



Conceptualizations of Reentry Success In the Milwaukee Reentry Council

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Introduction:

The Milwaukee Reentry Council was founded in 2016 and is a subset of the Milwaukee Community Justice Council (MCJC). The Reentry Council is one of several sub-councils for the MCJC. The Reentry Council consists of approximately 300 individuals and 60 organizations, their stated goal is, “To reduce recidivism in Milwaukee by 50% within 5 years by broadening and deepening community engagement and commitment to this work” (Milwaukee Reentry Council). Their stated purpose, “As a subcommittee of the Milwaukee Community Justice Council, The Reentry Council is focused on promoting the safe and successful reintegration of individuals who have been incarcerated back into the community and prevent future involvement with the justice system (Milwaukee Reentry Council).

Essentially, the role of the Milwaukee Reentry Council is to connect reentering individuals with services in their different areas of need. The efforts of individuals in the Reentry Council to connect those reentering to services not only affects Milwaukee in terms of crime and recidivism statistics but improves community relations.



Research Question:

What individuals are members of organizations involved in the Milwaukee Reentry Council? In what way does organizational size, function, and funding affect how individuals define success? What are the factors (housing, employment, healthcare, etc.) that these organizations prioritize the most? Do demographic characteristics influence which definition of success is preferred for individuals?

Methods:

Qualitative:

- Participant Observation/Ethnographic note-taking September 2020-June 2021
- Nine interviews conducted in March-April 2021
 - Interviews were conducted with individuals identified as ‘leaders’ in the Reentry Council.
 - Ranged from 10-20 minutes.
 - Interviews were analyzed and used to create survey questions.

“And, also I think there’s no one service provider that can ultimately meet the needs and the desires of every person returning home, so there’s both pros and cons to being such a vast array of services out in the community, but there needs to be support and helping individuals know that those resources even exist, and do so in a way that doesn’t send individuals going from one side of town to the next, ultimately to find out that that provider doesn’t provide what they thought that they would.”

-Quote from Interviews

“The other thing that we were recognizing too is that it’s not a start and stop with the justice system, ultimately if we’re not helping to support reentry then it’s a really slippery slope for individuals to ultimately end back in what we would call this cyclical involvement in the justice system.

-Quote from Interviews

Preliminary Results:

- Survey data is still being analyzed, so final conclusions cannot be drawn.
- **Success is conceptualized in different ways by different organizations and individuals.**
 - This sometimes leads to overlapping service provision.
 - Different organizations view different issues as more or less important, depending on their focus.
- **Increased coordination and cooperation between reentry organizations will improve reentry overall.**
 - Community action and involvement will lead to increased understanding of reentry and de-stigmatization of felony convictions.

Works Cited:

- Milwaukee Community Justice Council. (n.d.). [Milwaukee Community Justice Council logo]. Retrieved October 7, 2021, from <https://www.milwaukee.gov/EN/MCJC>
- Milwaukee Reentry Council: Subcommittee of the Milwaukee Community Justice Council. (n.d.). Milwaukee Community Justice Council. Retrieved March 15, 2021, from <https://www.milwaukee.gov/EN/MCJC/Committees/Reentry-Council>.

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