

Recommendations for Improving the City of Worcester's Reintegration Services



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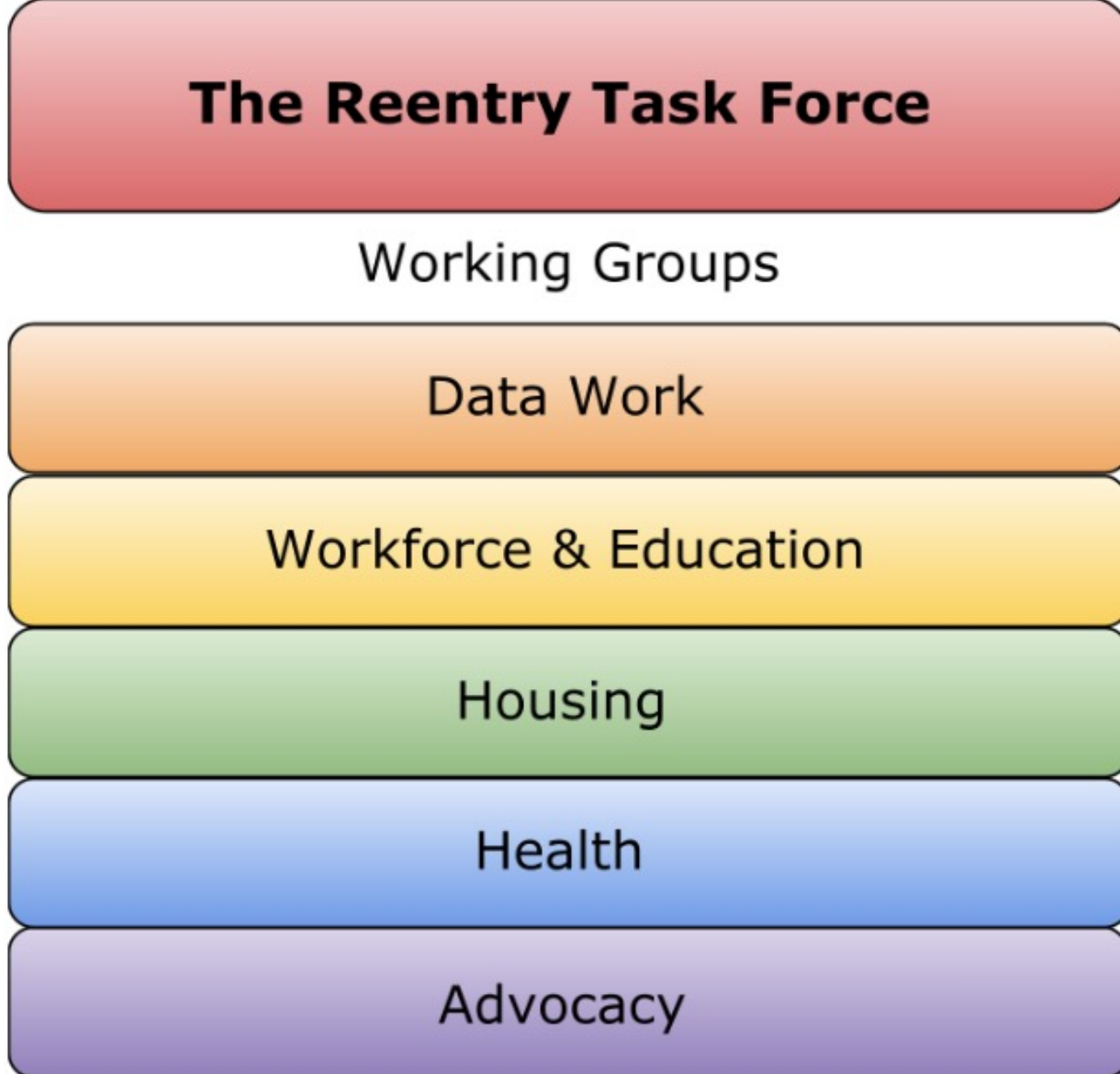
Background

