approached the line staff about implementing the survey, there was hesitation. "When we talked to them about it," she says, "everybody in Correction said that's not possible. 'We have no time at the beginning of the process, we have a mandate to get people in a bed in 24 hours.' They thought it would not work."³⁹ Marta Nelson, a collaboration member from CEO, suggested that the group perform an audit to see how much time it would take to fill out the forms. The study, undertaken by the Vera Institute, found that it took only three minutes on average to complete a form with each inmate. "So then the question became, is three minutes going to change whether we can get somebody in a bed or not and the answer was no," Coughlin says. It was also assumed that inmates would refuse to answer such private questions. With a current completion

rate of around 95%, that assumption was also proven false. Form 983 now constitutes the centerpiece of the collaboration's efforts to create an interactive database to track recidivism rates and utilization of discharge planning services. For Coughlin and the collaboration, the larger lesson is that change was possible within the correctional facility without sacrificing security. That is, as Chief Squillante put it, if one is willing to be creative.

Describing the nature of that creativity, the former warden concedes that you have to find willing partners. Part of that is also cultivating change, making them realize that they can do more. "A lot of people didn't realize how they could help by doing little extra things. You know a couple just want to be a person who opens and shuts the door, maybe 2%. For the most part people want to help, they just don't know how or understand what they can do to help. And once they do, they enjoy their work."⁴⁰ Coughlin concurs. Speaking about her own interactions with line staff, she explains: "I try to give them a different perspective on their careers. I tell them, 'For twenty years you can open and shut gates or you can change peoples' lives.' You're going to be here anyway. Why not try to help somebody?"⁴¹

Because of this shift in thinking, city agency officials like Alison O. Jordan of the Department of Health are able to more effectively do their jobs: in her case, providing health services and awareness to some clients at Rikers. "I don't think transitional health would be what it is without the collaborative. I don't know how I would separate the two."⁴² As she points out, health awareness humanizes the interaction between correction officers and inmates. Through annual health fairs provided to staff, correction officers have the opportunity to better understand their own health needs. This in turn helps them understand and notice the health needs of inmates, which in turn reinforces the fact that they are not just inmates, but persons with health needs that matter. In addition, Alison points out, promoting health is an important component of

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Chief Frank Squillante interview, April 25, 2007.

⁴¹ Kathleen Coughlin interview.

⁴² Alison O. Jordan interview.

re-integrating clients with the community, since the care of one's health provides a sense of purpose and a link with the community in the form of a physician who cares. For this reason, the New York City Department of Health has made the provision of Medicaid-related health care for former inmates as part of its 2006 Take Care New York Plan.

Chief Squillante believes the collaboration has begun to change the way business is done at Rikers. There is still work to be done, he and others concede: civilian and uniform staff do not always see eye to eye, and conditions on the ground at Rikers can obstruct the larger goals of discharge planning. But Squillante believes the line staff have a different view of their jobs and their opportunities to lower recidivism. As part of his own effort to transform the EMTC, he instituted a number of changes when he was warden. He placed wagons with program information and brochures in areas where inmates congregated, to ensure maximum exposure. He also had providers come to the mess hall to introduce themselves and even had them prepare a short video presentation for new inmates. Squillante was recently promoted to the rank of Chief and will oversee security and special operations for the entire island. But he still intends to make discharge planning central to his work. In his new position he can increase the visibility of programs outside of the EMTC, such as he has done in the central visitors house. There, Squillante has placed synchronized videos throughout the waiting area to provide visitors with an orientation about programs at the facilities and an important reminder: "Don't Forget to Help Your Loved One Make a Plan." The point, he says, is to transform the visit house into an environment where families start thinking and talking to their loved ones about the value of programs and the assistance that is available when they get out. To that end, he has also placed throughout the facility Connections Booklets, a directory of discharge planning resources available to inmates both within the facility and in the community. In addition to the booklets, there are phones that connect inmates and visitor directly to the City's 311 information

line, and from there, to discharge planners such as Samaritan Village.

When reflecting on the transformation of Rikers, Squillante mentions the need to have goals filter down to those who operationalize them. "I think the biggest thing is that we changed. I changed. And unless you get the uniformed people involved, it will just be numbers. You can go out there and show a lot of numbers and show a lot of stuff, but until the uniformed people in the facility really understand and give it their all, using their innovativeness and their energies to support it, it will never be successful."⁴³

Lessons Learned:

- 1. The purpose of discharge planning, and the place it has in everyone's role, has to be explained to all involved, so that it can be meaningfully integrated into both civilian and uniform staff functions. This includes understanding the security situation from civilians' standpoint and creating a more accommodating environment in which to undertake discharge planning.**
- 2. To that end, transforming the physical jail environment can be a powerful signal—to clients, staff, and others—that discharge planning is important and can affect positive results.**
- 3. Programs and discharge planning serve the cause of security.**
- 4. Part of understanding how discharge planning is possible within everyone's role involves thinking creatively about that role, and staff can be creative about integrating discharge planning within existing procedures, using existing resources without sacrificing security.**

⁴³ Chief Frank Squillante interview, April 25, 2007.

“The Double Helix of Discharge Planning”: Evolution of the Collaborative

Before its current configuration of seven workgroups, the Collaboration was comprised of three committees: the Discharge Planning Committee, The Interagency Committee and the Big Picture group. Each was tasked with an exploratory mission: to figure out how to actually do the work of discharge planning. So too there was the question of “Where?” That is, “Where within the entire institutional framework of jail and shelter interventions could services be placed?” While the Planning Committee started off by examining three basic models of discharge planning, the Interagency Committee focused on ways to identify and bridge the gaps between agencies in order to reduce barriers to re-entry. True to its name, the Big Picture group turned to problems of evaluation, the definition of overall goals and the strategic use of data sources. These were large themes—but as committee members will tell you, co-chairs pushed to have groups carve from this large mass of considerations particular—and manageable—tasks.

The growth of the groups allowed the collaboration to institute pilot programs. Indeed, one can track the collaboration’s progress by the way it has both branched out and descended to earth, as it were, finally touching the ground with implemented programs.

In the end, this was accomplished by focusing on a discrete problem and by identifying the populations most readily affected. In the case of the Interagency Committee, for example, a potential issue to work on was the class of public benefits that are terminated upon incarceration. For the Discharge Planning Committee, housing and employment were identified early on. In many cases, problems like these were identified simply because committee members had worked on them within their own organizations and used meetings as an opportunity to tackle old puzzles with new perspectives. In other instances, ideas emerged because partners from various sectors were in the same room talking.

As problems and populations are identified, the collaboration has done something extremely important: they have broken into focused workgroups to address these issues. This

has been an organic process, resulting from members' interactions within the collaboration, rather than from top-down mandates. And so, while ground rules and a vision from the top provide a stable structure, the group's actual evolution has been somewhat free-flowing and emergent. As Mindy Tarlow explains, collaboration members have to ensure that the groups that do emerge reflect issues that are important to them. "What you do in the group is really important for establishing a dynamic," she says, mentioning the need for members to speak up if they feel that workgroups too heavily focus on criminal justice rather than homelessness. "The workgroups themselves created the several issues that the whole group is going to work on and the distribution of issues is pretty even in terms of self-interest and expertise."⁴⁴

For example, the Interagency Committee devolved into the benefits continuity workgroup and the short-stayers group; the discharge planning committee split off into the employment and housing workgroups. Each could then deal with a more discrete task. Benefits continuity began looking at inmate benefits that were terminated upon incarceration, such as Medicaid, public assistance and food stamps. The short-stayer group began working on the formidable challenge of planning for the 26% of the Rikers population who serve three days or less—hence the workgroup's name.

More importantly, the growth of the groups allowed the collaboration to institute pilot programs. Indeed, one can track the collaboration's progress by the way it has both branched out and descended to earth, as it were, finally touching the ground with implemented programs. In effect, as issues have been identified, they have become opportunities to put in practice the initiatives that will allow the group to build a body of evidence. For example, the Day Custody and Facilitated Medicaid Enrollment Programs were the products of the short-stayer and benefits continuity groups, respectively. Combined, these programs have served over 1,000 inmates.

In the case of housing, the workgroup is about to obtain housing units from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). In conjunction with Women's Prison Association, one of these sites will hopefully serve as a model dwelling for formerly incarcerated women. It is, admittedly, a small program but one that has taught the group important lessons while providing the beginnings of a track record. More importantly it has solidified the workgroup's identity and established important contacts within HPD. It is, in effect, the first wave of outcomes for this particular workgroup.

One of the more important things the collaboration has done in its "descent" towards concrete action has been to dismantle those groups whose purpose has been served, while keeping the originals who still matter. For example, now that Collaboration members have an idea of how to do discharge planning, the Discharge Planning Committee has ended, in order to shift personnel and resources over to the actual problem areas where such planning is required, such as housing and employment. The Big Picture group, by contrast, has reemerged after a hiatus and is now a vital committee of the collaboration, providing a forum for looking down the road with a large perspective. More importantly, the Collaborative as a whole has stuck to the second rule throughout its evolution: themes and thinking have to be broken into actionable and manageable parts. This has been done by re-allocating members in a flexible and organic manner.

As collaboration members see it, these early wins—Facilitated Medicaid enrollment, Day Custody, Form 983, RIDE, the 311 hotline—were a necessary phase in the development of their common trust and practical expertise, a kind of rite of passage to bolster confidence. Despite all the work that went into each initiative, they are still considered low-hanging fruit.

