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**Rethinking Arrest: Street Prostitution and Public  
Policy in Rhode Island**  
Family Life Center 2009

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## Introduction

The existence of prostitution is harmful to Rhode Island in many ways. Ultimately, Rhode Island wants better futures for its people, healthier influences on its children, and safer communities than those associated with prostitution. Currently, Rhode Island's public policy around prostitution has focused on limiting street prostitution through arrest and incarceration. This report analyses this arrest and incarceration method in order to inform Rhode Island's current dialogue around how to reduce prostitution in Rhode Island.

Study conclusions include:

- Street prostitution has decreased considerably in Rhode Island in the last two decades, but it is still prevalent in certain neighborhoods of Pawtucket, Central Falls, Woonsocket, and Providence.
- The state could save half a million dollars in law enforcement and incarceration costs by not arresting and incarcerating people for working as prostitutes.
- Pawtucket experienced a dramatic reduction in street prostitution as part of the R.E.N.E.W. program that provides outreach and social services to people working in street prostitution.
- This model should be replicated and expanded to the other cities.

Rhode Island is not unique in regard to prostitution—prostitution exists in Rhode Island and has existed for many years. However, Rhode Island is currently the only state with its own distinct set of prostitution related laws. Outdoor prostitution is illegal—it is illegal to solicit commercial sex from a car and loiter for the purposes of commercial sex. However, prostitution is semi-legal indoors—while it is illegal to manage or profit from a commercial sex business, it is legal to engage in commercial sex. Recently, a very active debate over Rhode Island's prostitution laws has compelled a re-examination of public policy. There has been considerable concern over Rhode Island's reputation as a destination for prostitution and a concern over the existence of sex trafficking as the result of semi-legalized indoor commercial sex. This study's focus on outdoor prostitution does not imply that sex trafficking is unimportant, it is just a study of other types of prostitution which also require attention.

The first section of the study describes Rhode Island prostitution law and then analyzes street prostitution. This analysis uses arrest data to try to describe where street prostitution exists in Rhode Island and how it has changed over time. The data used is compared to Connecticut and New Jersey, which publish similar data. The study then provides a more detailed description of what street prostitution is like based on a 21 person survey of women working in prostitution in Pawtucket.

The second section is a case study of the program Revitalizing & Engaging Neighborhoods by Empowering Women (R.E.N.E.W) that proactively attempts to decrease prostitution in the Barton Street neighborhood of Pawtucket. The third section outlines recommended public policy objectives and suggestions for fulfilling those objectives.

There are many different perspectives on prostitution. Although it is generally agreed that society should work towards decreasing prostitution, there is disagreement over exactly what the problem is, what solutions should be pursued, and what laws should be passed. This study attempts to provide more information on the subject in order to better inform all perspectives. Unfortunately, there is still a lot that is simply unknown and unstudied about prostitution, and the results of this study are limited by this lack of information. However, the data that is available provides at least a start towards making informed public policy in order to decrease prostitution in Rhode Island.

## Prostitution in Rhode Island

### Current Public Policy

Current public policy in Rhode Island focuses on deterring and punishing street prostitution through arrest and incarceration with the goal of decreasing prostitution and the associated community problems. Laws allow certain types of indoor prostitution.

RI law makes outdoor prostitution illegal through the “Loitering for indecent purposes” statute and the “Soliciting from a motor vehicle for indecent purposes” statute.<sup>1</sup> These laws criminalize not just the act of prostitution but the intent of engaging in prostitution.

Indoor prostitution is governed by three statutes which make it illegal to profit from some else’s act of prostitution, to in any way encourage or induce someone else to engage in prostitution, or to assist someone else in prostitution by knowingly providing transportation or housing.<sup>2</sup> These laws make it legal to engage in consensual commercial sex indoors. However, the laws make it illegal to run a commercial sex business. They also make it illegal to be a landlord for a brothel or place of prostitution, but this requires proof that the landlord is knowingly permitting prostitution.

Lastly, Rhode Island and Federal law make sex trafficking illegal. They carry more serious penalties than Rhode Island’s prostitution laws, but are harder to prove.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **11-34-8 Loitering for indecent purposes:** “It shall be unlawful for any person to stand or wander in or near any public highway or street, or any public or private place, and attempt to engage passersby in conversation, or stop or attempt to stop motor vehicles, for the purpose of prostitution...”

**11-34-8.1 Soliciting from motor vehicles for indecent purposes:** “It shall be unlawful for any person, while an operator or passenger in a motor vehicle to stop, or attempt to stop another vehicle or pedestrian, or to engage or attempt to engage persons in another vehicle or pedestrians in conversation, for the purposes of prostitution...”

