



Covid-19 Response Varies in Prisons and those with Civil Commitment, Often with Tragic Outcomes

by Wayne Bowers, CURE-SORT Director

Responses to Covid-19 of prisons and civil commitment centers, has varied results and some have not had good endings. Some prison systems have communicated well with inmates and family through J-Pay or a similar process. Some have designated a living unit for people who test positive. Unfortunately, compassionate leave for vulnerable people with a sex offense are generally not included. We have received numerous reports and various organizations have reported also and these are far more than we have space to publish. Some of our associates have received sad notices of someone passing and two we have received point out the futility and sadness of the circumstances. Both come from Missouri but there are countless stories nationally in civil and prison locations.

Vicki Henry of Women Against the Registry released this note: "I wanted to let you know about one of the men I have worked with over the last several years, Don Packham was about to turn 88 when he passed. The letter following is the detail I shared to Jesse Borgan at the **St. Louis Post Dispatch**.

"I wanted to let you that Don Packham, age 87 who was being held at SORTS in Farmington passed away on the morning of Sunday, November 22nd, in a St. Louis Hospital. His grave side service was held yesterday in Neosho, MO. As you remember Don Packham was the 86 year old that you wrote about a year or so ago, after being denied being released to his wife and family"

"Don was in a unit at SORTS that became infected with the COVID-19 virus through staff bringing it in. Don tested positive two weeks before his passing and was symptom free until about a week later. Don got to the point that he was wheelchair bound, and due to increasing breathing issues was put on a ventilator in his room at the facility"

"His issues steadily progressed to the point that they moved him to a Farmington hospital, and from there to St. Louis. When he was at Farmington both his wife and I would talk to him daily seeing how he was doing. When Don got to point that he was afraid he would die if went to sleep, his wife Loraine contacted the SORTS doctors to get him more help. After that he was moved to a local hospital."

" In St. Louis with treatment Don becoming better, they performed a heart procedure on him to open up two of his arteries. (angioplasty). This helped but the overall stress on his body was too much. While in the hospitals Don's wife was not allowed to have contact with him, and had to go through a third party staff member to get information on him. That person was off for the weekend when Don passed.

"Don was one of three elderly men who have passed at SORTS from COVID from the COVID; over the last few months. Jesse as Don's friend and Chaplin I want to thank you for all your time and effort in trying to help Don and the cause of others like him. Again, THANK YOU from me and the family for the work you do."

Pastor Gary Almquist
Chaplin, Vernon County Sheriff's Office

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One of our long-time associates has communicated for many years with a Missouri prisoner with a capital offense. He has remarked at times the change in attitude he has seen over the years. He told me recently that he had contracted COVID-19 and was in serious condition.

He died this week. In communication with this man's attorney, this was said about him: "Many of you knew that he has been very sick. On December 1 at 3:36 p.m. he died having contracted COVID-19 on Missouri's death row and spending 16 days on life support. Those of us who represented him knew him to be sensitive, funny and generous of spirit. On nearly a weekly basis, he asked for help of some kind for others, despite his own vulnerable position. At times, this included help for people who did not have his best interest in mind. When his legal team objected, he would patiently explain: 'it's not their fault, they are damaged. Hurt people, hurt people.' He recognized his own damage. Though it would have been so much easier for him to shut off and shut down, he spent the years after his crimes examining his own trauma and mental illness. He never defended what he did. He was truly sorry and his remorse enveloped him. But it did not stop him from demonstrating his generosity of spirit to others on a daily basis. He spent years trying to understand why he came to inflict the pain that he inflicted. Despite lifelong extremely severe trauma, he retained a wonderment, a beautiful and unique way of looking at the world, and a soft and wry sense of humor. We will miss him very much."

We also want to share these beautiful words from a friend, which his sister was able to read to him over video before he passed:

"I knew him from the time we spent together at Haley House as young men in a program that was out of our control. Some of us were granted the opportunities to become all we could be. He was a very frail small young man in a situation that we all felt we couldn't get out of. I'm saddened that most of us didn't survive that situation and that our lives were directed in ways that we would never have chosen for ourselves.

I think so many of us given the proper opportunities, our lives would have come out much differently. I didn't know him well in his adult life but what I do know about him is that he was no different than the rest of us- scared and alone and feeling that nobody really cared. I'm glad that he had a memory of someone that did. To his family, I'm sure he will be missed in your circle. Take some peace that he can rest now. We can pick out the parts of our lives that he impacted in a positive way and hold those memories for our own peace, all of us."

