

FRANKLIN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



Franklin County Reentry Task Force

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Executive Summary

With an estimated 2,212 adult inmates and 1,700 juvenile offenders leaving Ohio's correctional and rehabilitative institutions during the next year and returning to Columbus and neighboring communities, the task of assisting all of these individuals in finding housing, jobs, health and mental health services are challenges that require significant attention and full-scale community support. This is a particularly salient issue for Franklin County, which has the **third** highest number of ex-offenders being released from incarceration in the state.

In 2002, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction presented the results of a comprehensive assessment of reentry in a report entitled "The Ohio Plan for Productive Offenders Reentry and Recidivism Reduction". Included in this plan were forty-four (44) recommendations focusing on reentry assessment, programming and services, both during incarceration and after release. A majority of the recommendations emphasized the key role local jurisdictions must play in order to positively impact the successful integration of ex-offenders back into their communities. In recognition of the dramatic rise in the number of ex-offenders re-entering the community; being cognizant of the significant role local jurisdictions must play in order to deliver quality reentry opportunities; and understanding the need for coordinated reentry services, the Franklin County Criminal Justice Planning Board deemed Reentry as a justice system priority in 2009 and a major emphasis area moving forward.

The concept of reentry is not new to churches, civic and community action organizations or to the criminal justice system. The difference in reentry today compared to past efforts is the emphasis on achieving public safety through successful outcomes for ex-offenders. With this goal in mind, in January 2009, the Franklin County Reentry Task Force was established. The Franklin County Reentry Task Force is charged with examining ways to pool resources and funding streams as well as to collect data and identify best practice toward the overarching goal of lowering recidivism rates.

Chaired by a Columbus City Council Member, the Franklin County Reentry Task Force meets monthly and is comprised of a diverse group of representatives from the following disciplines: law enforcement, community corrections, and adult and youth state department of corrections, public defenders, prosecution, housing, employment, mental health, faith community and government. For a complete listing of statutory and ad hoc Task Force membership see Addendum A. The Franklin County Office of Homeland Security and Justice Programs acts as the administrative agent to the Task Force. This group of subject-matter experts and concerned community members has dedicated itself to promoting change and enhancing and improving the scope of services delivered to ex-offenders in Franklin County and neighboring communities.

Clearly, the challenge to Franklin County is far greater than simply connecting ex-offenders to jobs and/or housing. Given the sheer volume of inmate releases and the complexities of concurrent service needs, Franklin County must implement new, better, and more effective strategies to address the extensive and co-occurring needs of ex-offenders. As a result of these findings, the Task Force agreed that a comprehensive action plan was necessary to guide the County's many partners in a coordinated approach toward meeting the varied needs of the ex-offender population reentering Franklin County. The action plan must include new and enhanced interagency and organizational partnerships that simplify access to a variety of resources, promote cross referral to support services, and encourage focused attention and increased financial investment by the private and public sectors.

This action plan represents the beginning of what must be a long-term commitment to address ex-offender reentry and integration issues. These recommendations, when implemented, have the potential to vastly improve reentry outcomes for a significant portion of Franklin County's ex-offender population.

The Significance of Reentry, a Franklin County Justice System Priority

The nation's prison population continues to grow at an alarming rate and according to a recent PEW Center on the States report (*One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*) for the first time more than one in every 100 adults is now confined in an American jail or prison. In Ohio, one in every 25 adults is now confined in a correctional institution. Equally important and cause for concern is the increasing number of individuals returning to neighborhoods and communities throughout the country. The key to successful reintegration of these individuals returning to neighborhoods and communities will be the quality and extent to which local jurisdictions plan and create reentry initiatives.

In 2008, there were 2,243 offenders released from Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and 41,378 offenders released from the Franklin County Correctional Institution into communities and surrounding neighborhoods of Franklin County. Of those released from state incarceration, slightly more than half were not required to submit to any form of supervision. The average length of stay in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correctional (ODRC) is 2.2 years; however, a little over fifty percent (50%) of Franklin County residents committed to ODRC serve one year or less. In comparison with the average length of stay in Franklin County Correctional Institution of 29 days; however, nearly ten percent (9.90%) of Franklin County residents committed to the Franklin County Jail serve one year.