<sup>2</sup> **11-34-5.1 Deriving support or maintenance from prostitution:** Makes it illegal for “Any person, knowing a person to be a prostitute, who shall live or derive support or maintenance, in whole or in part, from the earnings or proceeds of prostitution, from moneys loaned, advanced to, or charged against the prostitute by any keeper, manager, or inmate of a house of ill fame or other place where prostitution is practiced or allowed, or who shall share in the earnings, proceeds or money”

**11-34-1 Pandering.** – (a) It shall be unlawful for any person to secure a person for a house of ill fame, or to procure for a person a place as inmate of a house of ill fame; or by any promise, threat, by abuse of person, or by any other device or scheme, to cause, induce, persuade, or encourage a person to become a prostitute, to enter upon or lead a wanton or dissolute life, to become an inmate of a house of ill fame, to enter a place in which prostitution is encouraged or allowed, or remain in it as an inmate, or to come into this state or leave this state for the purpose of prostitution.

**11-34-5 Transportation for indecent purposes – Harboring prostitution.** – (a) It shall be unlawful for any person, for pecuniary gain, to secure, direct, or transport, or offer to secure, direct, or transport another for the purpose of prostitution, or for any other lewd or indecent act; or to receive or offer or agree to receive any person into any place, structure, house, building, room, or conveyance for the purpose of committing any such acts, or knowingly permit any person to remain in the premises for those purposes, or to, in any way, aid or abet or participate in any of the acts or things enumerated in this chapter.

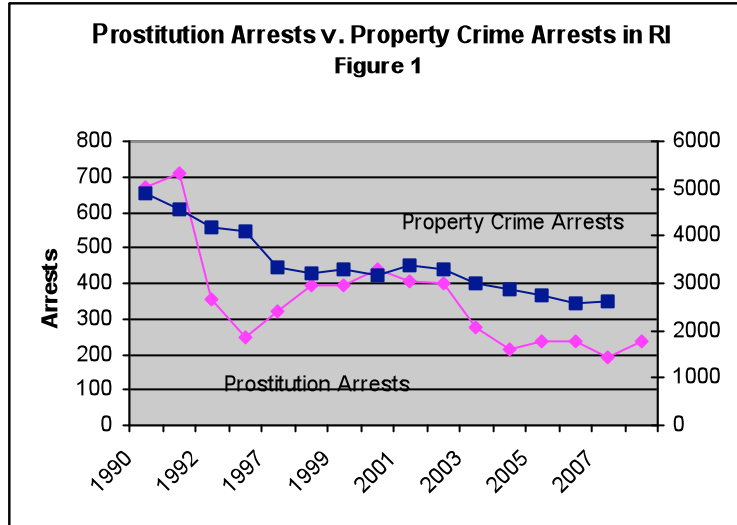
<sup>3</sup> Rhode Island General Law 11-67 Trafficking of Persons and Involuntary Servitude. The law criminalizes forced labor for the purposes of commercial sex ; The Federal “Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000” (VTVPA) supplements existing laws and establishes new tools and resources to combat trafficking in persons and to provide services and protections for victims.

These laws require proof of force, fraud, or coercion to convict a person of trafficking someone for sex.

**Where does street prostitution occur in Rhode Island?**

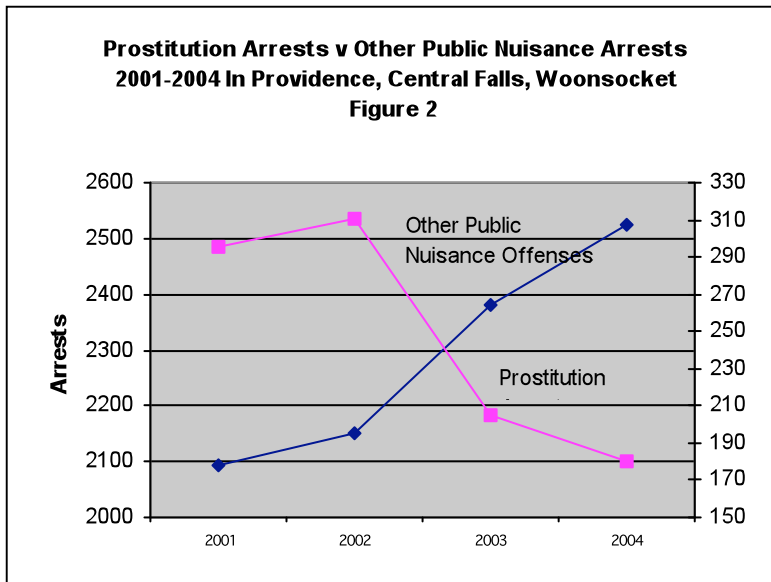
Arrests for prostitution are concentrated almost entirely in Providence County, in the city of Providence, with significant amounts also in Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Woonsocket. On average, 96% of all arrests for prostitution occur within these four cities.