Our goal at CURE-SORT is to help all people incarcerated to be released and to have the resources to improve their life, understand their weaknesses, and move on with a good life. Unfortunately, that doesn't happen with all of those locked up. It does not, however, mean they cannot make major changes in their lives. I respect these people and those helping

Marshall Project Offers Free Subscription to Service

The Marshall Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization that seeks to create and sustain a sense of national urgency about the U.S. criminal justice system. Because of changes as a result of COVID, many states have closed their prison libraries. This means some incarcerated people no longer have access to their newsletter, News Inside.

You may write or email The Marshall Project for free subscriptions. The information is below, as well as a link to the latest issue, released today.

Marshall Project Address:

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The Marshall Project
156 West 56 Street, Suite 701
New York, NY 10019

Email: newsinside@themarshallproject.org

Latest Issue Introduction:

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/11/17/subjects-to-debate>

Ban the Box: Eliminating the Stigma of the Previously Incarcerated Persons

By David Garlock

Ban the Box is a campaign that began in the 1990's to help previously incarcerated individuals obtain employment. The purpose is to eradicate the question about felony or misdemeanor convictions on the initial job application. Taking the question off means that they cannot ask during the initial application process. Most places that have taken it off applications can ask once a job has been offered, and the conviction can only result in loss of the job if it affects the work one will be doing. Hence, someone who went to prison for a drug charge would not be allowed to be a pharmacist. Several states, cities, and jurisdictions have passed this practice.

The reason that Ban the Box is important is two-fold. First, many qualified individuals are not considered for positions after the potential employer takes a quick glance over the application. Many employers search for criminal background, education, and reasons for leaving a previous job. Once they see that someone has a criminal background, the application goes into the trash. The applicant's qualifications are trumped by their time in prison. The second part of this is the reaction a previously incarcerated applicant may have to this type of question. There are some individuals who come upon this question and stop filling out the application out of shame. They feel like they are standing before the judge again and must relive the worst thing that they did, wondering if it will stop.

The Ban the Box campaign has shifted to also fight to get this question off housing applications and college applications. All of these are part of our basic needs, and they are shut off to those who have criminal backgrounds. Society tells those who are coming out of prison to get a job or education and housing, but they have 20-foot walls in front of every opportunity. They are being set up for failure.

The way we can best help those returning home to succeed is to be aware of campaigns like Ban the Box and push for the legislation of these laws. Individuals who went to prison should not continue to be judged by the worst thing they ever did. We need to look show them the grace and forgiveness that God has shown us. Stand with us as we fight to open new doors and opportunities for those who are returning home as new persons.

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*Your Contributions Are Vital to
CURE-SORT. Please consider
donating to help us continue
our operation work today*

Efforts to assist as many people as we can with issues of sex offense in some way could never be more important. And financial support has been hampered some this year with many people having budget problems of their own, due to Covid-19 and the various ramifications, which in many instances has led to loss of jobs. So, with this in mind, we continue to appreciate the donations we receive.

We thank all of you so much for your support. And we thank so many of you who make comments in correspondence about how much our efforts and assistance through the years has been beneficial to you. Those comments make us realize the importance that we continue to carry on. Our best wishes and Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all of you. And on behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your continued efforts and your financial support.

Sincerely,

Wayne Bowers

Wayne Bowers
CURE-SORT Director

Available Resources from CURE-SORT

We are pleased to offer the following resources. Donations accepted to cover cost of postage and printing. Mail donations to the CURE-SORT, address on Page 3.

One Breath At A Time by Ila Davis (\$17.50)

Understanding Offending Behavior by Stephen Price. (A collection of 9 of Stephens articles from previous newsletters) (\$4.00 for the set of 9 articles)

When Someone on the Registry Moves into My Neighborhood (Member Price \$5; Non-Member \$10)

SUPPORT GROUP: Families & friends for those in civil confinement, contact Andrew Extein, MSW. Interested persons please e-mail:

CCN@curenational.org. Contact SORT if no email and we'll contact him.

No More Victims – One Man's Journey into Sexual Offending and Recovery, By S. Sands (Ed G), \$13.95 (does not include shipping). Send all Requests to: **gunder788@verizon.net** or **amazon.com**, or to CURE-SORT.

I/We, _____, make the following donation to CURE-SORT and understand that my gift is tax exempt to the extent provided under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code.

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