Now that they have built this foundation, workgroups are looking to "go broad" again, ready to expand after the process of contraction that led to particular pilot

⁴⁴ Mindy Tarlow interview.

programs. And they are doing so with more confidence and a feeling of maturity, a “more seasoned and reasoned approach.” Florence Hutner, General Counsel for the Department of Correction and co-chair of the Diversion Workgroup, comments on this trajectory: “The short-stayer to diversion leap is sort of a symptom of that. Okay we’re looking at a clear sub-group of the population and now we’re broadening to look bigger and we’re deliberately focusing harder on homelessness and jail.”⁴⁵ The Diversion workgroup also illustrates the collaboration’s dynamic, flexible structure. With the Day Custody program in place, the Short-Stayer workgroup was free to reconfigure itself, this time as the Diversion workgroup, signaling that it is ready to think big again. This does not imply a regression back to low-hanging fruit or to the theorizing that marked their initial efforts. In fact, the diversion workgroup recently met to discuss what a new pilot might look like. Throughout the discussion, the focus was to choose a population where a greater potential impact could be felt. As Ari Wax of the Department of Correction expressed it: “We don’t want to just do community service. It’s been done. This shouldn’t just be community service as punishment, but something that will prevent future activity.”⁴⁶ In this way, workgroups are hoping to use what they have learned to tackle bigger, practical problems and to implement larger pilots. Going broad here means going to scale.

Some groups, such as the Benefits Continuity workgroup, even considered re-writing their mission and perhaps returning to their original configuration as the Inter-Agency committee. In a recent meeting of the group, committee members went through the valuable exercise of hammering out their identity. During the meeting, Anita Marton of the Legal Action Center reflected on the historical development of the workgroup, in words that echo Hutner’s. “I think our mission changed,” she says, looking around the room. “It got narrower, then it got broader. It was to look at barriers, city barriers,

inter-agency barriers and how to eliminate them...I would like to go back to that broader mission. I think we have by natural process gone broader.” In light of her comments, the group then began to re-work its mission statement. “Identifying interagency policy as barriers to re-entry?” someone tries out. Others make suggestions that seem almost too broad, and the discussion is tempered by a comment from Sarah Gallagher: “How do we limit our scope?” she asks. “Every group is doing inter-agency work,” particularly the Big Picture Group.⁴⁷ A moment of collective soul-searching ensues. After puzzling aloud over their mission statement, and reviewing the history of the problems they’ve considered, the group decides that what makes them unique is their goal to deal with public services jeopardized by incarceration. What is interesting is their awareness of the unique historic moment they occupy: they cannot go back to the days of broad thinking, when their workgroup was free to think about interagency collaboration more abstractly. And yet they can’t just pick another small pilot; they have to build off the momentum they’ve acquired through their work on Medicaid.⁴⁸ By the time the meeting ends, committee members are mentioning the thorny issue of providing released inmates with identification that can be used for employment. They are also talking about working on issues related to child support. Both of these issues, the group believes, are big enough to justify an entire workgroup and complex enough to feel there is advancement. In part they are big enough because of the potential populations to be served, and in part because they involve a broader swathe of interlocking policies and procedures that will need to be modified. For example, birth certificates are essential for clients to begin the re-entry process. The DOHMH issues certificates for a \$15 fee, an important source of revenue for the department. However, many clients cannot afford the fee and the only alternative is a free certificate, but one that is not honored at the Department of Motor Vehicles. The DOC

⁴⁵ Author interview with Florence Hutner, General Counsel, New York City Department of Correction, March 9, 2007.

⁴⁶ New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration, Diversion Workgroup Meeting, March 26, 2007.

⁴⁷ New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration, Benefits Continuity Workgroup Meeting, April 17, 2007.

⁴⁸ In July of 2007, the Medicaid Suspension Bill (Bill Number: A8356/S.5875) was signed into law. This law provides for the “suspension” of Medicaid benefits for individuals incarcerated in local and state correctional facilities and the immediate reinstatement of those benefits upon release. Implementation of the law is scheduled to be completed by April 2008.

has therefore decided to use its own funding to purchase the certificates from the DOHMH and, at the time of this writing, has provided nearly 300 birth certificates to clients. This is a temporary solution. The eventual goal for the workgroup is to identify a sustainable source of public funding that meets DOHMH's needs and ensures that clients get the certificates.

Interestingly, the workgroup itself has evolved into something of a unit of measure: that is, collaboration members seem to decide whether a problem is complex enough by figuring out whether it can sustain the interest of an entire group. Familiar now with the administrative costs of running the groups, they gauge a problem by determining whether it warrants that amount of work. The aim here is not unlike JoAnne Page's suggestion during

In effect, the group was about to map out their place within the known universe of re-entry, starting from what they knew best and radiating outward.

the creation of the vision statement: it's got to be an issue big enough to make a change, but manageable enough that they can see outcomes. The workgroup unit appears to fit that standard well.

In fact, now that they have given themselves the confidence to move forward, the collaboration has begun to wonder just how much of the jail and shelter population they do affect and can affect. It is an important moment of introspection for them. As Deputy Commissioner Coughlin recently asked, "How much of a difference are we making in the life of the average inmate?"⁴⁹ This consideration led to one of the most important developments in the collaboration's evolution, one that illustrates just how they have begun to contend with this concern.

At a recent guide team meeting, it was suggested by Richard Cho and others that the group engage in a "systems mapping" exercise. The point was to determine the breadth and depth of current and future discharge planning efforts. But to do this meant to address not only how many inmates and shelter residents they were affecting, but how that affected population was distributed along the spectrum of possible interventions. Were there particular densities and distributions along the spectrum, knots, as it were, or gaps where too few were being addressed? Naturally, that spectrum had to be illuminated as well, and thus emerged the second of their tasks: to map out, as thoroughly as possible, the processes through which individuals entered the jail or shelter system. In effect, the group was about to map out their place within the known universe of re-entry, starting from what they knew best and radiating outward.

On a Thursday afternoon in March of 2007, Collaboration volunteers assembled in the Department of Correction conference room. They comprised DOC and DHS employees, members of the Fortune Society, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the Center for Employment Opportunities, and the Bronx Defenders. For the next four hours they unfurled, literally and figuratively, the map of jail and shelter entry. As is common when collaboration members get together, there were a great many jokes made at the start and a general feeling of enthusiasm. There would have to be, to sustain them for four hours. Their first task was to divide into two groups: one that would deal with the question of the population being served; the other, to examine the spectrum of entry and thus the system of possible intervention points. It was decided that there should be equal representation by DOC and DHS in each group. Volunteers were chosen and the distribution happened to be even. Sides of the long conference table were chosen, groups gathered round, a time limit of one hour was announced, and the groups began filling large sheets of paper set up on

⁴⁹ New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration, Guide Team Meeting, April 5, 2007.

easels. On one end, Richard Cho volunteered to stand at the board; on the other, McGregor Smyth. Their respective groups began to talk and throw out ideas and the map of their particular universe gradually began to emerge. Perhaps no other image captures better where in its development the group has arrived. For that reason, it is the image with which this document began.

In the systems group, the entire process of incarceration, from arrest through arraignments to jail entry was eventually mapped on paper and placed on the wall. Possible interventions, or exit points, were included. In total, the map took up two full sheets. The group decided that to truly understand arrests, however, they had to pull back a step and examine the social conditions that lead to arrest, conditions such as at-risk neighborhoods. Interventions were possible at that level, they agreed. And so, above the incarceration map, Smyth placed another sheet and labeled it "Causes of Incarceration". He numbered it with a "1" and the arrest maps with a "2" and "3". With that in place, it was on to the possible points of neighborhood intervention: "Parks" someone shouted out. "Schools," came another suggestion and then another and another. Smyth struggled to keep up. A poignant question was then interjected: "Where does the map end?" someone asked.

Turning then to possible pathways to homelessness, the group faced another basic question. Is becoming homeless the analog to becoming incarcerated? What are the basic differences, not only with respect to triggering events, but to possible interventions? Different viewpoints were expressed. Carl Hoyt, formerly of the Department of Homeless Services, contended that the process of becoming homeless was not as formalized, since individuals can walk in off the street, due to eviction or domestic violence. For McGregor Smyth, eviction was a process, and one formalized enough to make intervention along the way possible. The discussion continued back and forth, examining just how formalized the

particular determinants of homelessness were: was the process of losing a job as rich in possible interventions as say, the path a runaway might take to find themselves at the door of a shelter? How could intervention be anticipated? Who could do it? Who was responsible for intervening? Again the map stretched farther back. Until Mindy Tarlow, the group's appointed leader, made a pragmatic decision: they didn't have to solve this debate then and there, the group just had to get as much on the map concerning homelessness as possible.

Although the group didn't get to it that day, whether or not the two paths are analogous might turn out to have important consequences, for this reason: if the pathway to incarceration, by its nature, is more formalized, it might mean that interventions are more readily available. If that is true, it could mean that possible partners to fold into the collaboration are also more readily visible. In the case of homelessness, however, if the path is not as clear, and the interventions not as crisply arrayed along it, then this makes the DHS structurally disadvantaged to get as much out of the collaboration as the DOC. This seems to be borne out by the fact that a diversion workgroup exists to look at alternatives to incarceration. No such group exists to examine alternatives to homelessness. Is such a workgroup necessary? Is such a workgroup possible, and capable of addressing the issue concretely, without falling prey to intractable questions about the general causes of poverty?

Nevertheless, in that four-hour meeting, the collaboration began the difficult process of mapping out just how the twin systems of jail and shelter, and the twin processes of becoming homeless and becoming incarcerated, intertwine. It was, someone in the group said in jest, not unlike the process of mapping out the twin strands of DNA, "the double helix of discharge planning." In so doing, the collaboration has come face to face with the thorny question: whose responsibility is it to make sure that jails and shelters are used only as a last resort? In a

sense, it is the same as asking where the map ends. For that reason, the map can be seen as one of possible responses and responsibilities.

