**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**
**COURT SERVICES AND OFFENDER SUPERVISION AGENCY &**
**PRETRIAL SERVICES AGENCY**
**RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE**

# REVIEW RECOMMENDATION STATEMENT

**DATE:** November 3, 2010

## I. RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUMMARY

**Principal Researcher:** The principal investigator is Karen McDonnell, PhD, The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services (SPHHS) and Prevention and Community Health Department. The student and principal contact for this study is Aldrenna P. Williams (doctoral candidate – The George Washington University SPHHS).

**Title:** Reentry of Substance Abusing Female Ex-Offenders from Prison to an Urban Community

**Institution:** The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services (SPHHS) and Prevention and Community Health Department

**Description:** The purpose of this study is to examine the transition process for substance abusing female ex-offenders from the BOP to communities in Washington, DC, including transition through a halfway house and transition under parole supervision. Participants will be identified by CSOSA as having a substance abuser disorder. The researcher will study relapse and recidivism rates for the cohort of offenders that transitioned through the halfway house and those that transitioned under parole.

This study pertains to CSOSA only.

**Type of Data and Analysis:** The study includes two phases – a qualitative phase based on interviews of experts in the field; and a quantitative phase based on CSOSA data.

The qualitative phase of the study will consist of key informant interviews conducted with professionals at the local and Federal level and national experts responsible for or knowledgeable about directing the transition process of parole or halfway house residents. The researcher initially proposed interviewing a couple of CSOs, but eliminated this request in consideration of the additional time required for union review and approval.

The quantitative phase requires secondary CSOSA data for 75-100 female ex-offenders for the study group and the same number for the comparison group for a total of 150-200 female ex-offenders; over a five- to six-year period.

A table listing the descriptive measures is included as an attachment.

## II. RECOMMENDATION

The RRC recommendation for this study:

■ **Support** ☐ Support with Conditions ☐ Do Not Support

The RRC recommends support of this request as described in the researcher's proposal.

## III. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- The proposed research shows no evidence of non-compliance with Agency policies pertaining to research.
- The researcher requests only non-identifiable data and the resources required to compile these data are minimal.

**Other Considerations:** The researcher does not clarify in the proposal how the comparison group will be identified, or how the data will be requested from CSOSA. However, it was clarified via telephone conversation that the researcher expects to receive a single data file which includes aggregate data for all females released from BOP to the supervision of CSOSA.

CSOSA is able to provide data for the variables readily available through SMART (any data not available from SMART will have to be obtained through BOP's SENTRY. The dataset will include women sentenced in DC Superior Court, sentenced to BOP, and serving the balance of their sentence in the community under post-release supervision (Women serving all their time [MAX OUT] while at BOP to include the halfway house will not be included). The researcher will be able to construct a comparison, and conduct bivariate and multivariate analyses with the data provided.

| I **ACCEPT** the RRC recommendation ✓ | I **DO NOT ACCEPT** the RRC recommendation |
|---|---|
| **Adrienne Poteat, Acting Director, Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency** | |
| Comments: Cedric R. Hendricks for | |

**Name:** Aldrenna P. Williams (Doctoral Candidate – The George Washington University)
**Date:** August 16, 2010

CSOSA Policy Statement 1201: Requirements for Non-Agency Research and Research Involving Human Subjects
(Effective Date of Policy Statement: November 25, 2003)

Submission in Response to Requirements for Non-Agency Research and Research Involving Human Subjects

**(a) Name(s) and current affiliation(s) of the researcher(s):** The name and current affiliation of the principal investigator is Karen McDonnell, PhD, The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services (SPHHS) and Prevention and Community Health Department. The student and principal contact for this study, as stated on the approved IRB, is Aldrenna P. Williams (doctoral candidate – The George Washington University SPHHS).

