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**Restoration and Renewal:
Potential for Arts-in-Corrections in California**
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Overcrowding in California's state prison system has reached crisis proportions, resulting in federal receivership and a U.S. Supreme Court mandate to reduce overcrowding in the state's correctional facilities. To address this problem, Governor Brown achieved a realignment of the prison system—which will mean sending thousands of state prisoners to county jails. Funds for services for the expanded population in the county jails were negotiated in the budget process.

California Lawyers for the Arts is working with the William James Association and California Arts Advocates on efforts to restore arts in corrections programs by incubating a number of model projects, developing new evaluation information and distributing information about the value of these programs.

California Lawyers for the Arts has received seed funding from the Gerbode Foundation to expand the advocacy effort while beginning a small number of model projects that will be evaluated in order to build the case for state-wide restoration of California's Arts-in-Corrections programs. In addition, the State Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has pledged some in-kind support for programs in the state prison system.

We have reached out to CAC local arts agencies in order to let them know about this new opportunity to expand their services for disadvantaged persons. Our goal is to provide resources, including background information, training tools and proposal templates for local arts agencies that are interested in facilitating arts programs in the county jails. This is the time to approach county Sheriffs with suggestions that they offer arts services as part of the rehabilitation and reentry services they will provide to inmates. For example, WJA met with the Sheriff of Santa Cruz County, as well as representatives of the County Office of Education, to gain their support for such programs.

Artists of all disciplines, including performers, writers, media and visual artists as well as artists working in the environmental realm, can serve as creative mentors and teachers for those persons who are able to turn their lives around but currently lack the tools to do so. Through the arts, inmates learn how to work, building their self-esteem and dignity, essential qualities for a successful life after incarceration.

The William James Association, a nationally funded organization providing training and technical assistance for arts-in-corrections programs, is working with the Sheriff's office to develop classes in visual and performing arts, as well as arts activities for inmates and their families. Through its mediation program, California Lawyers for the Arts is developing short programs that include conflict resolution and restorative justice elements that can be included in the menu of arts programs. California Arts Advocates, the state's advocacy organization for the arts, is committed to helping with developing public support for the renewal of arts-in-corrections.

Background:

The California Arts Council (CAC) eliminated its national model Artist in Residence Program (AIR) in 2003-04 when the agency's general fund allocation was reduced by 94% (from \$18 million to \$1 million). This significant program—the agency's oldest—placed artists in schools, nonprofit organizations, units of government, senior centers, hospitals, Boys & Girls Clubs, correctional centers and tribal governments. In addition, the agency maintained interagency agreements with the CDCR and the California Youth Authority (CYA) that funded administrative positions to support Artist Facilitators across the system; those agreements ceased with the funding reduction. Though the CDCR continued to support a limited number of Artist Facilitators, funding for these positions was recently eliminated as well.

Lack of rehabilitation programs in the state of California has resulted in the country's highest recidivism rate, estimated at 70% within three years of release.

A cost/benefit analysis by Lawrence G. Brewster, Political Science Professor at San Jose State University, for the William James Association and the Department of Corrections, concluded in 1983 that arts in corrections programs provide economic benefits for the Corrections Department, such as reduced costs of disciplinary administration, as well as better parole outcomes for ex-offenders. Because inmates who have been engaged in arts programs are less likely to return to prison, this program will pay for itself and even reduce overall costs of corrections going forward. The full report is available at http://www.williamjamesassociation.org/reports/Brewster_report_full.pdf

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