More importantly, as the group moves away from the low-hanging fruit, they have decided that the correct way to proceed is to look systematically at what one might call the entire structure of interventions. This shows just how strategic their thinking has become: pilot programs will have to be examined and implemented in the context of this systemic thinking, to maximize impact.

They are not done yet. The map is still in its early stages. In particular, collaboration members have to begin looking more closely at how the two processes of incarceration and losing housing intersect. In effect, possible movements between the two systems have

“Really the point is to look at the fluidity here. [If] it’s a consumer-driven, client-driven system, where [clients] are physically at any given time doesn’t much matter.”

[Jody Rudin, Assistant Commissioner, Street Homeless Solutions, DHS]

to be anticipated, the lateral pathways and potential populations described. Doing so will provide for a more fluid, client-based system, as Jody Rudin of the DHS points out: “Really the point is to look at the fluidity here. [If] it’s a consumer-driven, client-driven system, where [clients] are physically at any given time doesn’t much matter. It’s about helping to find a good solution for them that’s going to get them connected to whatever housing and services they need so that they’re not homeless and so that their future incarcerations are potentially decreased.”⁵⁰ The data match already provides a good beginning, since the two agencies know the size and demographics of the population that tends to shuttle back and forth. And with a New York City law in

place mandating that such matches be done, there is some assurance that this investigation will continue.

But in attempting that work, collaboration members are beginning to understand how all of these pieces fit together and how responsibilities overlap. They will have to, if their goals are to be achieved. Responsibility is a looming issue, and goes back to the question of risks in collaborating. For the vision of jail and shelter as a last resort cannot happen without the involvement of certain agencies whose role is vital to shifting utilization away from the two institutions. As James Whelan of the Human Resources Administration explains, collaboration members, and everyone interested in discharge planning, have to articulate just what collaboration means.⁵¹ Consensus on this issue has already begun to emerge, as discussions with participants revealed. The answer: a holistic vision of how public entities fit together has to become central to their efforts, a vision that explains how shifts in mission or numbers for one agency translate into an overall win for the city. Why a particular agency is involved, and how it is contributing to the overall goal therefore has to be made clear to the public. In part, this is a question of finding where agency responsibilities overlap, and where missions can be harnessed towards the larger goal of ending reliance on jail and shelter and increasing public safety. But the collaboration will have to do the work of evaluating and demonstrating how an agency’s involvement has contributed. This serves as a powerful reminder of the responsibility to be borne for silo-busting: benefits have to be shared by all agencies

The answer: a holistic vision of how public entities fit together has to become central to their efforts, a vision that explains how shifts in mission or numbers for one agency translate into an overall win for the city.

⁵⁰ Author interview with Jody Rudin, New York City Department of Homeless Services, March 27, 2007.

⁵¹ Author interview with James Whelan, Human Resources Administration, April 3, 2007.

and the contributions of each tracked and made clear to the public. One suggestion that has made its way through the collaboration squares neatly with this concern: the inclusion in the Mayor's Management Report of overall discharge planning measures for the city, rather than by agency. Deputy Mayor Gibbs agrees that joint measures are important, but only if a holistic approach is taken, stressing that the collaboration's work needs to be seen as more than a crime reduction program. "The best outcome," she explains, "is that when that person leaves, you know that overall there's a reduction in the amount of homelessness, there's an increase in employment and that person is stably employed and economically independent and has a decent place to live and does not enter the criminal justice system."⁵² With joint measures to show how these various dimensions of re-integration are being addressed, collaboration agencies can all share the success.

Until that time, the group finds itself standing before the map of re-entry, ready to broaden their reach and affect change. How they do that, and based on what model becomes a logical next question. In the section that follows, we take up that very issue, of how the Collaboration intends to go to scale. We do so by examining what many believe to be their most successful pilot and their best chance for a model: the Frequent Users Service Enhancement or FUSE program.

Lessons Learned:

1. Rules and expectations for entry need to be explicit and set from the top, but growth—with respect to issues tackled, pilots attempted, etc—should be organic and determined through consensus.

2. In thinking through discharge planning, specific populations affected by specific policies and barriers have to be addressed.

3. Initiating small pilots at the outset—focused around particular, targeted problems or populations—can build a track record and confidence, and help solidify the group's cohesiveness.

4. The administrative costs associated with a workgroup are a good standard for judging whether an issue is worth taking on: the population or issue area to be addressed should be complex enough that it requires its own separate workgroup, but not so complex that it is being covered by other workgroups.

4. All agencies and organizations involved in the collaboration have to understand their role within the collective. A win for one has to mean a win for all—for that to be understood, an articulated vision—or map—of how they all fit together has to be made. That map should include where gaps exist and where other partners could be brought in.

⁵² Interview with Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs

“Looking at the Totality”: The FUSE Pilot

Woody St. Juste is worried that landlords won't be willing to take his clients. He has hit roadblocks in the past, he explains to a meeting of service providers, especially when he tells landlords that these clients are part of a pilot program. There is a concern that tenants won't pay rent on time or at all. Sitting across from him, Paul Gregory from Common Ground speaks up, trying to get Woody to look at the situation in a different way: since Woody's agency would be the master lease holder for the apartment his client is looking to occupy, why not ask the landlord to do a credit check on the agency rather than on the client.

“They've done it with us, and they've been happy,” Paul says. “Besides,” Paul continues, “with the FUSE program, the landlord is getting three years of rent guaranteed, and that's a lot better than a lot of them ever get.”⁵³

A wave of nods travels around the room and everyone agrees that three years is a boon for landlords and should be a selling point. Woody nods too and smiles, armed with a new strategy for assisting his clients, many of whom have spent years shuttling back and forth between New York City's jails and homeless shelters. These clients, “heavy users” of jail and shelter, form the core of FUSE, an innovative program that, in many ways, could be seen as the culmination of the Collaborative's systemic thinking and efforts at relationship-building.

In its current configuration, the Frequent Users Service Enhancement (FUSE) program utilizes both a unique housing model and a unique funding structure. Clients are housed either in congregate beds through Department of Health support or individually in scattered site apartments through the auspices of the Section 8 voucher program operated by the NYC Housing Authority. The JEHT foundation provides funding for the social services and case management needed to ensure that clients keep that housing and stay out of jail: up to \$6,500 per individual. Social service

As Commissioner Horn remarked, “this population represented a very rich opportunity to influence the statistics of the [overall] population and to save a lot of money.”

⁵³ FUSE Service Providers Meeting, March 27, 2007, New York City Department of Correction.

providers, in turn, act as master lease-holders for the apartments, ensuring that rent is paid to landlords on time. Under the terms of the pilot study, the 73 FUSE clients placed in housing as January 31, 2007 were also matched to a control population, according to age, gender, and jail and shelter entrances in the past five years. This comparison group will be used to evaluate the impact of the FUSE pilot.

The client population is also unique, and in many ways synonymous with the efforts of the Discharge Planning Collaboration. For it was the population targeted for FUSE that first attracted the attention of collaboration members when they began their data matches back in 2003. Known then as Heavy Users, this population of around 850 individuals could be seen shuttling back and forth between the jail and shelter systems, each having entered each system on more than four separate occasions over the course of five years, more than eight separate entries. It soon became clear that this was a population facing serious obstacles to re-entry and costing the city a significant amount of money. As Commissioner Horn remarked, “this population represented a very rich opportunity to influence the statistics of the [overall] population and to save a lot of money.”⁵⁴

In fact, identifying such a strategically significant population is what makes FUSE unique, collaboration members believe. According to Debbie Pantin, who oversees her agency’s FUSE program, FUSE represents an advance in the collaboration’s systemic thinking, precisely because it involves first selecting a population that has a high impact on both systems and then defining a set of intense, tailored interventions and case management to address that population. Moreover, it shows just how much the group is thinking collectively, and using the map of re-entry to guide them. For example, FUSE clients are not long-term users of either system,

staying an average of 120 days in shelter and 42 days in jail. This fact would normally present a unique challenge to agency initiative.

Jody Rudin from the DHS explains: “From our agency’s perspective there might be a...desire to target that more chronic group [who has been in shelter for 5 or 10 years].”⁵⁵ Yet, the clients’ cyclical re-entry to both jail and shelter meant that something was wrong, that clients were not being sufficiently addressed. They were not just going away, they were coming back to both systems with regularity. “In embracing FUSE,” Rudin continues, “it involves us in saying, wait a minute, looking at the larger picture beyond homeless services and looking at the other systems in the city that might be being used, yeah sure, 63 days they may be in shelter, but for the other 302 days they’re partly in jail and partly in this other system, and so

Richard Cho, the principal architect behind the FUSE concept, explains this concern in stark terms: “There’s something perverse about using these systems over and over again and not getting anywhere.”

it’s taking a step back from the specific use of one’s own system, and looking at the totality of it.”⁵⁶

Because this utilization pattern is persistent and cyclical, it raises and transforms the very question of responsibility: are clients coming to shelter because they were incarcerated and perhaps lost access to public housing, or are they jailed because they don’t have shelter and commit the kinds of quality of life crimes that often occur among the homeless, crimes such as turnstile jumping and public urination? More importantly, is either agency directly responsible for addressing the persistent drug addiction that fuels a large percentage of entries into either system?⁵⁷ Without a firm sense of where the cycle began, the question of responsibility became irrelevant. All that mattered was that clients and the city as a

⁵⁴ “Breaking the Cycle”, FUSE Breakfast Meeting, April 9, 2007, John Jay College.

