

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 3, 2016

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH AND JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF ONTARIO RELEASE REPORT CALLING FOR REAL CHANGE TO REINTEGRAING FORMERLY INCARCERATED PERSONS.

“There is a great deficit of care, effective services, and awareness surrounding the reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons in Ontario” says Julie Baks, an individual with lived experience. “Barriers to effective reintegration need to be acknowledged, understood, and most importantly addressed. *Reintegration in Ontario* is a crucial part of that process.”

*Reintegration in Ontario: Practices, Priorities, and Effective Models*, a Report released on behalf of the Association for Effective Reintegration in Ontario (AERO), a collaborative group of researchers, front-line service providers, and academics, provides practical solutions to effect real change to the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals back into society.

“This really is the culmination of years of important collaboration amongst researchers, academics, community service providers, and justice stakeholders,” said Michelle Keast, Director at John Howard Society of Ontario’s (JHSO) Centre for Research, Policy & Program Development. “This Report is a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder roadmap that outlines effective, workable, evidence-based approaches to a pressing issue.”

Best practices in the reintegration of individuals exiting correctional facilities will have widespread, positive impacts, says the new Report.

Reza Ahmadi, Researcher at JHSO suggests why this work is crucial. “Successful reintegration has widespread implications – for those people being released, their families, and our communities.” Ahmadi stresses that “not only can best practices in reintegration improve the health and well-being of society’s most marginalized populations, it is also one of the primary factors in reducing recidivism.”

The Report notes that individuals involved with the justice system tend to have a number of social and health determinants which precipitate contact with the criminal justice system. Lack of stable housing, lack of employment, mental and physical health challenges, poverty, racialization, and substance abuse: “These factors tend to increase the chances that someone will come into contact with the criminal justice system,” says Keast. “Effective reintegration, as envisioned by this Report, is aimed directly at these determinants.”

For example, discharge planning, notes Dr. Bill O’Grady, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Guelph, is crucial to helping individuals transition from incarceration to the community because it helps identify an individual’s most pressing needs, such as housing, mental health, or addiction treatment. “The problem is that research

indicates that many provincial releasees in Ontario lack access to adequate discharge planning before their release,” says O’Grady.

*Reintegration in Ontario* provides a unique guide for reintegration services and programming in Ontario. The research and models identified challenge those traditional programs and services that no longer adequately deal with the complex nature of reintegration.

“The bottom line is that people released from incarceration need help” says Baks. “The barriers to housing, education, and social support services that the Report speaks to are real. We have the research, we have the knowledge, we have examples of best practices. Now is the time to put it all into action.”

--

To read the report, *Reintegration in Ontario: Practices, Priorities, and Effective Models*, please visit [www.johnhoward.on.ca](http://www.johnhoward.on.ca) and follow us [@ReducingCrime](https://twitter.com/ReducingCrime)

***The Centre of Research, Policy & Program Development at the John Howard Society of Ontario engages in non-partisan research, policy analysis, public education and program evaluation in the social and criminal justice sector.***

For more information, please contact:

Graham Brown  
Policy Analyst

***Centre of Research, Policy & Program Development***  
John Howard Society of Ontario  
(416) 408-4282 ext. 229  
[GBrown@JohnHoward.on.ca](mailto:GBrown@JohnHoward.on.ca)