According to a study conducted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, 17% or 4,528 inmates released will be re-incarcerated within one year of release from an Ohio prison. In Franklin County, the rate of recidivism three years after release is thirty-eight percent (38.9%), slightly lower than the State's average of thirty-nine percent (39.3%) (*Source: Urban Institute*). A study conducted by ODRC in conjunction with the Urban Institute found that the recidivism rate for Franklin County can be attributed to the commission of a new crime in sixty nine percent (69.2%) of the cases and technical and/or post release control violations for the remaining thirty percent (30.8%) (*Source: ODRC and Urban Institute*).

A January 2007 analysis of the addresses of ex-offenders on supervision within Franklin County concluded that ex-offenders on supervision live in communities throughout the County, with pockets of higher concentration in some zip codes, specifically 43205 and 43215. While tracking the geographic locations of inmates who are not under supervision is challenging, studies combining pre-incarceration addresses and the known location of ex-offenders on supervision are a reliable source to gauge where a large percentage of those re-entering Franklin County post-incarceration reside.

An ex-offender's successful reentry is predicated on the characteristics of the community to which he/she returns to upon release from incarceration. A high concentration of ex-offenders within a community can generate huge costs as well as increase the potential for criminal activity, heighten public health issues, and raise rates of homelessness and unemployment. Many ex-offenders are ill-equipped to live successful, productive and law abiding lives once released from prison or jail.

Analysis of Reentry Services in Franklin County

Concerned with the substantial increase in the number of ex-offenders entering Franklin County and its impact on issues of public safety and recidivism, Franklin County commissioned Community Research Partners (CRP) in June 2009 to conduct primary research to identify reentry services currently available in Franklin County, and to assess the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps of the system. CRP is a nonprofit research and evaluation center based in Columbus, and is a partnership of the City of Columbus, United Way of Central Ohio, Franklin County, and the John Glenn School of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University.

CRP drafted five overarching questions to guide the data collection and analysis for research: (1) What targeted services are currently provided in Franklin County for adults returning from incarceration; (2) What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the current system of reentry; (3) What are the perceived barriers to accessing reentry services; (4) What are the perceived barriers to providing reentry services and finally, (5) What are the perceived gaps in reentry services?

CRP utilized three research methods (literature review, survey and focus groups) to explore the guided research questions: (1) literature review – a brief review was conducted of existing literature regarding prisoner reentry to inform the development of the survey and focus group protocols that were used to gather data. (2) Survey – an electronic survey was distributed via email to agencies in Franklin County that provide prisoner reentry services.

The intent of the survey was to obtain an inventory of services and programs available in the county for adult prisoners returning from incarceration. The survey items included: current location and contact information for the organizations providing reentry services; the types, frequency, and duration of services provided; and the goals and intended outcomes of the services provided. The survey also included questions about the perceived strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the system of reentry services in Franklin County.

The survey was distributed via email to 53 organizations identified by the Franklin County Homeland Security and Justice Programs (FCHS&JP) as providers of prisoner reentry services.

(3) Focus Groups – In an effort to gather additional perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps of the reentry system in Franklin County, CRP conducted two, 1-hour focus groups with providers of reentry services and two, 1-hour focus groups with ex-offenders from jail or prison. The recruitment efforts brought together 18 service providers and 38 ex-offenders who offered their perspectives on the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps of the system of reentry services in Franklin County. CRP digitally

recorded the focus groups and transcripts were used for content analysis to identify emergent themes and patterns within and across focus groups.

An in-depth explanation of methods, findings, and recommendations, of the research on prisoner reentry services can be found in the document entitled "Prisoner Reentry Services Research": Franklin County Office of Homeland Security and Justice Program, October 2009.

SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis:

Strengths: are internal characteristics, qualities, and capacities that are doing well and are part of the reason the organization has achieved its accomplishments

The focus group participants identified a number of strengths of the current prisoner reentry system in Franklin County that could serve as a foundation upon which a more comprehensive system of services could be built. The strengths that emerged as most prominent among focus group participants and survey respondents included: 1) existing services and 2) existing collaborations that could be modeled or expanded.

- (1) Existing Services – The wealth of reentry services available in Franklin County is one of the greatest strengths of the county's system of prisoner reentry. Despite there being a lack of structure to the system, a large number of services are available in Franklin County as illustrated by the number of ex-offenders from other counties travelling to the Central Ohio area to access reentry services.
- (2) Existing Collaboration – There currently exist a handful of formalized cross-discipline networks providing an array of reentry services and programming. However, these collaborative efforts are limited in their scope and impact. Thus, despite the absence of a "one-stop shop" or community hub, a number of reentry agencies exists which collectively have the capacity to serve as a system.

Weaknesses: are internal qualities or gaps in capacities that require improvement, and may be harmful to achieving the objectives of the organization.

Both sets of focus group participants identified a number of weaknesses and gaps in Franklin County's prisoner reentry system contributing to a lack of access to quality, holistic services.

The following are some of the most prominent weaknesses and gaps in the system of reentry services in Franklin County identified by service providers and ex-offenders: (1) a lack of structure, (2) a lack of communication, (3) limited collaboration across providers and systems, (4) perceived lack of pre-release programs, and (5) limited educational services:

- (1) Lack of structure between and among service providers was identified as a major weakness of the prisoner reentry. The system includes a medley of service providers, yet no formal mechanisms in place for connecting programs and

guiding ex-offenders from “point A to point B”. Ex-offenders and service providers alike reiterated frustration with the lack of a “one-stop shop” or community hub where ex-offenders could go immediately upon release and be connected to the available services. Ex-offenders were particularly frustrated and indicated feeling “lost in the shuffle” as they try to navigate “the maze” of services.

- (2) Lack of communication between service providers contributes greatly to the perception that the system of reentry services in Franklin County is fragmented. It also complicates the task of developing a more comprehensive system of reentry services in Franklin County. The lack of communication encourages duplication in services as service providers are often unaware of one another. Ex-offenders on the path of becoming productive citizens indicate that this lack of communication among service providers makes it more difficult for them to obtain information regarding all the services available to them, and increases the likelihood that they have to duplicate processing repeatedly.
- (3) Limited collaboration among service providers across systems is cited as a major hindrance to the development of a more unified system of reentry services. Service providers indicate that collaboration is often hampered by a pervading sense of competition among one another for limited financial resources and common client-types.
- (4) Perceived lack of pre-release programs in Franklin County available for persons returning from incarceration. Service providers and ex-offenders identified some programs that provide service in a prison, but the services are limited to inmates in that particular institution and very few jails or prisons have the services available. Both ex-offenders and service providers indicated that, typically, ex-offenders are released from jail or prison without going through any process or program that truly prepares them for the transition into the community. Ex-offenders expressed dissatisfaction with the programs that were available during incarceration as they felt these programs failed to prepare ex-offenders for their transition back into the community.
- (5) Limited educational services available for those incarcerated in jails or prisons. Several ex-offenders spoke during the focus groups about the need for more services addressing educational needs. They recounted how priority for educational services within penal institutions was given to inmates who were younger and those with shorter sentences. As a result, many ex-offenders who participated in the focus groups left jails or prisons without obtaining the appropriate level of educational services needed to successfully transition back into the community.

Survey respondents, service providers and ex-offenders who participated in the focus groups identified several needs they felt were priorities for reentry. Although the level of priority given to the needs differed, they identified the same needs, including: (1)

housing, (2) employment, (3) transportation, (4) support, and (5) sober living. These five items not only describe the priorities for reentry they also describe critical barriers to the successful reentry of ex-offenders into the community.