⁵⁵ Jody Rudin interview.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ For example, around 80% of inmates at Rikers have some type of addiction history; 20% require detoxification upon admission.

whole were being let down, time and again. Richard Cho, the principal architect behind the FUSE concept, explains this concern in stark terms: “There’s something perverse about using these systems over and over again and not getting anywhere.” And, he points out, since this is a “city-wide problem,” not an “agency-level” problem, there was a need to think beyond agency responsibility.⁵⁸ Jody Rudin of the Department of Homeless Services agrees: “When you really start looking at this from a microscope and kind of unpacking the different populations...there’s no clear answer on who’s singularly responsible,” she says. For this reason, FUSE is an extraordinary opportunity to affect a population that neither agency is equipped to handle on its own, yet one that affects multiple systems. By pitching together and providing housing, drug treatment, and employment services, both agencies are working to break the cycle of re-entry that represents such a high cost for both.

For the JEHT foundation, this same strategic, systemic thinking was what made the pilot so appealing, even for a foundation that normally does not fund direct services. Peggy McGarry of the Foundation recently explained why her organization was compelled to offer funding for FUSE services: “I was so impressed with how smart it was, how it was data-based, matching the two groups, and in terms of the resources that providers had was just impressive and made a lot of sense.”⁵⁹ As she explains, however, her foundation wasn’t willing to commit to funds unless there was a guarantee of some kind the program would endure. Members of the collaboration, and Commissioner Horn in particular, therefore approached the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to secure future funds for the pilot, arguing that it encouraged inter-agency cooperation and sharing of resources, and would therefore be a proven cost-savings measure. Eventually, according to an arrangement that Horn called

one of the more extraordinary in government history, OMB agreed to continue funding for the pilot after its initial year if strict and commonly agreed upon benchmarks were met. “It was like a house of cards in a way,” Cho reflects, “Nobody would agree unless everybody did.”⁶⁰

While the program’s elegant design and clear strategy were important, it would not have been possible without a good deal of relationship-building and cultivation. Given the fact that FUSE relies on involvement from NYCHA, OMB, HRA, and the state Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services, with assistance from the DOHMH, this is hardly surprising. At the center, however, has been NYCHA’s increasing role in supplying much-needed Section 8 vouchers. As Cho points out, what attracted NYCHA’s willingness to participate and what has kept them there has

By pitching in together and providing housing, drug treatment, and employment services, both agencies [DOC and DHS] are working to break the cycle of re-entry that represents such a high cost for each of them.

evolved, as the Housing Agency’s own understanding of what it has to gain has evolved. “Getting NYCHA to the table was all about the relationships and Marty Horn’s and Linda Gibbs’s leadership,” Cho remarks, citing the commissioners’ “credibility and leadership and legitimacy.” “What’s going to keep [NYCHA] there,” he continues, “is showing them that by contributing they can have their own successes.” Indeed, as Doug Apple, General Manager of the New York City Housing Authority, recently stated, re-entry is an issue of growing importance across the country, and one that his agency needs to begin thinking through. He cited the FUSE initiative as an opportunity to examine how subsidized housing in the city can fit

into that larger picture. In addition, Apple was willing to work with the collaboration because he recognized it as a good opportunity to put into practice the Mayor’s wish to see agencies working together in “non-traditional ways.”⁶¹ As Cho is quick to add, the success of the program will eventually be something that NYCHA can

⁵⁸ Author Interview with Richard Cho, Associate Director, The Corporation for Supportive Housing, April 30, 2007.

⁵⁹ “Breaking the Cycle,” FUSE Breakfast meeting, April 9, 2007, John Jay College.

⁶⁰ Richard Cho interview.

⁶¹ “Breaking the Cycle” FUSE Breakfast, April 9, 2007, John Jay College.

cite as its own success, as proof of its efforts to contribute to public safety across the city.

And there is success to be celebrated. At a recent breakfast, entitled “Breaking the Cycle,” hosted by the evaluation team of John Jay College, preliminary results for the pilot were announced. They were nothing short of extraordinary. Of the 73 clients in the study, 92% had remained housed. Moreover, of the 36 clients who have been in the program for more than 180 days, 100% avoided shelter use while 89% avoided going back to jail.⁶² Researchers at John Jay expect to see an even greater divergence between the study and control groups as time goes on. The study has also shown that participation in the pilot has eroded clients’ tendency to shuttle back and forth between systems. Using as a measure the average length of time that a particular client spent outside of both systems, the program has shown that 93% of clients have now exceeded that time, decreasing their reliance on and cost to each system.

Of course, success would not be possible without the FUSE providers to perform in-reach at the city’s shelters and jails. At the John Jay breakfast meeting, providers from several nonprofit agencies spoke about the changes they have seen in the lives of their FUSE clients. “These are stories of chaotic childhoods and early involvement with the criminal justice system. These were people who were never able to take care of themselves before,” remarked one provider. “The outcomes are very clear,” he continued, “they are obtaining life skills, and looking forward to housing and obtaining employment.” All of the providers acknowledged the difficulties in initially engaging clients. “Many clients didn’t believe it when we told them about FUSE. Many of

them had been part of programs in the past that had failed,” Paul Gregory of Common Ground explained. “But, with word of mouth in the shelter, and clients talking about how it’s working, we now have clients calling us, saying they’d like to be part of the program.”⁶³ In many instances, it was providers’ refusal to give up after 10 or 12 attempts at engagement that won the day. Responding to a question about why clients might be so reluctant to join a program with such seemingly clear benefits, Coughlin reflected on the unique perspective that clients bring to such a drastic life change: “If you think that going to jail is scary, it’s not for people who go to jail all the time. What’s scary is for someone to live independently who never has before.”⁶⁴

What makes the program particularly successful, providers agreed, was the additional level of services that FUSE provides, services that can help clients navigate the complex set of problems that face them as they put their history of criminal involvement behind them and look forward to a new life. With the case management available through FUSE, clients are given the skills and support to order their lives, including showing up to drug treatment services, thereby avoiding relapse and possible recidivism. As one provider put it: “The bottom line is to have them not lose their housing.”

For collaboration members, the question that now remains is what lessons FUSE has provided to allow the group to take on the large-scale interventions it seems ready to initiate. There are differing views on how much the FUSE experience can be translated into future outcomes. Many collaboration members believe the pilot possesses a winning combination: buy-in and coordination from a wide swathe of agencies matched with the achievement of measurable and concrete goals. Certainly, this fits in well with the Collaboration’s own values

While the program’s elegant design and clear strategy were important, it would not have been possible without a good deal of relationship-building and cultivation.

⁶² This suggests positive initial outcomes when compared to the comparison group where 89% stayed out of shelter and 86.6% avoided jail.

⁶³ “Breaking the Cycle” FUSE Breakfast, April 9, 2007, John Jay College.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

and culture. As Cho points out, FUSE is also a complete intervention, in that it addresses drug addiction, housing and employment with intense case management. For this reason, he believes the group can harvest a number of lessons: “How to identify the population, how to process data we know how to do like never before. We also know how to bring foundations to the table with this issue too. And we know how to get providers to the table to look at these issues. So I think we can replicate these processes. But,” he pauses, “I also worry how much other populations are different. So I don’t want to fall into the trap of thinking it’s a cookie cutter approach.”⁶⁵ Indeed, given the intensity of services offered by FUSE, it is not appropriate for all populations. In addition, given the nature of the population it is serving, coupled with the scarcity of public housing, it is a politically sensitive program, and one that will require more evidence before NYCHA is willing to publicize its involvement. To that end, it serves as yet another reminder of the need to articulate a holistic vision of the city’s responsibility in re-integrating individuals whose social connections have been affected by incarceration or homelessness.

As it takes the lessons it has learned about strategic thinking and relationship-building from FUSE, the group will have to decide what to do next. As we are about to see, the contours of that decision-making process are already being shaped by the fact that the current administration, facing term limitations, has just under 1,000 days left.

Lessons Learned:

1. The ultimate goal of discharge planning is to be able to intervene along any part of the entry or re-entry spectrum, without regard to particular institutional boundaries.

2. Collaborative discharge planning works best by targeting a strategically-selected and specific population—one that affects several agencies—with a complete package of services.

3. Unlikely or seemingly unwilling partners can be found—if the value of collaborating can be made explicit in terms of that organization’s or agency’s own goals. In some cases, a collective good is the sum total of particular, agency specific goods.

4. Systemic change means addressing populations where the responsibility for adverse barriers is unclear—but this lack of specific responsibility can be seen as a common responsibility and one that can further motivate collaboration.

⁶⁵ Richard Cho interview.

“1,000 Days...1,000 Days”: Sustainability and Institutionalization

At the Collaboration’s latest retreat, held in late April of 2007, the future of the Collaboration was at the forefront of the discussion. The event was held at the lavish ballroom of the Prince George hotel, a room of gilded pillars and elaborate parquet floors restored to life in a building that is now itself dedicated to restoring lives: for the Prince George, once a rundown empty shell, is one of the most significant housing facilities for the formerly homeless in the city and country, run by Common Ground, one of the Collaboration’s partners. There were many new victories to be applauded that day: Commissioner Hess of the DHS announced that 50 new Section 8 vouchers were being made available to FUSE; Commissioner Doar, the newly appointed Commissioner of the Human Resources Administration (HRA) spoke of the new commitment on the part of HRA to work with the Collaboration. But it was also in this setting that the question of sustainability was raised for the first time before the entire congregation—usually accompanied by the stark reminder that less than 1,000 days were left to act.