Prostitution arrest data is largely comprised of arrests for outdoor prostitution.<sup>4</sup> Police do not report whether or not arrests are made indoors, however according to the *Providence Journal*,



between 1997 and 2005 there were 17 raids of indoor locations in Providence, and some of the raids resulted in prostitution arrests, an average of 2 raids per year and an estimated 24 arrests for prostitution.<sup>5</sup>

(In 2000, for example, there were 311 prostitution arrests in Providence).



Because prostitution arrests are generally for street prostitution, this indicates that the problem of street prostitution is concentrated in these four cities. This does not indicate where the individuals buying and selling sex are from, only where the crime takes place.

These four cities have high per capita rates of

<sup>4</sup> Until 2005, RI data did not distinguish between prostitution arrests for buying, selling, or pimping. Since 2005 arrests have distinguished pimping, which is consistently below 10 arrests statewide a year, however arrest data does still not distinguish between buying and selling.

<sup>5</sup> Shapiro lists 10 raids, 5 of which mention arresting women for prostitution: 3 women, 5 women, and 6 women, plus two with an unknown number of arrests. Shapiro, Melanie. 2009. "Sex Trafficking and Decriminalized Prostitution in Rhode Island." Senior Honors Thesis, University of Rhode Island.

prostitution as compared to other Connecticut cities of their size and socioeconomic status. For example, the cities of New London and Hartford had similar rates of prostitution arrests to Providence (see Appendix). Central Falls, a city with very high population density and poverty rates, has a very high per capita rate of prostitution arrests.

In contrast, all other Rhode Island cities have almost no prostitution arrests. There were a total of three arrests for prostitution in Bristol, Washington and Newport counties from 2005 through 2008. Even cities like Newport, West Warwick, and Cranston with significant rates of poverty had no street prostitution arrests. This is in contrast with Connecticut and New Jersey, where prostitution arrests occur in all parts of the states with poverty rates above 7%. These Rhode Island cities have historically experienced a conspicuous absence of street prostitution arrests.

It is impossible to calculate the number of individuals working in street prostitution in Rhode Island. An estimate was made by counting the number of women brought to prison or jail on prostitution charges. A period of three years is used because the majority of women surveyed had been on the street for over three years. Using this method, at least 350 women are involved in street prostitution in Rhode Island. This estimate does not take into account the significant number of women who reported they had never been arrested for prostitution. It also does not take into account the fact that many women likely work intermittently in prostitution.

### **Prostitution Trends in Rhode Island**

Prostitution arrests have declined by 60% over the last two decades in Rhode Island and specifically in the cities of Providence, Central Falls, and Woonsocket. The rates of all indexed crimes have fallen dramatically over this period of time in Rhode Island and across the nation. However, as shown in Figure 1, prostitution arrests declined relative to similar crimes in 1992 and then again in 2002. Figure 2 shows the number of prostitution arrests versus the number of public nuisance and nonviolent street crime arrests in Providence, Central Falls, and Woonsocket from 2001-2004.<sup>6</sup> While these arrests increased 21%, prostitution arrests declined by 38%. These two graphs indicate that Rhode Island streets are relatively free of street prostitution in comparison to the past two decades and this decline was not correlated with similar crime rates.

In 2002, indoor prostitution started changing in Rhode Island. Until 2002 Providence police were making prostitution arrests in message parlors. In 2002 a District Court judge dismissed an indoor prostitution arrest based on a rereading of the Rhode Island prostitution law, and consequently arrests of individuals for prostitution indoors stopped. Very little else is known about indoor prostitution in Rhode Island except for anecdotal information collected from the internet and newspaper advertisements.

### **The Faces of Street Prostitution**

While street prostitution has declined in Rhode Island, it is still prevalent in parts of Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Woonsocket. In these cities, there were a total

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<sup>6</sup> This group of offenses includes: breaking and entering, larceny, motor vehicle theft, vandalism, stolen property, drug possession, and disorderly conduct. Pawtucket is not included in the analysis because it is an outlier. This is discussed more in Section 3. This chart is restricted to this period of time because of changes in RI offense reporting standards which make comparisons of various offenses difficult.

of 231 people arrested specifically for the crime of engaging in prostitution in 2008. According to the Department of Corrections, 23% of the females brought to jail are brought for prostitution charges. While little is known about these women, since 2004 Pawtucket Citizens Development Corporation's Project R.E.N.E.W. has been actively reaching out to, assisting, and learning about people engaging in prostitution.

