



# Reentry in Ohio

## The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

Ted Strickland, Governor

Terry J. Collins, Director

### Ohio's Preparation for the Second Chance Act

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) has taken on reentry through a comprehensive report published in 2002 called the *Ohio Plan for Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction* targeting six major areas in which reentry changes have been and will continue to be made: offender reentry planning, offender programming, family involvement, employment readiness, offender supervision, and community partnerships.

DRC is committed to providing reentry services and programs that consist of an integrated statewide system that seeks to foster the preparation and successful transition of incarcerated individuals as returning citizens.

When the reentry process is successful there are benefits for the community in terms of improved public safety. Correctional and criminal justice costs are reduced in the long-run as returning citizens are directed away from reoffending to more productive work and contributions to society.

Those who leave prison face many barriers during the transition from confinement to the community. Understanding these barriers allows DRC to assist ex-offenders in making successful reentry transitions. Barriers can range from the inability to secure safe housing, gainful employment, valid forms of identification, and access to community services.

Moreover, in a relatively short amount of time, an impressive series of initiatives have been launched at all levels of government and by countless groups and organizations to build more effective and innovative responses to the tribulations of reentry.

Across the state, innovative projects are underway that emphasize building a continuum of services and programming that extends well beyond the release from prison. DRC is a collaborative partner in a number of these initiatives with state and local governments.

In fact, Ohio's commitment to offender reentry can be seen by the number of collaborative partnerships and programs throughout the state.

The *Children of Incarcerated Parents* project was developed in partnership with the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The purpose of this project is a community-wide collaboration to provide family case management, reunification services, and employment readiness preparation for returning parents so they, in turn, are better positioned to offer a stable and supportive environment for their children.

DRC is working to provide reentry services to offenders and their families who reside in Montgomery, Clark, Miami, Franklin, Cuyahoga, Lucas, and Greene Counties.

In conjunction with the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, the U.S. Veterans Administration, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and Buckeye Chapter of the Vietnam Veteran's, DRC is providing pre- and post-release assistance to incarcerated veterans by linking them with qualified services prior to release.

DRC and the Corporation for Supportive Housing have collaborated to implement a permanent supportive housing project entitled, Returning Home-Ohio. The target population is comprised of offenders who are identified as chronically homeless before incarceration or are likely to become homeless upon release due to disabling conditions. Supportive housing is available in Montgomery, Franklin, Cuyahoga, Lucas, and Hamilton counties.

DRC, the Ohio Central School System, and Community Connection of Ohio are partnering on the Transitional Education Program (TEPS) which provides offenders the opportunity to focus on pro-social skills, employment opportunities, and life skills. Training is provided through real and virtual case management designed to ensure supportive transitional post release services.



## **Ohio House Bill 130**

HB 130, signed by Governor Strickland on January 6, 2009, offers a framework for a long-term investment in reentry by beginning to address some of the legal and other barriers to employment for people released from prison. A key component of this legislation is the removal of non-relevant prohibitions or collateral sanctions to employment for certain professions. This proposal provides that conviction of a felony does not by itself constitute grounds for denying employment. The bill also calls for the formation of a State Agency Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition that will serve as a conduit for Ohio's reentry efforts, better positioning the state to receive future funding under the Second Chance Act of 2007. Other important provisions include the authorization for reentry courts, and procedures for facilitating access to obtaining valid forms of identification upon release.

### ***DRC Strategic Federal Priorities***

#### ***National Institute of Corrections Funding (NIC)***

DRC strongly supports continuation of funding at current levels for the National Institute of Corrections because of its enhancements to agency operations. DRC receives a number of free training and technical assistance resources from NIC that facilitate staff education and benchmarking with other correctional agencies across the country. These resources are invaluable and could not be replaced if NIC funding were eliminated. A complete list of the benefits that are received by the Department are attached for review. NIC also has a jails division that provides technical assistance in the areas of staffing analysis, construction design analysis, operational and policy recommendations to the Department's jail bureau, and to local jails across the state. NIC also provides an annual forum for jail administrators in Ohio and across the country to share pertinent information, and discuss future initiatives that will benefit state and local jurisdictions.

#### ***Education and Reentry Programs***

DRC supports continuation of the U.S. Department of Education grant funds that emphasize re-entry and vocational programming that assist prisoners with their reintegration into society, and reduce return to prison rates. Entry Year Funding (\$2,800 in FY 2009) from the Ohio Department of Education supports OCSS Entry Year Program for beginning teachers. These teachers must successfully complete the one-year program and pass praxis III assessment prior to receiving a five-year professional license. The money received is used in providing training and instructional materials to assist the beginning teachers in preparing for the Praxis III assessment.

ABLE Grant funds (\$769,359 in FY 2009) are used to support forty percent of the Federal Grants Administrator's position and two support services staff members. Grant funds are also used to support twelve Community Based Correctional Facilities and four Criminal Justice/ABLE centers to educate clients of all ages.

Title One funds (\$1,416,981 in FY 2009) are used to support sixty percent of the Federal Grant Administrator's position, four support service staff, twelve Community Base Community Correctional Facilities, four Criminal Justice/ABLE Centers and eight ODRC institutions. Title One teachers are used to educate clients age twenty-one and under only.



The Special Education grant money (\$334,862 in FY 2009) for education is utilized for staff salaries, staff benefits, supplies/equipment, professional development and service contracts. The special education grant serves inmates under the age of twenty-two, who have a suspected disability or determined disability. In addition, we utilize the grant to conduct special education evaluations and assessments, which are conducted by a certified school psychologist and our intervention specialist. The special education department conducts professional development opportunities throughout the year, so our teachers can continue to keep up with ongoing regulation changes and trends. Last, the special education department purchase supplies/equipment/materials, which are utilized in the classroom to accommodate students with disabilities.

### **Justice Assistance Grants (JAG)**

DRC supports continuation of the Byrne formula grant program (replaced by Justice Assistance Grants (JAG)) administered by the Department of Public Safety in the Commerce, State, Justice Appropriations Act for Federal Fiscal Year 2010 and future federal budgets. The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program allows states and local governments to support a broad range of activities to prevent and control crime and to improve the criminal justice system. JAG replaces the Byrne Formula and Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG) programs with a single funding mechanism that simplifies the administration process for grantees. The procedures for allocating JAG funds is a formula based on population and crime statistics, in combination with a minimum allocation to ensure that each state and territory receives an appropriate share. Traditionally, under the Byrne Formula and LLEBG Programs, funds were distributed 60/40 between state and local recipients. This distribution continues under JAG. DRC has submitted a statewide request for \$286,000 for FFY 2009.

### **State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP)**

DRC supports continuation of the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCCAP), which enables DRC to support various program initiatives. DRC receives funds for the costs incurred for incarcerating certain undocumented criminal aliens in Ohio. The Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice administers SCAAP. Upon receipt by DRC, these funds are granted in-house to cover the development and operation of innovative pilot projects, as well as, conferences, staff training, and information systems updates. In 2009, DRC received \$918,547 in SCAAP funding.

### **Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Programs (RSAT)**

DRC supports continuation and expansion of the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program for state prisoners in the Commerce, State, Justice Appropriations Act for Federal FY2010 and future federal budgets. In Ohio, this program is administered by the Office of Criminal Justice Services within the Ohio Department of Public Safety.

## **Mental Health Diversion Courts / Prisoner Reentry Initiative**



The Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA) enacted in 2004 received unanimous, bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress, it enjoyed support from a broad spectrum of leaders representing the diverse fields of law enforcement, corrections, the courts, and mental health. This measure, which received \$5 million in funding in Federal FY2006 and 2007, \$6.5 million in Federal FY2008, and Federal FY2009 \$10 million is helping to better coordinate responses in dealing with non-violent mentally ill offenders.

The program is intended to help states and counties design and implement collaborative efforts between criminal justice and mental health systems. The grants can be used for a broad range of activities, including mental health courts, mental health and substance abuse treatment for incarcerated mentally ill offenders, community reentry services, and the cross-training of criminal justice, law enforcement, and mental health personnel. In May 2009, DRC and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services will be submitting a grant application for \$150,000.

Reauthorization of the original MIOTCRA was contained in an omnibus criminal justice package (S. 3297) that was passed in September 2008 by Congress and signed into law by President Bush. Reauthorization of the act and future funding will help insure that states and local governments can provide offenders diagnosed with mental illness appropriate services to allow their safe return to their communities. It will do so by providing grants that facilitate the design and implementation of risk assessment instruments, encourage the enrollment of ex-offenders with mental illness (of those who are eligible) in federal benefit programs, and promote aspects of programs that prove effective in reducing recidivism.

## **Reentry Means "Going Home to Stay"**

For more information about the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and Offender Reentry, please visit our website at

<http://www.drc.ohio.gov/>

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