**(b) Title of the study:** Reentry of Substance Abusing Female Ex-Offenders from Prison to an Urban Community

**(c) Purpose of the project:** The purpose of this study is to examine the transition process for substance abusing female ex-offenders from prison to communities in Washington, DC. This study will examine transition through a halfway house and transition under parole supervision for female ex-offenders identified by Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) as having a substance abuser disorder who are returning to their Washington, DC communities following imprisonment in a Bureau of Prison's (BOP) federal prison. The overall objective is to examine and compare relapse and recidivism rates for the cohort of offenders that transitioned through the halfway house and the cohort that transitioned under parole. The results of the study will serve to provide policy and program recommendations about which transition process is best suited to support and guide female ex-offenders who have a substance abuse disorder in successfully transitioning back to their communities as measured by lower rates of recidivism and relapse for this target population.

**(d) Location of the project:** Washington, DC

**(e) Duration of the study:** no more than 1-year to complete study (Secondary quantitative data abstracted from CSOSA will span 5-6 year period)

**(f) Research methods to be employed:** There will be two phases to this study: 1) phase 1 – a qualitative phase (based on interviews of experts in the field; no ex-offenders will be interviewed) and 2) phase 2 – the quantitative phase (based on CSOSA data). The qualitative phase of the study will consist of key informant interviews conducted with professionals at the local and Federal level and national experts responsible for or knowledgeable about directing the transition process of parole or halfway house residents. Data gathered from the interviews will be used to identify possible confounding variables to ensure that the study and comparison groups are comparable and lessen the chance of bias occurring and also to ensure clarity about the criteria used to refer female offenders to a halfway house or grant parole. For phase 2 or the quantitative phase, data will be abstracted from the multiple CSOSA case management database systems. A table listing the descriptive measures, dependent and independent variables, level of measurement and possible range were submitted to and reviewed by the CSOSA Research

Director to ensure that the data required for the quantitative phase of this study will be made available and to ensure that there is no way that subjects can be identified.

**(g) Sample type and size required and time frame for sample collection**: Quantitative data will be abstracted for 75-100 female ex-offenders for the study group and the same number for the comparison group for a total of 150-200 female ex-offenders. Sample data from CSOSA databases will be abstracted from a timeframe spanning 5-6 years. Data to be abstracted is based on variables table in dissertation proposal. This will be an adequate number of subjects to answer my research questions. This sample size is well within the range of those used for comparable studies based on extensive literature review of studies involving this population group.

The time frame for sample collection of this secondary data for each study group is 12 months after the offender has completed serving out the final days of their sentence in either a halfway house or under parole. The qualitative portion of this study will be comprised of key informant interviews with professionals at the local and Federal level and national experts responsible for or knowledgeable about directing the transition process of parole or halfway house residents will be conducted with no more than 10 individuals

**(h) Agency staff and/or resources needed to support the study and description of the support needs:** For the quantitative phase the only resources required will be data abstracted from the multiple CSOSA case management database systems that includes the Supervision and Management Automated Record Tracking (SMART) database, the Recidivism Tracking Database, the Screener Database, the AUTO Screener Database and the CSOSA/PSA-2 Drug Test Management System (DTMS) and CSOSA/PSA-6-Pretrial Real time Information Systems Manager (PRISM). Data requested is based on a CSOSA pre-approved list of variables. No resources or support will be required for the qualitative portion of this study.

**(i) Indication of risk or discomfort to subjects as a result of participation**: There are no physical risks associated with this study. The only possible risk to loss of confidentiality or privacy is to the individuals interviewed for phase one of this study. The key informant may also experience some emotional discomfort as a result of their discussing specific activities. To address this risk, no identifiable information will be collected on these individuals. All information will remain anonymous. Data points obtained for the second or quantitative phase of this study will be from the CSOSA database. A consent form will be sent electronically to the key informant prior to their participation in the interview. The consent form will be review with the key informant prior to the start of the interview. Verbal consent will be obtained at that time.

**(j) Anticipated results:** Focusing on the female ex-offender returning to the community provides useful information for designing intervention programs to assist them with their personal development. Identifying the more effective transition process for female substance abusing ex-offenders to have lower recidivism rates and lower relapse rates provides the statistical and conceptual justification needed to acquire increased funding to ensure provision of more appropriate and effective resources which also means increased public safety. In addition, this study will also produce empirical data and information that provides insight needed to assist public health practitioners and those in the field of criminal justice in addressing reentry issues as it relates to health program planning and substance abuse treatment.