The following survey data provides a general overview of the life of this group of women. This data is based on a sample of 21 women interviewed by R.E.N.E.W in 2007 that were involved in street prostitution. The results are similar to other survey research conducted on street prostitution in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Average Age   | 40  |
| Have Been Arrested for Prostitution                   | 55% |
| Have been working on the street for more than 3 years | 55% |
| Engage in commercial sex more than 6 times a week     | 90% |
| Engage in unprotected commercial sex                  | 35% |
| Know their HIV status                                 | 47% |
| Have Hepatitis C                                      | 45% |
| Have used drugs in the past year                      | 95% |
| Want to quit taking drugs                             | 79% |
| Have been homeless in the past year                   | 70% |
| Have been diagnosed with a mental illness             | 55% |
| Have children   | 85% |
| Live with their children                              | 22% |

The survey reveals that this group of women is extremely poor, at risk for sexually transmitted diseases and other health problems, has a high degree of drug use, and are trapped in a life of prostitution. Research on indoor prostitution versus street prostitution indicates that there are important differences so this data should not be extrapolated to all types of prostitution.<sup>8</sup>

The following quotations are from interviews done by R.E.N.E.W in 2009. R.E.N.E.W. will be releasing a video about their program which includes video of the interviews.

*Tammy*<sup>9</sup>

“When I was growing up I seen whores and pimps, and I always seen that and I said, I will never be a prostitute I will never have a pimp, and all that crap. And then when I became thirty five I became addicted to heroin. I was molested by my step dad at three or four, all my life I had problems with people touching me. So I don't like being with the guys, but I felt like at least I'm getting paid for it now.

<sup>7</sup> Farley, Melissa and Kelly, Vanessa. 2000. “Prostitution: a critical review of the medical and social sciences literature,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 2000, Vol 11 (4): 29-64; Jeal, N., & Salisbury, C. (2007). A health needs assessment of street-based prostitutes: A cross-sectional survey. *Journal of Public Health*, 26(2):147-151.

<sup>8</sup> Church, S.; Henderson, M.; Barnard, M.; & Hart, G. (2001). Violence by clients towards female prostitutes in different work settings: questionnaire survey. *British Medical Journal*, 322: 524-525. Raphael, J., & Shapiro, D.L. (2004). Violence in indoor and outdoor prostitution venues; *Violence Against Women*, 10 (2):126-139. Sex Workers Project. (2005). *Behind Closed Doors: An Analysis of Indoor Sex Work in New York City*. New York: Urban Justice Center.

<sup>9</sup> Names have been changed

The last rape, that I had, I told you I got on the street when I was like 35, and I still do it today, and I'm like 51. The last time I got raped was when I was 43, and I finally, finally, finally told the cops.

*Linda*

"The kids grew up, the husband left me, so I was on my own, mommy and daddy were tired of supporting my habit for me. I worked the street to support the habit, that's the only time I was on the street, to support my habit."

Felicia [R.E.N.E.W. outreach worker] called me and I told her I wanted to do a program, and she told me there was one in New York. I left for three months, came back. My family was disgusted with me, both of my kids at that time were locked up, so again I hit the streets. There was nothing they could do but listen to me.

When I seen Felicia and she told me about the [R.E.N.E.W] education program, I made myself go there. I got my certificate of completion, and I said, you know, I've never had no completion of nothing. Right now the only thing that's lacking in my life right now is a job, I don't care if its five dollars an hour. If R.E.N.E.W. can find some company that's willing to give us criminals, us ex-prostitutes, a chance, I would love it.

I've been clean for months now, sure I get urges sometime. Sometimes I'll be walking down the street and the smell of a muffler, to me, its crack."

*Jennifer*

"In the beginning I was in it for the money, I didn't get into drugs until I was in my thirties. I was on heroine for 10 years, I was clean for 7 years, I had three boys, two boys passed three years ago, and I relapsed into the dope.

I was [back] in the street for a year and a half, and I met Felicia, and she saved me. She helped get me into a program, and from then its been another world, its been a new life for me. I went to every class, and it gave me the strength I needed."