Some have even described the group as standing at a crossroads: they must choose carefully and focus on what is most likely to convince the next administration to continue their work or there might not be a second shot.

Everybody in the collaboration seems to realize that time is limited. In fact, when interviewed, collaboration members were nearly unanimous in feeling that they had to prove—to the city, to the mayor, to themselves—that their work is paying off. When asked what phase of its development the collaboration was in, many likened it to a newfound maturity, an emergence from a prior phase not unlike adolescent wonder, which brought perhaps more excitement, but also less awareness of the responsibility facing them to ensure that their work lives on. With just under 1,000 days remaining, nearly everyone is thinking and worrying about that responsibility. Some have even described the group as standing at a crossroads: they must choose carefully and focus on what is most likely to convince the next administration to continue their work or there might not be a second shot.

Everyone agrees that it will take evidence to convince future administrations, concrete evidence of the difference the collaboration's initiatives are making. As Nick Freudenberg puts it, collaboration members have to confront a basic question: "What would it take so that whoever is the next mayor and the next correction commissioner would see it, and say, 'If I'm smart, I'll continue this initiative'?"⁶⁶

Already, there are mechanisms in place to ensure that such data is amassed, such as changes to the administrative code passed by the City Council in 2003, requiring that the Departments of Correction and Homelessness continue to perform the data matches that began in 2003. So too, there is the FUSE evaluation study, being undertaken by researchers from John Jay College. As he looks ahead to the future, Horn is also hopeful that discharge planning measures will find their way into the Mayor's Management Report, a political development he believes will go a long way towards institutionalizing their efforts. But data is not enough; there will also have to be courses and students to study that data. Indeed, re-entry needs to become a bigger part of university curricula, as collaboration members are wont to point out.

For that to happen, and for general awareness of discharge planning and re-entry to become more visible an issue in the city, will require something of a sea change, collaboration members agree. They are not unaware that they work on behalf of a population widely considered undeserving of assistance, to say the least. And crucial partners have yet to show up to the table, despite being invited. But, as was evident that day at the Prince George Ballroom, collaboration members believe that the image of the homeless and the formerly incarcerated can change through effective public messaging and presentation of the Collaboration's

efforts, and through enough success stories, of those who have gone through the Fresh Start programs and RIDE and FUSE. Moreover, with help from newly enlisted community boards and from the clergy, and with the assistance of Patricia Gatlin, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the issue of opportunities for re-integration, and job opportunities in particular, is destined to become more visible throughout the city.

As Commissioner Horn points out, it is not only data and imagery, but the very existence of the collaboration, its shared memory of effort and triumphs, that will go a long way towards ensuring their presence within the next administration: for the group now forms a constituency that can bring pressure to bear on the next mayor and his commissioners. Richard Cho agrees, going one step further and suggesting that the creation of a trade organization built around re-entry would go a long way towards solidifying that constituency and ensuring its existence in the future.

Trade association or not, what will motivate that constituency, what will fuel that memory, is certainly the culture that has been created among members of the collaboration. One sees evidence of it when hearing Department of Correction employees refer to "clients", rather than "inmates". One

sees it when watching members gather for meetings and the enthusiasm with which they stay, huddled in small groups, talking, laughing and strategizing, long after the meeting has officially ended. One hears it in the way that collaboration members speak of "the rules" to newcomers, inviting them to think beyond their particular organization's goals, suggesting that they not point fingers and instead seek constructive solutions, reminding them that it is their collaboration too.

"What would it take so that whoever is the next mayor and the next correction commissioner would see it, and say, 'If I'm smart, I'll continue this initiative'?"

[Nick Freudenberg, Professor of Urban Health, Hunter College].

⁶⁶ Nick Freudenberg interview.

And it comes in telling moments, such as at the FUSE breakfast discussed in the last chapter. During a panel discussion on the origins of FUSE and the collaboration, Deputy Commissioner Coughlin and former Deputy Commissioner Mark Hurwitz sat next to each other and fielded questions from the audience. A striking thing happened as they discussed their work: Mark Hurwitz, an employee of the DHS, answered, without hesitation, a question about the challenges inmates face when leaving jail, and went on to discuss discharge planning efforts for those at Rikers. And seamlessly, Coughlin of the DOC followed up by talking about efforts to find housing for the homeless. It showed not only how much each had learned about the other's system, but how comfortable they were in speaking about issues that one would expect to fall outside of their purview. Indeed, Hurwitz went on to make a comment that may seem radical at the present time, but which may also portend a future in which coordination between the two is even greater and more seamless: "The next step," he said, "is to really look at what the difference is between jail and shelter. Why not just call it shelter?"⁶⁷

Perhaps what best illustrates their collective identity also illustrates the current state of their development. The Collaboration has recently begun thinking about the map of re-entry in a different way, expanding beyond their particular orbit to begin engaging New York State agencies. And it is in their preparation to engage the state that one sees the group seeking strength in the cohesion and discipline that define them. At a recent guide-team meeting, comprised of workgroup chairs who meet periodically with the Commissioners of Correction and Homeless Services, Commissioner Horn and collaboration

As Commissioner Horn points out, it is not only data and imagery, but the very existence of the collaboration, its shared memory of effort and triumphs, that will go a long way towards ensuring their presence within the next administration.

members strategized how best to approach the state. Their discussion demonstrated the usual planning and circumspection the group has learned from one another. "The best thing we can do," Horn remarked, looking around the room "is to really have things laid out for the state that we'd like them to work on."⁶⁸ He suggested that everyone come up with three priorities that the state could begin examining: actionable, concrete obstacles to re-entry.

These should be non-statutory items, but rather policies and procedures that actually affect the work of each of the subgroups. Mindy Tarlow agreed. As she pointed out, to do so would be in keeping with what made the group unique. "This is what separates us from the pack," she reflected aloud. "We're an operations-oriented group, interested in the things we can control and get done."⁶⁹ And she wanted the state to know it. In so doing, she not only reaffirmed their sense of identity, she sought to sharpen it by comparison to what happens outside the Collaboration. Indeed, it was important to everyone at that meeting that initial contact with the state send the right impression: it had to demonstrate the seriousness of purpose and careful thinking that characterizes their work.

The discussion with state commissioners had to be focused, and state employees had to walk away with a list of issues they could actually work on. After agreeing that this was the proper strategy, the group began thinking about who to invite from the state, how large a group it should be—preferring an intimate gathering where real discussion could take place—and even considering what setting might be most appropriate.

The question of how best to engage the state would find its way onto the agenda of the Collaboration retreat, some two weeks later at the Prince George. Addressing the crowd of some 70 government and nonprofit members that day, Horn asked what they thought were the most important issues facing the

⁶⁷ "Breaking the Cycle" FUSE Breakfast Meeting, April 9, 2007, John Jay College.

⁶⁸ New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration, Guide Team Meeting, April 5, 2007, New York City Department of Correction.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

collaboration that required the intervention and assistance of the state. A variety of suggestions were made, spanning across the core concerns of the Collaborative. For example, the need to engage the state on suspension rather than termination of Medicaid benefits for the incarcerated; state leadership in providing job opportunities for individuals with criminal records; better coordination with state prisons in order to ease the transition from jail to prison, including recognition of program credits obtained while in jail. Finally, Commissioner Doar himself spoke about the need to engage the state around child support issues, including modifying child support orders for formerly incarcerated men. Now that Doar is at the helm

of HRA and committed to the collaboration, there is hope that he can bring his vast

expertise as a former state employee to bear on this issue. In particular, the Commissioner focused on the population of single men as potentially rich in interventions, a notion echoed by Deputy Mayor Gibbs. Speaking about possible directions the collaboration might take, she links New York's efforts to broader national trends. "If you think about the next phase of poverty reduction beyond the welfare reform of the 90s," she explains, "the population untended to are the single adults, particularly men of color. And as the broader poverty conversation evolves and people focus more deeply on how to engage men in supporting their children and their families, there's more attention drawn to how to overcome employment barriers when you have men in and out of prison."⁷⁰

Aside from concerns about budget items, baseline funding, executive orders and codes—all necessary for the continued existence of the collaboration—there is the more daunting, and mysterious, challenge of nurturing and

sustaining the enthusiastic relationships that form the core of this group. At a recent meeting of the Big Picture workgroup, JoAnne Page of the Fortune Society phrased the concern in bald terms: "How do you sustain something that Linda and Marty began as a lucky occurrence because they happened to be in the same elevator?"⁷¹ She is right to focus on how seemingly haphazard the genesis of the Collaboration is: how to transform the charisma, good will and passion that have characterized the collaboration's initial stages into something more lasting—and routine?

Kathy Coughlin may have the answer. She believes that what lies at the heart of this

collaboration is the ability of its members to see that change is possible, not only outside in the world of programs and service provision, but also within the space of

the particular role that each has to play in that larger universe of re-entry and re-integration—from a correction officer who opens gates to a Commissioner and Mayor looking over budgets. She describes it as being able to "feel the power of what you could do, not that your job says that, but there's a difference you can make and you just have to own it and do it."⁷² Often, that involves stepping out of the confines of a role and taking risks, to see just how much can be accomplished. What the collaboration has done, she believes, is to put people in touch with each other who recognize that such change is possible, even while there are barriers around them telling them otherwise. And by putting them in contact, the result has been a supportive network of individuals who find strength in each other's commitment, and who nurture the courage to take the initiative. In many instances, just being part of the collaboration has changed members' notions of what was possible, of what they could possibly contribute. For that reason, it is a network that will continue to reward those who

"This is what separates us from the pack...we're an operations-oriented group, interested in the things we can control and get done."