**(k) List of deliverables:** In terms of the list of deliverables that will be prepared once the study is completed, a completed and successfully defended dissertation study document will be delivered to include datasets based on data obtained from CSOSA.

**(2) A detailed statement, which includes the following information items in the order in which they are listed below:**

**(a) Review of the related literature:** The complete literature review appears as part of the successfully defended and approved dissertation proposal. However, a summary of the literature review is as follows: A summary of the reviewed literature criminal justice and related studies was conducted to identify those that focus on female offenders as the main target population or a segment of the study population, substance abuse treatment, reentry and recidivism. The overarching question that guided the review of the studies was "Which transition process, halfway house or community supervision (parole), is best suited to assist female ex-offenders in transitioning back to their communities in providing the support, structure and services needed to be successful in addressing their substance abuse problems and avoiding re-arrest". While it is acknowledged that there are many challenges ex-offenders face in the transition to their communities; limited empirical research focused on female offenders exclusively. Research has primarily focused on male offenders transitioning back to the community. Female offenders are often grouped with male offenders in these studies because they are a small segment of the overall correctional population.

**(b) Detailed description of the research method:** The study is designed to achieve the following objectives: 1) to examine the characteristics of female offenders who transition through a halfway house compared to those who transition under parole 2) to examine the relationships between the transition process of halfway house stay and relapse and recidivism rates 3) to examine the relationships between parole and relapse and recidivism rates and 4) to examine the correlation between descriptive/ background variables and the two transition processes and relapse and recidivism rates. In order to do so there will be two phases to this study: 1) phase 1 – a qualitative phase and 2) phase 2 – the quantitative phase. The qualitative phase of the study will consist of key informant interviews conducted with professionals at the local and Federal level and national experts responsible for or knowledgeable about directing the transition process of parole or halfway house residents. Data gathered from the interviews will be used to identify possible confounding variables to ensure that the study and comparison groups are comparable and lessen the chance of bias occurring and also to ensure clarity about the criteria used to refer female offenders to a halfway house or grant parole. For phase 2 or the quantitative phase, data will be abstracted from the multiple CSOSA case management database systems that includes the Supervision and Management Automated Record Tracking (SMART) database, the Recidivism Tracking Database, the Screener Database, the AUTO Screener Database and the CSOSA/PSA-2 Drug Test Management System (DTMS) and CSOSA/PSA-6 - Pretrial Real time Information Systems Manager (PRISM) . The timeframe of the study will be from January 2003- January 2008 (5 years). Data will be abstracted 12 months after the offender has completed serving out the final days of their sentence either in a halfway house or under parole. A table listing the descriptive measures, dependent and independent variables, level of measurement and possible range were submitted to and reviewed by the CSOSA Research

Director to ensure that the data required for the quantitative phase of this study will be made available and to ensure that there is no way that subjects can be identified. The CSOSA Research Director has provided written approval of the document. Upon receiving IRB Exempt status a formal document will be prepared and submitted to the CSOSA Research and Review Committee (RRC), as required by CSOSA according to Policy Statement 1201, to receive formal approval for non-agency research.

Interviews will take place in a mutually agreed to location or will be conducted telephonically. Key informant interviews will be conducted with no more than 10 individuals. Quantitative data will be abstracted for 75-100 female ex-offenders for the study group and the same number for the comparison group for a total of 150-200 female ex-offenders.

Analysis will consist of univariable analyses of descriptive measures to include frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations; correlations among all variables will then be inspected. Multivariable analysis will be conducted to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable and each of the independent variables. Regression will also be measured.

**(c) Significance of anticipated results and their contribution to the advancement of knowledge and benefits of research and/or participation to CSOSA/PSA:** The results/findings of this study will be made available to members of my dissertation committee and CSOSA/PSA. In addition, efforts will be made to publish the results in peer review journals to contribute to the fields responsible for working with and providing criminal justice services, substance abuse treatment/prevention and other public health related services to the target population. This will be done to provide insight into the best policy suited to support and guide female ex-offenders who are substance abusers in successfully transitioning back to their communities as measured by lower rates of recidivism and relapse. Because this study will focus solely on data obtained from CSOSA, CSOSA/PSA will benefit to a greater extent than other urban areas.