- (1) Housing – finding and securing housing is one of the most difficult aspects of the reentry process. The difficulty largely results from ex-offenders having felony records and lacking the financial means to make down payments and monthly rent payments immediately upon release. The situation is further exacerbated by the overall lack of affordable housing in Columbus. Those who do receive housing assistance tend to be individuals who, in addition to being an ex-offender, have disabilities, or dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance abuse. In response to their disability and/or mental illness, they are eligible to receive social security income and therefore, are financially able to afford rent payments once housing subsidies have been exhausted.

Not only does the lack of stable housing prove difficult for ex-offenders, it also makes it difficult for service providers to provide consistent and quality services to clients who are transient. Ex-offenders discussed how lack of housing can lead to their returning to environments that initially place them at risk for criminal behavior and substance abuse, and make them more susceptible to relapsing. In addition, restrictions on where sex offenders can live and laws that mandate sex offender registries serve as barriers to ex-offenders who are trying to reestablish their homes and families. Finally, the prohibition of residency in subsidized housing and denial of income maintenance subsidies, which are most severe for individuals with drug convictions also make them ineligible for food stamps and/or TANF services posing another obstacle that ex-offenders and service providers must overcome. These issues also serve as barriers to service providers who have difficulty convincing landlords to rent to ex-offenders.

- (2) Employment – sustained employment is critical to the ability of ex-offenders to make strides toward independence and self-sufficiency. Yet, most ex-offenders who participated in the focus groups said they have had difficulty finding and/or maintaining employment. Several ex-offenders stated they had been working in prison industries or had received training for certain careers during incarceration only to find out that the experiences and training had very little, if any, value for helping them secure employment upon release. Many felt they were not given the opportunity to be considered a candidate for hire because of their felony records and lack of employment histories.

Legal barriers also restrict ex-offenders from working with certain populations and professions, often prohibiting them from securing jobs for which they were previously trained. A December 2009 report of the Employment Workgroup to the Ohio Ex-Offender Re-entry Coalition found that scattered throughout Ohio statutes and regulations are over 400 “collateral sanctions” or laws triggered by criminal records that absolutely bar or partially restrict access to employment, housing, and other social privileges.

The report also found that job applicants with criminal records often face company policies and hiring managers' fears that presume such applicants are uniformly untrustworthy and dangerous. Often, these employers fear potential liability and subsequent monetary loss they believe will be caused hiring someone with a criminal record. This finding parallels the responses by several ex-offenders and service providers that indicated that ex-offenders who do find employment are often dismayed at losing their jobs once their employers conduct background checks and realize they have hired an ex-offender. These fears mentioned above, either perceived or actual, result in the refusal of many employers to insure an ex-offender, or the employer's liability insurance is substantially increased to the point that the cost of hiring the ex-offender far outweighs the resulting benefit.

In addition to finding, securing, and maintaining employment ex-offenders stated they rarely find jobs that are tailored to meet their interests, skills and educational levels, and often do not pay above minimum wage. This statement is also consistent with the report's finding that a large portion of Ohio's ex-offenders lack basic math and literacy skills. They may also lack the technical and interpersonal skills necessary to succeed in the modern economy. Finally, the lack of employment impedes their ability to pay child support, which results in their driver's licenses being suspended and the increased potential for being incarcerated again, on warrants issued for failure to pay child support. To address issues of non-support, in June 2009, a federally funded demonstration project was established in Franklin County, to assist ex-offenders in navigating the child support system to reduce the number of warrants issued for failure to pay child support.

- (3) Transportation - the lack of transportation or the existence of reliable transportation makes it very difficult for ex-offenders to make scheduled appointments. This inability to travel inhibits the ability of ex-offenders to receive the benefits of the service providers and the ability of service providers to provide such services.
- (4) Support - extending encouragement, guidance, and assistance with navigating the reentry system from critical individuals in their lives such as family members, friends, case managers, parole and probation officers influences the quality of the ex-offender's reentry experience. Both ex-offenders and service providers discussed how ex-offenders receive limited support from others as they transition back into the community to the extent that ex-offenders feel they are left on their own to figure out how to find and access community and social services. This is particularly the case for individuals who leave jail or prison without supervision. Family support, spiritual support, educational support, pre-release case managers' support, parole and probation officers' support and assistance with accessing services are essential for successful re-integration into the community.