[Mindy Tarlow, Executive Director, Center for Employment Opportunities.]

⁷⁰ Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs interview.

⁷¹ Big Picture workgroup, Fortune Society, March 19, 2007.

⁷² Kathleen Coughlin interview.

take risks to contribute to this endeavor. Perhaps the past can be a guide to the future, for if the case of HRA's involvement is any illustration,

Coughlin may be right. Despite a former commissioner who was not very active in the collaboration, several members of the Human Resources

Administration continued working

on behalf of the Collaboration, "keeping the tiny flame alive," as Ed Dejowski put it.⁷³ They continued coming to workgroup meetings, listening to the suggestions and needs of collaboration members, offering advice and drawing strength and interest from the collective enthusiasm and commitment they came in contact with. The investment of those years of waiting paid off, as was evident at the April retreat, when recently-appointed HRA Commissioner Doar, speaking before the assembly in the Ballroom, signaled his interest in working with the collaboration, including moving ahead on obtaining food stamps for inmates leaving Rikers.

In October the group will host its next retreat, moving toward the five-year anniversary of the Collaboration's creation. It will be a time to reflect on just how far they have come. It will also be a time to lay out their plan for the next administration. Whether or not the future mayor or future commissioners are amenable remains to be seen. For now, they have their 1000 days, and they have the leadership of Marty Horn, a commissioner uniquely qualified to take them to the next phase. A former commissioner of Correction should know, and Michael Jacobson believes that Horn is the right person to see this work through. "If I had to pick," he recently said, "if you lined up 15 different actors in New York City at the moment, and said, one of them has to really grab this and run with this, I'd pick Marty."⁷⁴

What lies at the heart of this collaboration is the ability of its members to see that change is possible, not only outside in the world of programs and service provision, but also within the space of the particular role that each has to play in that larger universe of re-entry and re-integration—from a correction officer who opens gates to a Commissioner and Mayor looking over budgets.

After the guide team meeting had finished its discussion of the state and adjourned that day, collaboration members rose and began talking with one another in small groups. Martin Horn left the conference room by the door that adjoins his office. Minutes later he came back, through the room's other entrance and stood in the doorway, looking on in silence and

smiling as collaboration members talked and joked. One could sense that he too, had the thought on his mind: "1,000 days...1,000 days." But the smile on his face also seemed to say, "We'll be fine, we'll be fine."

Lessons Learned:

1. Just being in contact through a supportive network fosters a sense of commitment.

2. Collective memory and a distinct collaborative culture help promote a supportive constituency. Moreover, collaboration members, when proud of that culture, will act in a way that is consistent with it, re-enforcing that identity and producing like-minded results. Culture promotes consistency.

3. In the absence of support from the top, a network of like-minded peers keeps the issue alive and in place to present to leaders who may one day be more receptive.

4. Members all have something to contribute to discharge planning: the trick is to dig around within the space of one's own role to see what that is.

⁷³ Edward Dejowski interview.

⁷⁴ Author interview with Michael Jacobson, Director, The Vera Institute of Justice, April 18, 2007.

A P P E N D I X

While the process discussion provides an overview of how the collaboration works, this appendix will provide a brief overview of the products the collaboration has produced to date and highlight some work in progress. More information in any area can be obtained by sending specific questions to nycdischargeplanning@doc.nyc.gov.

Table of Contents (numbers refer to items, not pages)

Funding:	1
Data/Information Sharing/Research:	2-10
Initiatives/Pilots by Subpopulation:	
Youth:	11-14
Women/Mothers:	15-16
Men/Fathers	17
Drug Treatment:	18
Detainees:	19-20
Parolees:	21-23
Legal/Legislative Efforts:	24-25
Programs and Services, by Type	
Connections to Community-Based Services:	26-31
Public Benefits:	32-38
Housing:	39-40
Employment:	41-44
Alternatives to Incarceration:	45-47
Internal Changes: Collaboration Procedures and Infrastructure:	48-54

I. FUNDING

1. Funding for Discharge Planning

An indication of its maturity and effectiveness, the Collaboration's work has been used to leverage additional funding for discharge planning services from organizations that are interested in its unique work, such as the FUSE pilot funded by the JEHT Foundation, the Rikers Island Single Stops run by the Center for Urban Community Services and funded by the Robin Hood Foundation and the receipt of a grant through the Department of Justice for the Prisoner Reentry Initiative. Each investment into programmatic initiatives has the support of the entire collaboration. New York City, both directly and through its public and private partners, now invests more than \$11 million dollars in discharge planning services.

II. DATA/INFORMATION SHARING/RESEARCH

2. DOC/DHS Data match

Since January 2004, DHS has been matching DOC monthly discharges to its single adult database to monitor who enters shelter. The discharge planning workgroups have been using the matched data to look at frequent users, short-term stayers, and recently, the sentenced population. Currently, DOC and DHS are working together to match clients who have been in the shelter system in the past year who may now be currently in jail. The goal is to identify these clients and then contact their shelter so that work on the housing plan can continue and not be interrupted by the short-term incarceration.

3. FUSE Data Match

A data match between DOC and DHS identified more than 1,100 individuals who have a minimum of 4 stays in jail and 4 stays in shelter over the last five years and became the basis for the Frequent User Service Enhancement discussed later.

4. NYU Summer Capstone

At the February 10, 2006 Discharge Planning Retreat, graduate students from NYU's Wagner School of Public Administration who were working with DOC and DHS presented findings from their research on the relationship between homelessness and incarceration. Their work pinpointed two populations to whom services might effectively be targeted: 1) the newly homeless released from Rikers, and 2) clients who were in shelter one month prior to incarceration. Recommendations from the study have been used by the Housing Workgroup to profile the housing needs of the DOC population. In addition, a data match is underway to determine who has been in shelter during the previous year, in order to target services.

5. Public/Private Ventures

In 2004, Public/Private Ventures evaluated the Center for Employment Opportunities' transitional employment initiative through a series of in-depth interviews with both providers and DOC staff. Results provided insight into the context of program implementation, outlining the role of uniformed staff as well as perceptions of the overall initiative.

6. 983 Discharge Planning Screening Form

A Discharge Planning Screening form, developed and tested by the Vera Institute of Justice, is now being administered to everyone entering the DOC system. The information gleaned from this form is being used in the development of discharge plans and will form the basis for the DOC's discharge planning database.

7. Discharge Planning Database

A database is under construction that will allow DOC and the discharge planning providers to store and analyze data gathered through the Discharge Planning process. The database will allow DOC to track clients' progress, referrals and use of services, as well as analyze possible causes of recidivism in order to improve services.

8. Commission for Economic Opportunity Addresses Re-Entry

As part of the mayor's interest in and support of discharge planning for inmates, the Commission for Economic Opportunity examined the population of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated 16-24 year olds. Recommendations that followed, including the expansion of in-house jail educational opportunities and vocation/educational programs for youth leaving Rikers Island have received funding in the 2008 budget.

9. Division of Parole/DHS Data Match of Individuals Released to Parole in 2003

Since 2003, the DHS and the State Division of Parole have conducted a data match in order to divert parolees from entering the shelter system and to increase the number of permanent housing placements for parolees. Further analysis of this data is underway by DHS to determine patterns of use and lengths of stay so that appropriate interventions might be developed.

10. DHS/SOMH Data match

The DHS and the New York State Office of Mental Health conducted a data match to better coordinate discharge planning services, particularly for those with serious mental illness. The match

targeted those individuals with serious mental illness discharged from prison between 1999 and 2004 and who subsequently entered the shelter system between 2000 and 2004.

III. INITIATIVES/PILOTS BY SUBPOPULATION:

a. Youth

11. Children of Incarcerated Parents

In order to address the impact of jail/prison on children, the DOC and the Osborne Association piloted a Children's Day in the Manhattan Detention Complex, where fathers could speak with their children, select age-appropriate toys and games, discuss communication problems as well as problems facing children of incarcerated parents. Feedback from the event has been incorporated into the discharge planning work of the Osborne Association, funded by the City Council and now includes the use of multi-session parenting classes for men.

12. Vera Institute of Justice Report

In response to a Vera report on the effect that incarceration of mothers has on children in foster care, the Administration for Children's Services has begun holding visit days for parents, in addition to running parenting classes on Rikers Island.

13. The Adolescent Re-Entry Initiative (ARI): Vera Institute of Justice

An expansion of the RIDE program to include inmates between the ages of 16 and 18, the Vera-run ARI works to stimulate interests in occupational fields for adolescents where vocational training already exists. Through case management, adolescents who use the program are being guided through vocational and educational training programs after release. The program establishes linkages with the adolescent's family system before release to ease the transition.

14. Interventions for Criminal Justice-Involved Youth

The Vera Institute of Justice, in conjunction with the Mayor's Office of Adult Education, is looking into increasing access to education for criminal-justice involved young adults with low literacy levels. In addition, the Center for Economic Opportunity initiative aims to increase the enrollment of 19-24 year olds in optional educational services on Rikers Island, through an educational services hotline in facilities as well as through incentives in the form of cash payments similar to those provided for those who do manual labor while incarcerated. The CEO after-jail educational initiatives include the establishment of three new pilot programs for criminal justice-involved youth: one that seeks to orient and register youth interested in college or in obtaining their GED; one that targets youth with the lowest literacy rates for post-release educational services; and one that pairs individuals with mentors who can perform education and vocational assessments, provide support during court appearances, and guide individuals to group counseling, all with the aim of increasing self-sufficiency.

b. Women/Mothers

15. Family Law Library

A family law section has been added to the Law Library at the Rose M Singer Center, to assist women with child custody issues. This came about as a suggestion from the Women's Advocacy Project of the Women's Prison Association, in collaboration with Volunteers for Legal Services.