*Nicole*

"I am also a victim of domestic abuse, and in 1982 I was stabbed 18 times by my husband. One thing about the lifestyle, is it's a lifestyle, and if you've lived it, and you don't know any other lifestyle, you can't just pull out of it like that. Even if you get off the drugs, you can't just get out of there. I was living on a porch near the \_\_\_\_\_ lounge, I got a disability check but I couldn't afford rent.

I met Felicia, and I needed a jacket, and she gave me her jacket and a phone number...At the HIV prevention classes, I shared and I listened... Some girls are HIV. I got lucky, I'm not. Now I live in an apartment looking at the porch I came from. I'm not just a client, I'm the community."

### **Law Enforcement as Public Policy Towards Prostitution**

Some social services are available to people working in prostitution, such as food stamps and the emergency room, however no social services in the state specifically track, consider, or serve people working as prostitutes except for R.E.N.E.W. The majority of public resources dedicated to responding to prostitution is in the arrest and incarceration of women working in prostitution.

According to the Department of Corrections, the most common misdemeanor offense for women in Rhode Island is prostitution. There were 236 arrests specifically for prostitution charges in 2008. There were also 119 women on probation for prostitution charges arrested and jailed for new misdemeanor offenses. Not all arrests for misdemeanor offenses result in jail terms. However, in 2008 a total of 215 women were sent to jail for “loitering for indecent purposes.” Of these incarcerations, 33 were for failure to keep up with fees associated with the prostitution charge payments, and those women spent an average of nine days in jail. Of the 236 arrested, 102 women were sentenced to prison because of prostitution charges. The majority were sentenced as probation violators as the result of new charges for prostitution and they were sentenced to an average of 104 days in prison.

All of these women were in a cycle of arrest and incarceration, having on average been convicted specifically for prostitution six times before and at least twice for nonviolent charges related to street prostitution such as drug possession, trespassing, or resisting arrest. One woman had been convicted 23 times specifically for prostitution. 35% of these women were reincarcerated within one year after release.<sup>10</sup> Of the women brought to the ACI in 2005 for prostitution charges, 80% returned in the next three years.

### **Collateral Consequences of Arrest**

The use of arrest and incarceration does not show strong deterrent or preventative effects for women engaged in prostitution. However, arrest and incarceration has significant collateral consequences which decrease the ability to recover and reintegrate into society:

- Public housing bars or discriminates against people with criminal records from being tenants and even living with family members.
- People with criminal records are prevented from entering the legal workforce by discrimination and legal obstacles.
- Criminal charges result in court fine and fees which put women working as prostitutes into debt to the state. In 2008, 33 women were incarcerated because of court fees related to prostitution charges.
- Women that have been arrested for prostitution are commonly on probation, which means they can be reincarcerated for “failure to maintain good behavior.” This results in a very low tolerance policy that can interrupt the difficult process of recovery.

### **Law Enforcement Policy Towards “Johns” and “Pimps”**

In contrast to public policy of arresting and incarcerating people working as prostitutes, the act of buying or profiting from prostitution is relatively decriminalized in practice. In the R.E.N.E.W surveys 90% of women stated they saw over 6 “johns” a week. With an estimate of 350 women working as street prostitutes, this would be 145,600 crimes on behalf of “johns” per year. According to Pawtucket arrest data, individuals working as prostitutes were arrested between 3 and 4 times more than “johns.” Since 2003, there have been seven arrests for pimping in Pawtucket. However, “johns” and “pimps” are almost never incarcerated. In 2008 no people were incarcerated

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<sup>10</sup> Of the women sentenced to prison in 2007 for prostitution charges, 35% were reincarcerated in some manner within one year of release.

at the ACI specifically for the crime of “soliciting a prostitute” or for pandering or “pimping.” In addition, many “johns” were able to expunge their records. In contrast, prostitution charges can rarely be expunged because Rhode Island only allows people with one misdemeanor to expunge their record.

**Costs of Street Prostitution**

The most important costs of street prostitution are the costs to the individuals engaging in it. They are at a very high risk for rape, violence and abuse, drug-overdoses, mental health illnesses including post-traumatic stress syndrome, and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, society bears significant costs:

*Social Costs*

It is impossible to calculate the total costs to society in terms of healthcare, public assistance, and family support. These costs are far-reaching, including the community health costs of sexually transmitted diseases, the negative effects on families of mothers working in prostitution, and neighborhood quality of life costs. Chart 2 is an attempt to account for at least some

| <b>Chart 2. Annual social service costs associated with 350 individuals working as prostitutes</b> |                  |                     |
|--|------------------|---------------------|
| Type   | Costs Per Person | Total Cost Per Year |
| 3 Emergency Room visits per year   | \$549            | \$192,150           |
| 10% with 2 children in foster care   | \$10,500         | \$367,500           |
| 50% with food stamps   | \$1,248          | \$218,400           |
| 15% on welfare or disability   | \$6,600          | \$346,500           |
| 5% with HIV, healthcare costs  | \$25,200         | \$428,400           |
|  |                  | \$1,552,950         |

of the quantifiable costs. The appendix provides a complete description of the methodology used to calculate these numbers. These are rough estimates.

