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Presentation title: “From Fetters to Freedom: An Ethnographic Study of a Residential Facility for Female Ex-Offenders”

Abstract

This master’s thesis project examines the reentry challenges and service needs confronting formerly incarcerated women as they prepare to return to their communities, using the residents of a transitional home for women ex-offenders as a case in point. The researcher conducted field research and in-depth interviews with 10 residents and four program staff.

The researcher found that drug addiction was a common thread in the women’s involvement in crime. Underlying causes of drug addiction included histories of abuse and family problems. Women ex-offenders encountered multiple challenges in their reintegration into society, namely: returning to disenfranchised communities, obtaining employment, accessing public transportation, finding affordable housing, and securing medical care. They also faced persisting unmet needs, namely: further education, drug rehabilitation, and family reunification. Comprehensive services are needed to address the issues of women ex-offenders, especially drug rehabilitation and unemployment, so as to counter the lure of the underground economy and recidivism.