- (5) Sober living – a common occurrence among ex-offenders upon release from jail or prison is relapsing into drugs and/or alcohol use. Relapse often interferes with the ex-offenders ability to engage in more therapeutic activities and their ability to make better choices. The probability of staying sober once released is greatly diminished by the challenges to accessing services, like housing, and employment which would give ex-offenders more stability and constructive ways of spending time. In the absence of more constructive alternatives and activities, ex-offenders are more likely to return to the environments, people, and activities that initially contributed to their alcohol and/or drug use and incarceration.

Opportunities refer to external activities or trends that the organization may benefit from, connect with or take advantage of to grow or enhance its performance.

Federal and State momentum and the availability of federal funds has inspired states, cities and counties to focus attention on reentry services and programs that are committed to finding viable solutions to the increased rate of recidivism that could potentially create future public safety and financial crises.

Recently, the Senate approved an appropriations bill for the Department of Justice for fiscal year 2010 that provides \$114 million for prisoner reentry, including \$100 million for Second Chance Act grant programs.

The channels of communication have opened among corrections personnel, city and county officials as well as social service agencies to create collaborative approaches to address the issues surrounding successful reentry efforts.

Threats: are external activities or trends that threaten the current and future success of the organization.

Rising unemployment and lower tax receipts have already added to the strain on the state, city, and county budgets. Cuts in services were initiated as government's reaction to budget shortfalls, this phase of retrenchment is predicted to continue through 2010. {Bloomberg.com News :} This troubling economic news will be especially difficult for the State of Ohio with an unemployment rate of 10.2%. Additionally, this grim economic news could precipitate agency cuts that threaten the ability of key stakeholders to participate in collaborations that support effective reentry practices. Finally, a continued decline in the economy and a deeper decrease in low-skilled and/or living wage employment pose a detrimental impact on the ability of ex-offenders to successfully reintegrate into the community.

Mission, Vision, and Principles of the Franklin County Task Force

MISSION

The Franklin County Reentry Task Force (RTF) will provide research, planning, training, service delivery coordination, oversight and guidance concerning grants to internal and external partners working in the offender reentry field. This guidance includes, but is not limited to: organizing, planning, training, collaboration, and funding options as they apply for Federal, State, and Local grant opportunities. The RTF will establish strategic goals to influence services throughout the county and/or designated regions.

VISION

Creating Safer Neighborhoods and Productive Citizens-by increasing the success rates of ex-offenders transitioning from correctional and rehabilitative institutions into the community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Franklin County Reentry Task Force effort will be guided by principles designed to foster a comprehensive, integrated and regional continuum of services for ex-offenders re-entering Franklin County. This approach will be:

1. Outcome Driven. Promote outcomes relative to safety, health and welfare of the community and its returning citizens. Evidence-based, best practices should be implemented whenever practical.
2. Multi-disciplinary. Utilize a common oversight body that is multi-disciplinary and responsive to the holistic nature of reentry.
3. Maximize Resources. Develop a collaborative regional application and funding approach to maximize funding and reduce duplication of services. Pool existing resources and align support services to increase and improve outcomes for ex-offenders.
4. Promote Collaboration as essential to quality and effective reentry practices.
5. Data Driven. Reliable information equals effective decision making.
6. Accountable. Public Safety is enhanced by quality reentry approaches that foster greater accountability of agency outcomes and individual responsibility.
7. Transparent. Increase transparency within the reentry process for those in need of assistance and services.

A Comprehensive Five Year Strategic Plan

The Franklin County Reentry Task Force's overarching goals are to reduce recidivism in Franklin County by 50 percent within a five-year period, enhance public safety and ensure successful reentry of returning citizens. The dedication of sufficient resources and utilization of reentry practices, proven to reduce recidivism in the long-run, will also produce significant cost-savings to the County which spends \$79 per day per jail inmate and the State, which currently spends approximately \$25,000 per adult inmate per year on incarceration.

As a means of measuring the effectiveness of our efforts to improve and enhance the reentry process, the Task Force will explore the creation of a community "Reentry Progress Report" for Franklin County that will track reentry indicators of safety, support, and services for a select group of medium and high risk ex-offenders. The Progress Report will include: technical violations, convictions for new crimes, the number of ex-offenders accessing alcohol and other drugs or mental health treatment services, and the number of ex-offenders entering the shelter system from jail and/or prison. The Task Force will be responsible for creating an annual reentry progress report to the community, documenting success and challenges.

Today's focus on offender reentry differs from past efforts in that it is more directed toward achievements of public safety through successful ex-offender outcomes. Experts often recommend developing strategies and related services and programs with the end goal in mind. The following performance measures have been developed to align with the findings and recommendations from multiple local studies and to complement the State of Ohio's reentry efforts as detailed in the Ohio Ex- -offender Reentry Coalition Five Year Strategic Plan.

- 100% of ex-ex-offenders released to Franklin County will leave the institution with identification and social security card.
- A reduction in the number of ex-offenders released from the institution with outstanding wants and warrants.
- Increase in the number of ex-offenders with access to benefits PRIOR to release from the institution.
- Increase the number of ex-offenders hired by government offices.
- Increase the number of ex-offenders gainfully employed within one-month of release from institution.
- Increase linkages to case management supportive services
- Increase the number of ex-offenders leaving local/state incarceration with a reentry plan established.

Reentry: Measuring for Results

Targeted Recommendations, Goals and Objectives

The creation of a truly viable and quality driven reentry process recognizes the complex social, cultural, and political challenges impacting the reentry process. Reentry requires a local commitment to innovative concepts and ideas that, where practical, are evidence-based, utilize best practices, and are measurable. The Task Force will provide a continuum of support to the existing infrastructure with an emphasis on creating a foundation for policy development over time throughout Central Ohio. The overall strategy that the Task Force will adopt to achieve practical results in the coming years will involve modeling recommendations derived from the “Lessons Learned from National Reentry Demonstration Programs” such as transitional jobs, one-stop services, and early planning and continuum of care model.

Despite the challenges involved in providing successful reentry programs, the Franklin County Task Force was able to reach consensus and develop a set of recommendations that have the potential to improve reentry outcomes for a significant number of Franklin County’s ex-offender population. The issues and recommendations highlighted in this document will form the foundation of the next phase of the Reentry Task Force’s work – implementing a cooperative, unified plan for meeting transitional employment, housing, and supportive services needs of ex-offenders returning to Franklin County’s neighborhoods and surrounding communities.

Issue: Employment

Access to living-wage jobs has evaded a sizeable portion of Central Ohio residents, but none so significantly as ex-offenders. As previously mentioned, ex-offenders often do not find jobs that pay above minimum wage. Thus, access to living-wage jobs and continued employment are essential to an ex-offender’s short- and long-term success (source: urban institute). Employment and financial security are paramount to developing productive behaviors and positive relationships. Nonetheless, there are still many barriers to employment for individuals with a criminal conviction. Key among these barriers is the stigma of a criminal conviction and the resulting discrimination faced by ex-offenders from employers who fear possible legal ramifications or negative public perception.

Recommendations

A. Explore the development of an employment initiative, working with the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition’s Employment Workgroup and Central Ohio Work Investment Corporation (COWIC) – Job Leaders, Chamber of Commerce, Ohio Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Columbus State Community College, The City of Columbus, and elected officials to engage local business leaders in Central Ohio to examine their hiring policies and practices as it relates to ex-offenders. This initiative would inform local businesses of the tax incentives and other benefits of hiring qualified ex-offenders.

B. Utilizing Department of Labor information and in partnership with COWIC-Job Leaders, identify growth sectors in Central Ohio economy, including “green” jobs. Work with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to obtain information on the skill sets and educational levels of ex-offenders in the discharge planning phase and use this information to inform the development of an employment and education strategy.