Worcester Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)

- Coordinates and manages the City's critical health services in numerous areas, including prisoner reentry

The Reentry Task Force (RTF)

- Formed in 2019 through a collaboration between HHS, the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester, and 40+ local agencies
- Goals:** (1) identify gaps in the current reentry system, (2) determine what resources local agencies can provide, and (3) create an actionable plan to move this work forward
- The RTF hires undergraduate interns to provide research support and gather needs assessment data from those who have served time in the Worcester correctional facilities



Site Role

Responsibilities:

- Collaborate with the RTF and other interns on a community needs assessment
- Goals: demonstrate the need for comprehensive, culturally responsive, and data-driven reentry programming at the Worcester House of Corrections

Typical Week:

mon.	wed.	fri.
Meeting with site supervisor	Collect primary data at local agencies	Record data and investigate common trends

Project Highlights

Purpose: Improve the outcomes of community reentry for Latino males leaving the Worcester House of Correction (HOC).

Goal: Help the Reentry Task Force identify areas in which the City of Worcester's Reintegration Services can be improved.

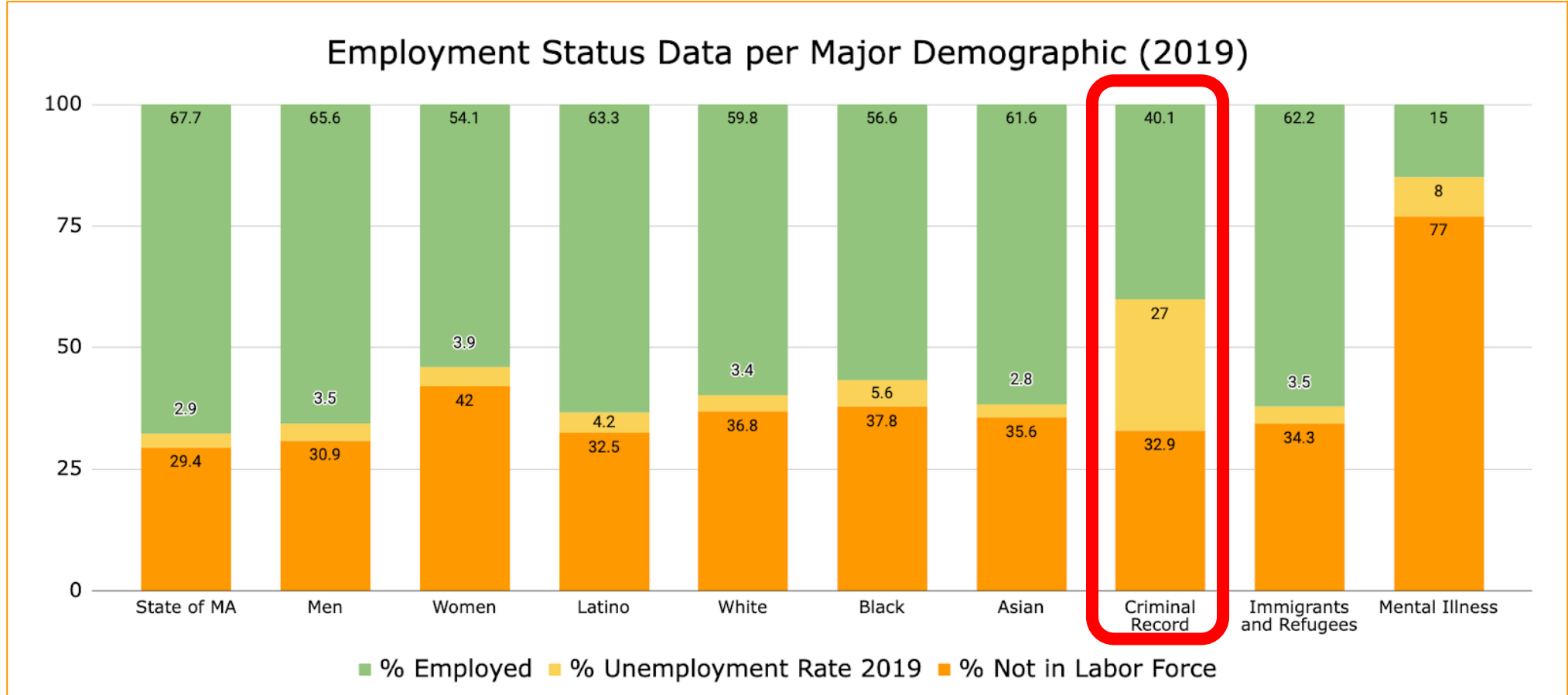
Methods:

Assessing Needs:

- One-Step Survey proctored at Hector Reyes House (HRH)
- Focus Group with previously sentenced residents at HRH
- Key Informant Interviews with local agencies and community members

☆ **Key Findings:**

- Almost 90% of HRH residents are homeless upon admission
- 75% of HRH residents did not meet with an integration specialist prior to release
- Need for native Spanish-speaking staff at HOC
- Need for individualized mental health treatment plans accomplished through trust-building
- Need for employment following release
- HOC programs and inmate services are poorly advertised



Interventions:

- Distribute an informational pamphlet to all inmates which comprehensively describes all program options and opportunities at the HOC during first 2 weeks of a sentence
- Hire at least 1 native Spanish-speaking facilitator for every program offered at the HOC

Project Implementation



(HHS Commissioner Dr. Mattie Castiel with residents of Hector Reyes House) If I was able to implement my interventions at the HOC I would...

- Step 1: Hire native Spanish-speakers**
 - Include Spanish-speaking counselors, social workers, and program facilitators in HOC staff
- Step 2: Distribute program information pamphlets**
 - Provide a comprehensive description of each program including eligibility criteria, duration, number of available spots, and desired outcomes to each inmate during intake
- Step 3: Provide program incentives**
 - Hold program group meetings outside so inmates are rewarded for their participation with extra yard time
- Step 4: Establish transitional services**
 - Collaborate with local agencies (HRH, OpenSky, Legendary Legacies, SMOC, etc.) to develop wrap-around services following incarceration
- Step 5: Evaluate**
 - One year after implementation; calculate the participation rate for each program by racial demographic and compare the data with 2021 participation rates

Desired Outcomes:

- ✓ HOC will report an increase in Latino men participating in programming one year after implementation
- ✓ Releasees will leave the HOC with a comprehensive individualized reintegration plan, connected to resources for housing, employment, medical treatment, mental health counseling, and education



(Café Reyes is a Cuban inspired restaurant which employs residents and graduates of the HRH)

Lessons Learned

- Collaboration is our strongest tool-* for the Reentry Task Force to create desirable results, over 40 different agencies must work together and provide respective resources
- Biases exist at every level of data collection-* in areas where one stakeholder sees a need for crucial for improvement, another may see it as inconsequential to update
- It is important to keep meticulous records-* Incomplete data makes it difficult to track trends and compare outcomes annually

Advice to Future Students

- Consider learning a second language-* The Worcester community is very diverse, thus being multilingual gives you more opportunities for local outreach
- Make good impressions-* Make yourself known to professionals in the Public Health field and form connections for future employment opportunities
- Create a comprehensive practicum plan-* Planning out your program's timeline at the beginning of your practicum experience will allow you to remain on focus and time



References:

- Hector Reyes House [Photograph]. Latin American Health Association. <https://www.lahaworc.org/?lightbox=dataItem-jw4do29n>
- Castile, M., Perrone, D. (2020). *A Brief Look at 2019 Overdose Data in Worcester*. [Powerpoint slides]. Department of Health and Human Services, Worcester, MA. https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1GcVaN8p8_07Kf6U9ic-ruRUTu1qhye/edit?slide=id.p1
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