**(e) Specific resources required from the Agency:** For the quantitative phase the only resources required will be data abstracted from the multiple CSOSA case management database systems that includes the Supervision and Management Automated Record Tracking (SMART) database, the Recidivism Tracking Database, the Screener Database, the AUTO Screener Database and the CSOSA/PSA-2 Drug Test Management System (DTMS) and CSOSA/PSA-6-Pretrial Real time Information Systems Manager (PRISM). Data requested is based on a CSOSA pre-approved list of variables. No resources or support will be required for the qualitative portion of this study.

**(f) Description of all possible risks, discomforts, and benefits to individual subjects or a class of subjects, and a discussion of the likelihood that the risks and discomforts will actually occur:** There are no physical risks associated with this study. The only possible risk to loss of confidentiality or privacy is to the key informants interviewed for phase one of this study. The key informant may experience some emotional discomfort as a result of their discussing specific activities. To address this risk, no identifiable information will be collected on these individuals. All information will remain anonymous. Data points obtained for the second or quantitative phase of this study will be from the CSOSA database. A consent form will be sent electronically to the key informant prior to their participation in the interview. The consent form

will be review with the key informant prior to the start of the interview. Verbal consent will be obtained at that time. The likelihood that the risks and discomforts will be experienced by the key informants is highly unlikely.

**(g) Description of steps taken to minimize any potential risks or discomforts; and (h) Description of physical and/or administrative procedures to be followed to: 1) ensure the security of any individually identifiable data that are being collected for the project; and 2) destroy research records or remove individual identifiers from those records when the research has been completed:** The initial phase of this study will be the interview of key informants. The notes written during my interview sessions will be stored on my personal computer. Information will only be accessible by entering a password. I will be the sole possessor of that password. No identifiable data will be collected that will make it possible to identify the key informants. Data will not be connected to the key informant to ensure confidentiality. Among each category/description for each key informant there is more than one person performing that activity/job thus making it very difficult to identify the person serving as the key informant(s).

The second phase of the study will require data abstracted from CSOSA databases. Data provided by CSOSA will be transferred electronically to my personal computer. The data being abstracted and analyzed for the quantitative portion of the study is being provided directly by the CSOSA Research Director via disk. I will not have direct access to the data system. The data will be abstracted in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified. The only data abstracted from the CSOSA databases are the following: Age, Race/Ethnicity, Substance User, Criminal Justice History, Education level, Marital status, Employment status, Parent status; Independent variables – halfway house stay and parole; Dependent variables – relapse and post-release recidivism. This information is not enough to identify the research subject. In addition, access to this data will also only be available by inserting a personal password. I will be the sole possessor of that password. All data upon completion of this study will be destroyed.

**(i) Description of any anticipated effects of the research project on Agency Programs and operations:** There should be no effects from the research project on Agency programs and operations. Data will be requested per the CSOSA pre-approved variables. Once data is obtained there should be no anticipated effects unless the data is in a form that is no useable.

**(j) Relevant research materials such as vitae, endorsements, descriptions of similar work undertaken, sample informed consent statements, questionnaires, and interview schedules:** A copy of the vitae is attached. An endorsement in the form of the approved IRB exempt application to conduct the study is also attached. The approved informed consent form that will be used for the qualitative data collection portion of the study which is separate from the CSOSA data collection portion is attached. This approved informed consent form contains the questions that will be posed to key informant interviews and interview schedule.

**(k) Statement indicating that copies of all deliverables will be provided to CSOSA/PSA; and (l) Statement that copies of any datasets will be provided to CSOSA/PSA at the conclusion of the project:** Copies of all deliverables which will consist of an approved

dissertation document will be provided to CSOSA/PSA. Datasets prepared for the dissertation research study will also be provided to CSOSA/PSA.

**(3) Employee and non-employee researchers (for non-Agency and Agency research Involving human subjects) must also provide verification that the proposed research has been approved by an independent Institutional Review Board (IRB), including; and (a) Copy of application for review to IRB and (b) Copy of certification statement from IRB:** Verification of approval by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), a copy of the IRB application that was submitted for review and a copy of certification statement from IRB are attached.