16. Domestic Violence Workgroup

A task force consisting of both uniformed and civilian DOC staff and members of the Women's Prison

Association and John Jay College of Criminal Justice was formed to address the issue of domestic violence to promote awareness of the issue within the city jail system and increase access to services for both DOC staff as well as inmates. Efforts include the placement of domestic violence posters and brochures throughout the women’s jail, a domestic violence awareness training for programs staff, the use of a domestic violence video to be shown at new inmate orientation, the availability of resource guides for victims of sexual assault in all facilities, and an attempt to identify services available to male victims.

c. Men/Fathers

17. Child Support Initiative with HRA

The DOC is working with the Child Support Enforcement Unit of the Human Resource Administration to ensure that child support is not a barrier to reentry for both custodial and non-custodial parents leaving jail and to promote the best interests of children and family reunification as appropriate. To this end, DOC and HRA have trained discharge planners on child support issues that impact both custodial and non-custodial parents, including opening a case and applying for modifications. Liaisons have been established in both agencies to address problems as they arise and mechanisms for tracking outcomes are currently being established.

d. Drug Treatment

18. Drug and Alcohol Workgroup

The Drug and Alcohol workgroup is in the process of developing a substance abuse intervention model to be implemented within the jail system that will assist individuals with substance abuse issues in obtaining the help they need to reduce their drug use and its attendant harms. The initial service plan will focus upon three target populations: those who report having a drug problem during the jail intake process, those who test positive in jail urine testing programs, and those who utilize detox services on Rikers Island.

e. Detainees

19. Serving the Detainee Population

The Fortune Society, with funding provided by the City Council, established a presence in the Samuel Perry Building, through which all individuals (not engaged with a service provider) exit Rikers Island, in order to engage those city-sentenced inmates who did not participate in discharge planning services while on Rikers as well as detainees who are being released. If an inmate chooses to engage in post release discharge planning service with the Fortune Society, they will be provided with a ride from Rikers Island to Fortune's community based location where they will work with a case manager for up to 90 days post release. Having a community-based services provider centrally located at the point of release ensures that all inmates are aware of and are offered support services to assist them in transitioning back into the community.

20. Detainee Short-Stayer Bail Survey

A voluntary survey was developed by the DOC for friends and family members to complete at the bail window. As a result of the survey and its recommendations, there are now ATM machines located in the Manhattan Detention Center and the Vernon C. Bain Center. Additionally, the DOC now offers multiple ways for friends and family to make deposits into inmate accounts so that individuals can pay their own bail. These new forms of payment include: Online (Credit or Debit Card), Kiosks at the Rikers Island Central Visit House, Telephone (Credit or Debit Card), or Agent (at any agent location such as MoneyGram or Western Union locations).

f. Parolees

21. Parole Restoration Project

In order to divert technical parole violators, avoid revocation of parole status, and shorten the length of detention, the PRP operated by CASES, links parole violators to community-based organizations for treatment and assistance as an alternative to incarceration. The program has proven to reduce length of stay for technical parole violators by an average of 19 days.

22. State Prison and DHS Coordinated Discharge Planning

The State Division of Parole has committed to bolstering its discharge planning efforts through increased staff accountability for discharges into homelessness and through a focus on family reunification. As a result of this commitment, DHS and Parole now do case conferencing on-site at the Queensboro Correctional Facility, the facility through which State prisoners are discharged back into the communities of New York City.

23. Proposal for Reducing the Parolee Population in the NYC Shelter System

As a result of its data matching, DHS and the NYS Division of Parole have instituted a number of shorthand long-term initiatives to reduce the average daily census of parolees in the New York City shelter system. Initiatives include a family reunification programs, pre-release community preparation, a transitional housing program, and continued data collection.

IV. LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS

24. Medicaid Suspension Rather than Termination

Achieved as the result a long term coordinated effort to prevent termination of clients' Medicaid benefits upon jail admission. As of this date, Medicaid suspension legislation has been approved by the Governor and signed into chapter 355 of the laws of 2007 to become effective on April 1, 2008.

25. Changes to the Administrative Code

On December 1, 2004, Mayor Bloomberg signed into law changes to New York City's Administrative Code that require the continuation of processes implemented to facilitate discharge planning. Processes include: data-matching between the DOC and DHS, information collection on all inmates in custody for 10 days or more, provision of assistance with benefits to sentenced inmates receiving discharge plans, and making information on benefits generally available.

V. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, BY TYPE

a. Connection to Community-Based Services

26. 311 "Jail Release" Services

Through the city's 311 information line, clients can now be connected to community-based organizations that offer assistance with employment, training, legal services, housing and substance abuse programs, simply by saying, "Jail Release Services." 311-directed phones are available within the Central Visitors House of Rikers Island as well.

27. Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement (RIDE)

The Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement (RIDE) program offers all city-sentenced inmates the opportunity to connect with a community-based provider to create a discharge plan while incarcerated. Discharge plans address needs in four main areas: housing, substance abuse treatment,

family reunification, and employment. Upon release RIDE providers provide transportation from Rikers Island directly to the housing or community-based providers as indicated in the discharge plan. RIDE providers then work with clients for up to 90 days after release and are paid through performance-based contracts structured to reward long-term client engagement. Preliminary results indicate that clients who remain engaged in these services for 90 days have a significantly lower rate of recidivism compared with those who do not remain engaged.

28. OASAS Treatment Readiness Program at Rose M. Singer

The OASAS/RIDE program at RMSC was developed to assist sentenced women in addressing their substance abuse issues while on Rikers Island. The 100 bed housing unit operates as a modified therapeutic community in which the women attend groups, receive individual counseling and engage in discharge planning services with the Women’s Prison Association.

29. RIDE Support Centers

The Support Centers in both the Eric M. Taylor for sentenced men and Rose M. Singer facility for all incarcerated women provide coordinated sites within Rikers for various public benefits agencies that assist clients in accessing the benefits for which they are eligible. Services include Facilitated Medicaid Enrollment, Single Stops, SSI interview sites, and Veteran’s benefits.

30. Single Stops

Rikers Island Single Stops, funded by the Robin Hood Foundation and run by the Center for Urban Community Services, assists individuals in their applications for federal, state and city benefits and tax/credit refunds when applicable. In addition, the Legal Action Center offers RAP sheet review and correction of errors, while Credit Where Credit is Due provides financial counseling to Single Stop clients. Through the Legal Aid Society, individuals are also able to obtain assistance with civil legal disputes, primarily on eviction prevention.

31. Webcam Connection to Rose M. Singer and Eric M. Taylor Centers

A webcam is now available in both Support Centers for discharge planners and service providers in the community who need to contact or interview clients at Rikers. The webcam system will also be used to process Food Stamp submissions once that process is finalized.

b. Public Benefits

32. Facilitated Medicaid Enrollment

As the result of collaboration between DOC, DOHMH and HRA, facilitated Medicaid enrollment is now occurring for city-sentenced individuals involved in discharge planning on Rikers Island. Required substance abuse assessments are provided through contractual services arranged by HRA.

33. Analysis of Public Benefits Enrollment of Longer Term (+30 days) Rikers Inmates

As part of its effort to provide inmates with valuable public benefits upon re-entry, the Collaboration first undertook a survey to determine what proportion of inmates used such services, and what proportion had lost their benefits during incarceration.

34. Birth Certificates

A coordinated effort to provide those leaving Rikers with discharge plans with a copy of their birth certificate to be used in obtaining valid identification, including driver’s licenses. The Department of Correction is currently purchasing birth certificates from the DOHMH for all sentenced inmates leaving with a discharge plan as well as for all inmates using the Single Stops.

35. Social Security Cards

Understanding the importance of having a social security card in obtaining employment and in accessing other services and benefits, DOC is working collaboratively with the Social Security Administration to verify social security numbers for inmates on Rikers Island and when time allows to actually have the social security card sent to the inmates property so that they will have their social security card upon release. If time doesn't allow, the card is forwarded to the after-jail address.

36. SSI/SSDI/SSI for Brad H clients

By telephone from Rikers, clients can apply for and access SSI/SSDI benefits available upon release. In addition, Brad H inmates with pre-existing benefits are identified and re-connected with services upon exit.

37. Veterans Benefits

Efforts are underway to ascertain eligibility for Veterans benefits by linking answers to the "Veterans questions" on the intake form 239 with VA files through a data match. In addition, Veterans are attending inmate orientations in which group benefits briefings are provided by local veterans organizations.

38. Electronic Food Stamp Submissions from Rikers Island

In collaboration with the Human Resources Administration, the DOC is currently working on an initiative that will enable individuals to apply for food stamps from Rikers so that this benefit will be activated on the day of release. The application process will be built into the benefits counseling service at Support Center Single Stops.

c. Housing

39. Frequent Users Service Enhancement (FUSE)

A pilot program that targets frequent users of both jail and shelter, the FUSE project seeks to place 100 individuals into supportive housing through a mix of NYCHA Section 8 apartments and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, combined with intense case management. (Also see part 4 of this document for more information).

