

My name is Bonnie Polley . I reside at 1631 Ottawa Drive, Las Vegas, Nv. I am a Deacon in the Episcopal Church, and am on staff at Christ Church, Las Vegas. I am also Chaplain at the Clark County Detention Center, a position that I have held for 26 years. I am the President of RAIN.

I have been working with men and women coming in and out of the jails and prisons in this state for 26years. I see them come to jail, go to prison, return to our community and reenter the system. It is a revolving door.

In 1992 the Episcopal Church in Southern Nevada was responsible for opening the first transitional housing program in the state of Nevada on the corner of 7th and Stewart in downtown Las Vegas. A 57 unit single room occupancy program provided housing for men and women coming out of jail and prison. The lack of appropriate training and resources resulted in daunting challenges which led to a new direction taken by the Board of Directors. Ex-felons were no longer accepted at Parsons Place.

Accent People, a non profit organization of which I am the Chair established and operated a six bed, transitional living facility in North Las Vegas from April 2006 to April 2008. Our mission is to assist the ex-felon in making his or her way back into the community. We established this facility in North Las Vegas at a time when a Special Use Permit was not required for this type of facility in this jurisdiction. We were left with this option after attempting to obtain a Special Use Permit for more than a year in other parts of the Las Vegas Valley. Since that time the City of North Las Vegas has established a moratorium on transitional housing.

Once established, we provided assistance to parolees in their transition back into the community for two years. We developed and refined policies, procedures, and rules, gained valuable experiences, and helped many men. It was with mixed emotions that we made the decision to close operations. The accompanying summary of obstacles and challenges were experienced as we struggled to establish a program for ex-felons that was not only effective but also financially viable. We were successful at helping many with their transition, in teaching principles of effective living, and at instilling habits that will lead to successful futures. However, the limited number of beds with which we operated did not allow us to become financially viable. Over the two years of operation, Accent People averaged losses of a little over \$3,000 per month.

The obstacles and challenges to establishing and operating a transitional living facility are as follows:

Required Special-Use-Permit process can be lengthy, costly, risky

- Up to 4 months to obtain Special-Use-Permit
- Non-Refundable application fees (up to \$500)
- Arbitrary Councilman Opposition
- Expensive architectural drawings required (\$1000s)
- Property owners un-willing to wait for process w/o nonrefundable
- Deposits and rent for duration

Limited property zones allow a transitional living facility

Limited areas available within the allowed property zones

Neighborhood resident's opposition during Special Use Permit process

Required minimums for backyard areas, parking spaces, landscape

State licensure process, lengthy, costly, risky

- Initial fee as well as annual fees

- Required fire suppression sprinkler system is costly

- Required kitchen facility standards are costly

- Laundry, beds, bedding/linen requirements are costly

- Minimum bedroom area and bathroom facilities per resident

Start-up costs are substantial:

- Capital costs of building purchase or construction (or lease)

- Furniture, office equipment, and security system cost

- Initial Facility supplies

- Utility deposits

Operational Expenses:

- Rent or mortgage

- Utilities

- Food

- Clothing

- Transportation

- Office Supplies

- Printing and Postage

- Security System Costs

- Drug and alcohol screening equipment and supplies

- Hazards/fire insurance

- Liability and Directors & Officers Insurance

Management and Operations Staff

- Hiring, training, and supervising qualified personnel

- Retention of competent personnel

Coordination with NDOC

- Screening of applicants

- Bed availability

- Programming and counseling needs of participant

- Availability of, and finding, adequate employment

We recognize that many of the obstacles that I am identifying today are necessary for the establishment and operation of safe facilities and effective programs. Having said this, we recommend the following:

More reasonable and uniform Special-Use-Permit requirements

(Clark County requirements should be used as the model)

More reasonable requirements for state licensing (tailored to the resident capacity of the facility, e.g. sprinkler system requirement

Other challenges could be removed by more socially responsible attitudes, policies, and regulations. The availability of additional public and private grant funding sources would be a tremendous boost to the financial viability.

Thank you for the opportunity of appearing before this committee and having the opportunity to voice our concerns. We appeal to you to take into consideration our recommendations.

The Rev. Deacon Bonnie Polley

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