



## ***BEYOND CONVENTIONAL WISDOM: CREATING REENTRY HOUSING*** **OCTOBER 6, 2011**

***THE PRISONER REENTRY INSTITUTE OF JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
HOSTS EXPERTS FROM THE FORTUNE SOCIETY AND THE CORPORATION FOR SUPPORTIVE  
HOUSING TO DISCUSS THE CHALLENGES OF CREATING HOUSING FOR  
THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED***

Each year approximately 735,000 individuals are released from prisons around the country. Research has shown stable housing is critical to the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals into society, which ultimately prevents them from committing future crimes. Today's program in the PRI Occasional Series features **Ryan Moser**, Managing Director of the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), and **JoAnne Page**, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Fortune Society. Both the Fortune Society and the Corporation for Supportive Housing have done groundbreaking work to develop housing for the formerly incarcerated by literally turning obstacles into opportunity.

Mr. Moser talks about the CSH Returning Home Initiative which is based on the premise that supportive housing helps thousands of people across the country escape the cycle of homelessness and criminal justice involvement. This subset of men and women often has chronic health conditions, including mental illness, substance use and other persistent health challenges. Additionally, government spends significant taxpayer dollars on services that shift people between shelters, hospitals, jails and prisons—with limited coordination of services and limited positive outcomes. CSH's Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE) model is central to the Returning Home Initiative's cycle-breaking strategy to help individuals who are the highest users of jails, homeless shelters and other crisis service systems gain stability across systems.

The CSH Returning Home Initiative is designed to:

- Improve the lives of tenants;
- Make more efficient use of public resources;
- Align and coordinate public and private resources and policies to create supportive housing;
- Generate cost offsets in crisis systems like jails and shelters; and
- Reduce recidivism and the use of costly emergency services.

CSH has engaged several jurisdictions across the country to design and implement supportive housing initiatives that integrate the systems and resources of criminal justice, behavioral

health, and housing agencies. Important steps toward systems change and improved outcomes include:

- Recognizing collective accountability for outcomes;
- Using data to identify frequent users, their patterns of use, and outcomes;
- Engaging in strategic cross–agency systems change planning;
- Removing barriers to effective interventions; and
- Financing the solutions.

The Occasional Series presentation coincides with the release of the toolkit, *In Our Backyard: Overcoming Community Resistance to Reentry Housing (A NIMBY Toolkit)*. This publication was produced by The Fortune Society and the Prisoner Reentry Institute of John Jay College with support from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance. This collaboration between complementary sets of expertise in reentry – that of a direct service provider and a college of criminal justice – was further enriched by contributions from the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Teachers College, Columbia University. The toolkit is also available for download at the following website: [www.jjay.cuny.edu/pri](http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/pri).

Highlighting information in the toolkit, Ms. Page reflects on lessons learned as Fortune overcame community resistance and nurtured a positive, supportive relationship with its neighbors when opening The Fortune Academy, historically called The Castle because of its Gothic architecture. The Castle became a comprehensive, 62-bed supportive housing project in West Harlem for homeless formerly incarcerated men and women. However, at the outset of the project, Fortune leaders faced several challenges:

- The surrounding neighborhood was tightly-knit, politically well-organized and was already frustrated by the unwelcome placement of a sewage treatment plant along the Hudson River adjacent to location of The Castle.
- The community was alarmed by a perceived over-saturation and “dumping” of social service programs in West Harlem, many of which were placed by the State of New York without community involvement and, once defunded, left clients behind to fend for themselves.
- Hostility and resistance were a byproduct of negative attitudes towards the homeless and those with criminal records.

To overcome these challenges, Fortune developed a comprehensive outreach strategy including:

- Hiring a public relations consultant who stressed the importance of being transparent, addressing the community’s concerns immediately and maintaining a steady presence;
- Reaching out to elected officials to seek their support and advice to identify stakeholders in the community, both those who could help Fortune build a support base and those who would oppose them;

- Hiring a community liaison who was a longtime resident of Harlem, was a trusted pillar of the community, and had significant experience with social service programs for the formerly incarcerated population; and
- Building a one-on-one relationship with community leaders to generate support for the project.

Today's event and the accompanying presenter publications outline numerous problems and solutions to help organizations nationwide overcome some of the greatest challenges associated with providing housing to formerly incarcerated individuals. By offering tangible steps and lessons learned, the experience of CSH and Fortune provides guidance and encouragement to organizations working to assist formerly incarcerated people, and create safer and more stable communities.

#### **ABOUT RYAN MOSER AND JOANNE PAGE**

**Ryan Moser, Managing Director, Eastern Region** joined the Corporation for Supportive Housing in 2005. He provides leadership and coordination of the agency's work throughout the eastern United States including teams deployed in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and the Mid-Atlantic. CSH's work centers on ending structural homelessness through strategic and targeted work with individuals and communities around the country. Prior to this role, Ryan led CSH's New York Returning Home Initiative and has also worked to develop models, initiatives and policy related to active substance use, mental health alternatives to incarceration, justice reinvestment, community corrections, veterans, and housing interventions for families with criminal justice involvement. Ryan's previous work and educational experience includes multicultural education, curriculum design, linguistics, ceramics, and international development.

**JoAnne Page, President and Chief Executive Officer** of The Fortune Society has over 30 years experience in criminal justice with the last 21 at the helm of Fortune, a non-profit organization that has been recognized by researchers and policymakers as a pioneer in assisting former incarcerated individuals reintegrate into society. Under Ms. Page's stewardship, Fortune's innovative and successful initiatives have become models for similar programs across the country. A graduate of Yale Law School, Ms. Page is a frequent speaker at conferences and presentations about alternatives to incarceration, HIV case management, and criminal justice issues. She has also been a featured interview guest on a range of national television programs including *CNN*, *Court TV*, *NBC News*, *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, *The O'Reilly Factor* and *Rivera Geraldo*.

#### **A LIST OF SUGGESTED REFERENCES for CREATING REENTRY HOUSING**

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Cortes, K. & Rogers, S. (2010). *Reentry housing options: The policymaker's guide*. New York, NY: Council of State Governments. Accessible at: [http://reentrypolicy.org/jc\\_publications/reentry-housing-options](http://reentrypolicy.org/jc_publications/reentry-housing-options)

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Wynne-Edwards, J. (2002). *Overcoming community opposition to homelessness sheltering projects under the National Homelessness Initiative*. Government of Canada. Accessible at: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/index.shtml>

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## ABOUT JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Established in 1964, John Jay College of Criminal Justice of The City University of New York is an international leader in educating for justice. It offers a rich liberal arts and professional studies curriculum to upwards of 14,000 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 135 nations. In teaching and research, the College approaches justice as an applied art in service to society and as an ongoing conversation about fundamental human desires for fairness, equality and the rule of law. The mission of the John Jay College **Prisoner Reentry Institute (PRI)** is to spur innovation and improve practice in the field of reentry. For more information, visit [www.jjay.cuny.edu/pri](http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/pri).

Ann L. Jacobs joined PRI as its Director in May of 2011 after nearly two decades as the Executive Director of the Women's Prison Association (WPA) in New York. The WPA is the nation's oldest and largest social service and advocacy organization for incarcerated women, formerly incarcerated women, and their families. Ms. Jacobs has over forty years of experience in the criminal justice field, corrections, and particularly community corrections and alternatives to incarceration.