*Law Enforcement Costs and Possible Savings*

Law enforcement costs are calculated using an estimate for the police and court cost of each arrest plus the average cost of 1 prison bed in the women’s prison. In addition, there is an estimate for enforcement savings.

This is an estimate for what the state could save for not arresting and incarcerating people for prostitution. This number is less than the costs because small reductions in the number of prison inmates does not allow the state to capture the full

| <b>Chart 3. Financial Costs of Prostitution Criminalization Costs</b>                   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Incidents of Incarceration  | 215         |
| Prison Beds Needed Per Year   | 30          |
| Prison Costs (\$55,420 per prison bed)  | 1.6 million |
| Number of Prostitution Related Arrests (includes probation violations for misdemeanors) | 365         |
| <b>Savings</b>  |             |
| Police and court savings  | \$45,625    |
| Prison savings from 30 bed reduction  | \$440,307   |
|   | \$485,932   |

costs as savings. For example, much of the staff and building costs do not decrease if the number of inmate decreases slightly (full methodology in appendix). Estimates for savings are relatively conservative and reliable.

## **Case Study: Revitalizing & Engaging Neighborhoods by Empowering Women**

In 2004 the Pawtucket Citizens Development Corporation began R.E.N.E.W, a project focused on improving the Barton Street neighborhood by decreasing street prostitution through outreach and connections to social services. In a community survey, street prostitution had been identified as one of the most important concerns about quality of community life. Since its inception, the neighborhood has experienced a dramatic reduction in prostitution.

### *Program Model*

The program model includes outreach work and referrals to social services, case management, health and HIV/STD prevention classes and condom distribution, advertisements to increase community awareness, and a diverse steering committee to guide the work. The model is based on the belief that a large number of women in prostitution want to leave the street and will leave if they are empowered, provided with positive support, and connected to appropriate services.

The program model begins with on-street outreach. Program participants stressed the importance of outreach workers that are empathetic and can relate well to clients. Felicia Delgado has been the outreach worker for the program since it began. She states about the program, “These women need help, and if you are not willing to help them, then don’t mock their survival skills. A lot of women already have what they need inside of them, they just need someone to help them, support them, and not judge them.” Ms. Delgado opens the relationship with clients and refers them to the R.E.N.E.W program. This includes referrals to outside recovery programs, such as detox and residential treatment programs. R.E.N.E.W. pays for its services through various grants, including HIV prevention funding through the RI Department of Health, and funding from the City of Pawtucket and the Pawtucket Police Department.

RENEW also provides intensive case management for clients which includes recovery coaching, mentoring, support, and transportation to referrals as diverse as detox, substance abuse treatment, mental and physical health services, HIV testing, and basic needs.

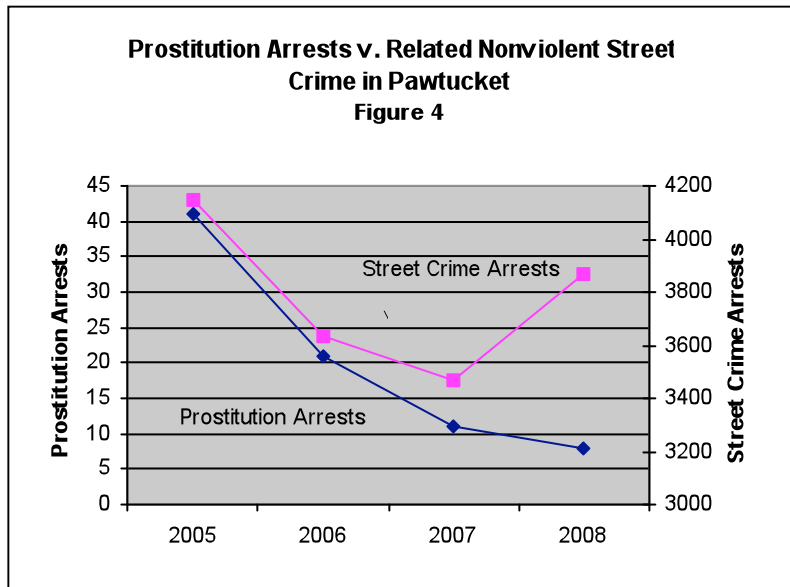
Starting in 2008, R.E.N.E.W. started offering health and HIV/STD prevention classes taught by Ms. Delgado and various partner agencies. The classes focus on learning how to prevent infection with HIV and other STDs but also serve as more general support groups for clients. They are the first HIV prevention classes in the state to focus on the population of CSW, and one of the only HIV prevention efforts in currently underway in the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls.

At the same time that R.E.N.E.W. did outreach to bring women off the streets, it also targeted the demand for prostitution. R.E.N.E.W purchased advertisements around the neighborhood stating: “Dear John: Looking for a hot meal and a free place to stay? The Pawtucket and Central Falls police can make your dream come true. If you solicit for prostitution in the Barton Street Neighborhood you will go to jail.” These advertisements were aimed at bringing the community together around the issue and deterring “johns” from the neighborhood.

The R.E.N.E.W. steering committee includes an array of members that provide balanced guidance and capacity to the program. The steering committee includes law enforcement from both the Pawtucket and Central Falls police force, a probation officer, substance abuse treatment providers, housing agencies, and other local social service representatives. Police departments have become strong supporters of the program after seeing the success in comparison to the previous efforts based solely on law enforcement.

*Outcomes*

Since R.E.N.E.W. began in 2004, the neighborhood has experienced a dramatic decrease in street prostitution. R.E.N.E.W. began doing intakes with clients in 2006. From 2005 to 2008 prostitution arrests in Pawtucket declined from 41 to 8, an 80% reduction. The program has served more than 100 women, done case management with 43 women, and placed 23 into substance abuse treatment. In addition, in a recent survey by



R.E.N.E.W., community members reported an increase in neighborhood quality of life.

The decrease in prostitution arrests is associated in time with the availability of R.E.N.E.W. services and does not correlate to a more general decrease in crime in Pawtucket. Figure 5 is a map of all Pawtucket prostitution related arrests in 2003 and again in 2008. All Pawtucket arrests were concentrated in the Barton Street neighborhood, demonstrating the geographic concentration of the problem. As shown in Figure 4, related street and public nuisance crimes in Pawtucket did not show consistent declines from 2005-2008, so the reduction in prostitution arrests is not associated entirely with a larger trend in crime reduction in Pawtucket.<sup>11</sup>

Because Pawtucket and Central Falls are so close, police have experienced problems in the past with prostitution simply moving back and forth over the border. Prostitution arrests in Central Falls did increase initially as Pawtucket arrests declined, however since 2005 the combined total of Pawtucket and Central Falls arrests has decreased from 52 to 24.

<sup>11</sup> Pawtucket arrest data was provided by the Pawtucket Police Department and compiled by Cause & Effect, Inc. of Providence. Arrest data was categorized into loitering for indecent purposes, loitering for indecent purposes plus other charge, and soliciting from a motor vehicle. 93% of the loitering related arrests were for loitering only, and the others were for unknown outstanding warrants, nonviolent crimes such as drug possession, or charges that were dropped. A total of 7 loitering charges were against men and appeared to be for pimping.

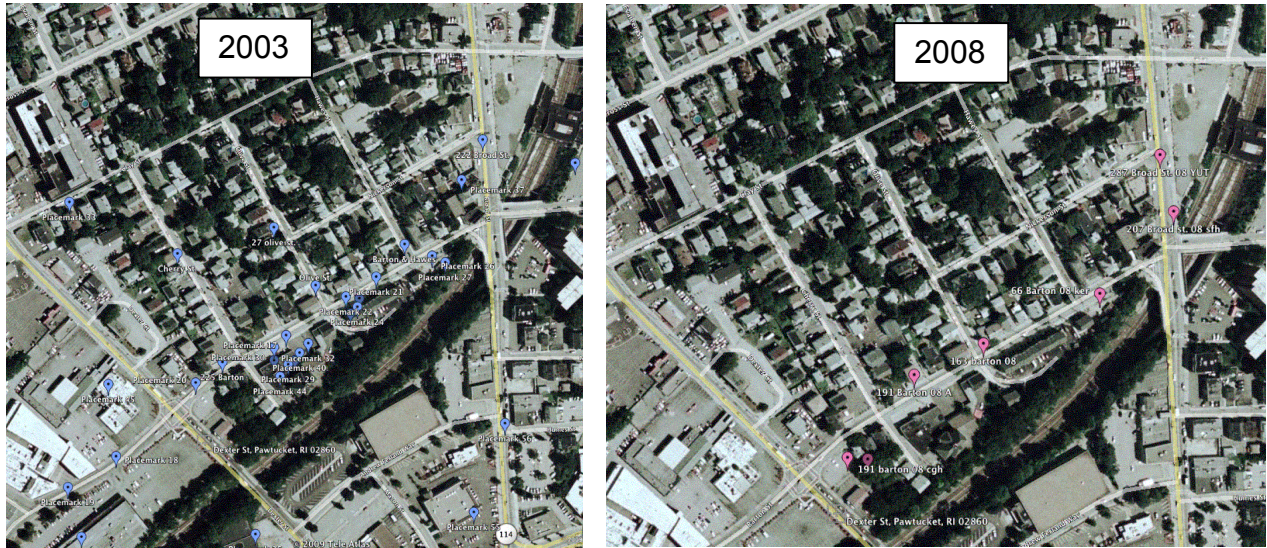


Figure 5. Maps of prostitution arrests in Pawtucket in 2003 and 2008. Maps generated by Cause & Effect, Inc. of Providence

The decline in street prostitution in Pawtucket caused a reduction in incarceration and prison costs for the state. Total number of prison sentences of people with prostitution conviction histories in Pawtucket decreased from 14 to 3 from 2004 to 2008.<sup>12</sup> In addition, there was a parallel reduction in incarceration for individuals awaiting trial for prostitution charges from 13 to 9. In total, this represents a savings of approximately 1184 days in prison.

The state saved significant resources from arresting and incarcerating fewer people for prostitution from Pawtucket. Only including the per-person, or marginal, savings, the state saved \$17,331 in law enforcement costs.

This reduction in street prostitution increased quality of life in the community. A R.E.N.E.W. survey indicated that the vast majority of residents agreed that “prostitution had either decreased a little or a lot.” Residents also reported that their quality of life had increased over the past few years, and many specifically mentioned PCDC and RENEW when asked why. In addition to a reduction in street prostitution, the Barton Street neighborhood has experienced a decrease in businesses that support prostitution, because of development efforts by Pawtucket Citizens Development Corporation. A local bar which served as a prostitution hot-spot has gone out of business and been purchased by the PCDC, which will be knocking it down and building commercial and residential space.

## Recommendations

Street prostitution is a social problem that can be successfully addressed. It involves a relatively small number of women in Rhode Island, potentially around 350, and is

<sup>12</sup> This represents the total number of people sentenced to prison that had a prostitution conviction on their record. This is used instead of the number of prison sentences for prostitution because women working in prostitution are more often sent to prison for related crimes such as disorderly conduct, shoplifting, and drug possession than prostitution. The sentences include convictions from an arrest made by the Pawtucket police.

concentrated in a small number of neighborhoods in four cities. It is a high risk activity with significant community costs, including HIV transmission, frequent law enforcement supervision and control, and reduction in community quality of life. This study recommends a holistic, outreach approach such as R.E.N.E.W.

By providing directed social services and empowerment, R.E.N.E.W. is successfully combating prostitution in Pawtucket. In contrast, women working in prostitution were on average convicted six times of prostitution, showing no evidence that these arrests were diverting them from or deterring them from prostitution. If this model were replicated and expanded to Woonsocket and Providence, and achieved a similar 80% reduction in street prostitution arrests, prostitution arrests statewide could drop to 35 a year. In addition, the state would be able to capture the larger savings described in the previous section of approximately half a million dollars.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Methodology for social service costs**

Estimates for percentage of individuals receiving different types of services are based on the 21 person survey done by R.E.N.E.W. of women working as prostitutes in Pawtucket.

- The estimate of percentage of people with HIV is probably low because only half had been tested in the past year.
- Emergency room cost is based on an estimate of 3 visits at \$183/visit, from Thompson, Karen and Glick, Doris. 1999. "Cost Analysis of Emergency Room Use by Low-Income Patients," Nursing Economics.
- Cost of food stamps is based on the typical Rhode Island food stamp payment for one individual of \$104.
- Welfare/disability is based on a \$550 monthly payment.
- The foster care estimate is based on an estimated payment from Rhode Island Department of Children Youth and Families of \$14.00/day for each child for two children over a year.
- The HIV healthcare costs are based on Schackman, BR et. al. 2006. The lifetime cost of current HIV care in the United States. Medical Care Vol 44 Suppl 3 11.