40. Housing Workgroup Proposal to HPD: Re-entry Housing

The Collaboration is currently in conversation with HPD to use vacant city-owned property to develop self-governed re-entry housing for formerly incarcerated individuals. Two sites have been offered and further searches for appropriate sites are under way.

d. Employment

41. Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative

DOC was awarded funding from the US Department of Justice to provide pre-release services to young adults ages 18 to 24 that will complement the post-release activities funded by a corresponding grant from the US Department of Labor (DOL). The Urban Youth Alliance is currently funded to provide post-release workforce development and related services to individuals leaving jail and prison, while DOC received funding to conduct recruitment and screening of clients for US DOJ services and to provide pre-release services to prepare clients for services they will receive after jail. The goal of the two grants is to provide Correction Departments and community and faith based organizations with complementary resources needed to collaboratively work together to provide pre and post release services that will reduce recidivism by helping people access services and find employment upon release to the community.

42. Managed Work Services Pilot

A pilot program to provide transitional employment services to inmates working at the Vernon C. Baines and Eric M. Taylor Center, the MWS sought to test the impact of early engagement on recidivism. In collaboration with Managed Work Services, a subsidiary of VIP Community Services, the pilot program engaged 55 clients, of whom 64% attended services in the community. Of those who attended MWS’s program in the community 63% were placed in jobs.

43. Fifth Avenue Committee Work Readiness

The Fifth Avenue Committee has been providing Employment Readiness Workshops at RMSC since 2006. Throughout the course, participants work on skills that will help them to develop a greater understanding of motivations, improve decision-making and life skills, access employment training, and develop a larger support network. Each seven-week cycle concludes with a graduation ceremony. Post release, participants have the opportunity to access Fifth Avenue’s on-going support services in the community.

44. Transitional Employment

Transitional employment services are offered as part of the Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement Program. Currently, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) works on Rikers Island to recruit city-sentenced men and women on Rikers Island to participate in community-based transitional work services. This process includes a two-day Life Skills class focusing on job readiness skills, daily work for up to four days each, and job development and placement services through assignment to a job coach and/or job developer.

e. Alternatives to Incarceration/Shelter

45. Day Custody Program

Through the efforts of the Short-Stayers Workgroup and in collaboration with the Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator, the CASES Day Custody Program opened at the Manhattan Detention Center on September 22, 2005. The program is open to those who have had three or more prior misdemeanor convictions. Participants are typically sentenced to a ten day term of imprisonment satisfied by serving three eight hour day time periods. While in custody, participants perform community service in the DOC facility under the supervision of CASES and DOC staff, and participate in needs assessments, treatment readiness counseling, and referrals to service providers in the community for employment, mental health services, housing and other assistance.

46. CASES Day Custody Program Mental Health (DCP-MH) Services

Recently, the collaboration sought to build on the Day Custody Program by including adult misdemeanor offenders with mental illness, through application for a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant. A data match would allow for cross-referencing of misdemeanants and those previously diagnosed as being mentally ill, thereby allowing DCP staff to advocate for the defendant’s release to the program. While this application has not yet been funded, the NYC Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator has agreed to fund a pilot of the effort while the results of the grant submission are pending.

47. Arrest Avoidance Policing Alternatives

In collaboration with the Bowery Residents’ Committee, the NYPD took tours of certain precincts to reach individuals subject to frequent arrest based on quality of life offenses. As part of this effort, officers received training in developing relationships with clients. In the subsequent two years, the First Precinct had no “homeless arrests.”

VI. INTERNAL CHANGES: COLLABORATION PROCEDURES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

48. Discharge Planning Collaboration Vision Statement

In the fall of 2006, the Discharge Planning Collaboration collectively signed off on a vision statement documenting their common intention and efforts.

49. DOC and DHS Systems Mapping

In March of 2007, volunteers from the Collaboration met to map out all possible points of intervention along the paths to incarceration and homelessness, and between the jail and shelter systems. Refinement of the map is now under way.

50. Involving Consumers and Line Staff in the Collaboration's Work

The need for feedback from clients and line staff prompted a discussion at the last Collaboration retreat of possible ways of involving inmates, their families, and Correction officers in the discharge planning process. Suggestions included conducting client surveys, engaging families through use of prominent fliers and videos in the Central Visitor House, and providing newsletters to keep clients and line staff informed. With respect to line staff specifically, a retreat specifically for line staff was held in October of 2006.

51. Facilitating the Entrance of Service Providers onto Rikers Island

In order to facilitate the access of service providers to clients on Rikers Island, providers now receive volunteer identification cards to expedite their entrance onto Rikers Island without the use of individual security clearances. Also, in May of 2006 A Discharge Planning Networking Forum was held on Rikers Island in order to invite community-based providers to Rikers Island to meet the discharge planning providers and to see how they could become more involved in discharge planning work.

52. Warrants

The DOC is now checking outstanding warrants for all sentenced inmates who receive discharge plans, in order to ensure release on the expected day of release. If warrants are identified, arrangements are made to transport individuals to court in order to address claims before the planned discharge date. This enables individuals to effectively plan for their date of release. To aid in this process, the DOC has installed a warrant machine in the discharge planning jails on Rikers Island. To date, over 90% of those taken to court have had the warrants lifted based on the nature of the charges and the client's involvement in the discharge planning effort.

53. Explorers Survey at the Central Visit House

In 2006, the Explorers, members of a leadership and community service program for young adults offered through DOC, conducted a survey of visitors to Rikers Central Visit House to determine the average length of commuting time to the center and most prevalent modes of transportation.

54. Central Visit House Project

In order to involve the families of inmates in the discharge planning process, and to provide more information, the central visit house has been outfitted with flier boards regarding public benefits, literacy/GED preparation, domestic violence services, service providers in the community, and legal assistance. In addition, discharge planning resource guides are placed throughout the visitor house, a Department of Health health station is available for health screenings and advice, and 311 phones are available to connect clients with the RIDE program. A new slide show plays continuously on monitors throughout the house, inviting clients and their families to think about plans for re-entry

A P P E N D I X

and encouraging them to avail themselves of discharge planning services in the community. Finally, Access NYC kiosks, which will enable individuals to enter personal information and receive information regarding the public benefits to which they are entitled, are currently being installed.

For more information on any of these initiatives, please direct your specific questions to: nycdischargeplanning@doc.nyc.gov.

DHS CLIENT POPULATION AT A GLANCE

- Number of Adult Shelter facilities FY 2007: 49
 - DHS Operated: 4
 - Non-DHS Operated: 45
- Total number of single adult beds FY 2007: 7,595
- Average daily single adult census FY 2007: 7,260
 - Men: 5,337
 - Women: 1,923
- Average daily single adult census FY 2008 (to date): 6,763
 - Men: 4,947
 - Women: 1,815
- Distribution of Population FY 2007 (average daily census)
 - Assessment: 1,071 (15%)
 - General: 922 (13%)
 - Program: 5,281 (73%)
 - Reception Center: 97 (1%)
 - Employment: 1,000 (14%)
 - Mental Health: 1,533 (21%)
 - Substance Abuse: 1,439 (20%)
 - Medical: 280 (4%)
 - Special Populations: 932 (17%)
 - Veterans: 390 (5%)
 - Young Adults: 92 (1%)
 - Older Adults: 178 (2%)
 - Outreach: 12 (0%)
 - Other: 261 (4%)
- Total adult entrants (unduplicated) FY 2007: 21,897
 - Total new single adults: 10,048
 - Repeat single adults: 11,849
- % of total single adult census
 - Women: 26%
 - Men: 74%
- Age of single adults
 - 18-29: 20.5%
 - 30-44: 37.5%
 - 45-64: 39.2%
 - over 65: 2.8%
- Race: 54% African American, 26% Hispanic, 11% white
New York City: 26.6 African American, 27.0 Latino, 44.7 whiteⁱ
- Average length of stay for single adults: 92 days
- Total placed in permanent housing FY07: 9,205
- Percent placed into housing who returned to DHS within a year: 14%

ⁱ Census 2000

- Average daily census in NYC jails in CY 2006: 13,788
- Total Admissions in CY 2006: 105,978
- Number of separate individuals accounting for total admissions in CY 2006: 72,606
- City-sentenced clients (sentenced to one year or less): 19%
- Pre-trial Detainees (unable to post bail or remanded without bail): 72%
75-77% of detainees are released to the community.
- Total female population: 8.2 percent
- Average age: 33.0
- Race: 57.6 percent African American, 33.7% Latino, 6.9 percent white
New York City: 26.6 African American, 27.0 Latino, 44.7 whiteⁱ
- Average length of stay for city-sentenced inmates: 36.5 days
- Average length of stay for detainees: 46.4 days
- Percent of city sentenced inmates who return within a year: 52%ⁱⁱ
- Percent of all inmates who return within a year: 40%ⁱⁱⁱ
- Percent of new admits who report having been previously incarcerated: 79%^{iv}

INMATE PROFILE: SOCIAL SERVICE NEEDS

- Substance abuse history: 70-80%
- Drug-related charges: 75%^v
- Require detoxification upon admission: 20%
- Self-reported drug use at the time of incarceration: 38%^{vi}
- Require mental health services: 40%
- Serious, Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI): 11%
- Percent of shelter entrants who have been in DOC custody: 30%^{vii}
- HIV-positive: 8% of males, 18% of females^{viii}

ⁱ Census 2000

ⁱⁱ Among all city-sentenced individuals admitted and discharged in 2005, 52 percent were readmitted within a year of discharge.

ⁱⁱⁱ Among all inmates, sentenced and detained, who were discharged in 2005, 40.2 percent were readmitted within a year of discharge.

^{iv} NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: survey data from the 7,305 new admits in August 2006

^v Wynn, Jennifer, *Inside Rikers* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2001) 74

^{vi} NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: survey data from the 7,305 new admits in August 2006

^{vii} DOC/DHS Data Match, 2003

^{viii} NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 1999.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION