

The Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs Holds Forum on Public Safety Projects

On October 6, 2009, about twenty WRI stakeholders attended a briefing by Walter Rand Institute (WRI) staff on recent and current public safety projects. The audience included Advisory Board members, funders and public safety advocates and practitioners.



Dr. Richard A. Harris, Director of the WRI, presented the first project, *Camden Safe Cities Initiative*. CSCI was a collaborative problem solving program that commenced in the fall 2003 with a grant from the Office of the Attorney General. Objectives of the program were to address the pervasive problem of violent crime in Camden, New Jersey, by linking parolee and probationers to employment, educational, mental health, and drug and alcohol services. Gaps in social service were also identified & worked with

policy makers to address these gaps. Completion of the project occurred in July 2007. Results showed that out of 143 participants, zero participants were arrested for gun-related, violent crimes or shot or in a gun-related crime while on the caseload. 4 participants were rearrested on charges that include possession of a firearm and 1 CSCI participant was a victim of a shooting. Due to the positive results and WRI's growing reputation as a go to organization for design and implementation of public safety initiatives, WRI has been award numerous grants assisting the prisoner population.

Project Opportunity Reconnect was next presented by **Joe Cassisi**, Project Coordinator. The goals to the project are to provide ex-offenders integrated services to assist them with easier access to social service. WRI has build collaboration with critical partners, to have them provide a variety of services at the site. For example, Volunteers of America staff will provide multi-agency case management and job readiness and job retention services. This will help lead participants to regular, steady employment, which research has been found to be an overwhelmingly decisive factor in keeping ex-offenders from committing new crimes and returning to prison. The site of Opportunity Reconnect will be on 1812 Federal Street Camden, NJ. Expected time of this program to be fully running is December 2009.



PRI-RESPECT was presented by **Tracy Swan**, Senior Project Coordinator. The program targets non-violent offenders to enhance pre-release transitional planning and services with a focus on preparing ex-offenders for securing employment. WRI is evaluating the NJ Department of Corrections' efforts to reduce recidivism by providing the transitional services. This dataset for this research includes 233 persons and several interventions including educational programs, job-skills development, employment services, and referrals to other social services as needed to maintain employment.

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