C. Work with the Public Defender’s Office, and other legal service providers such as the Ohio Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Legal Aid Society and students from Capital University Law School’s Legal Clinic to conduct information sessions that assist ex-offenders in obtaining a copy of their criminal record. In addition, work with members of the Ohio Justice and Policy Center to draft a fact sheet or matrix indicating the jobs that are barred by certain crimes and the circumstances under which these employment restrictions can be lifted.

D. Franklin County and the City of Columbus should lead by example and review their own hiring policies to ensure hiring practices do not unfairly discriminate against ex-offenders. The symbolic value of government hiring ex-offenders has been found to be significant, not to mention the increased opportunity for jobs.

Employment Goal: Increase the number of formerly incarcerated people who are trained, placed in employment and remain employed for a period of at least six months.

Objectives:

- a. Expansion of existing and newly created transitional employment programs targeted for persons with a criminal record. *Baseline: 4*
- b. Increase the number of ex-offenders provided employment readiness, workforce development and vocation opportunities while incarcerated within the Franklin County Correctional Center. *Baseline: 0*
- c. Increase the number of ex-offenders provided employment readiness, workforce development and vocational opportunities post local or state incarceration. *Baseline: 2,500*
- d. Develop an outreach marketing campaign targeted toward employers designed to dispel myths and convey benefits of hiring ex-offenders. *Baseline: 0*

Strategic Performance Outcomes:

Increase the number of ex-offenders accessing and successfully completing employment training programs while incarcerated within the Franklin County Correctional Center.

CY 2010: 0 **CY 2011:** 15 **CY 2012:** 25 **CY 2013:** 40 **CY 2014:** 50

Increase the number of ex-offenders accessing and successfully completing employment training programs post local or state incarceration.

CY 2010: 2500 CY 2011: 2700 CY 2012: 2800 CY 2013: 3000 CY 2014: 3000

Increase the number of ex-offenders offered participation in a transitional employment program.

CY 2010: 15 CY 2011: 30 CY 2012: 40 CY 2013: 50 CY 2014: 75

Increase the number of ex-offenders who successfully maintain employment for six months post entrance into a transitional employment program.

CY 2010: 10 CY 2011: 20 CY 2012: 30 CY 2013: 40 CY 2014: 60

Issue: Fragmentation of Services

The system of reentry services in Franklin County is fragmented and lacks system-wide planning. At the same time, there are a number of opportunities for collaborative and targeted efforts that could enhance ex-offenders' awareness, access to, and successful use of reentry services.

Recommendations

Research shows that evidence-based interventions focused on ex-offenders with increased potential for committing new crimes result in better outcomes both for the ex-offender and the community (Latessa 2007). Therefore, increased coordination between service providers who work within the ex-offender reentry system in Franklin County proactively responding to medium and high-risk persons released from incarceration regardless of supervision status is crucial to creating better outcomes for ex-offenders. With these concerns in mind, the Task Force must create a unified group of agencies and programs that work collaboratively to deliver reentry services to ensure ex-offenders easily matriculate through the system.

The Task Force, in collaboration with the local corrections community, will look to approaches that best improve incarceration intake, including reliable and tested assessment tools that match resources to risk for individuals in the discharge planning phase, improve utilization of jail and prison-based reentry preparation, increase and improve information sharing for post release reentry management and increase community capacity building and sustainability. The Task Force recognizes that a quality reentry program is initiated at reception and continues until the ex-offender is released.

Service Enhancement Goal: To increase the coordination of county-wide reentry efforts to enhance quality service provision, maximize limited resources and minimize duplication.

Objectives:

- a. Increased understanding by all stakeholders of available resources, best practice information and task force activities as measured by the annual survey.
- b. Development of an annual community Reentry Progress Report.
Baseline: 0
- c. Improved system information sharing between providers and across systems as measured by the annual survey.
- d. Adoption of a standardized assessment tool that can be used during all phases of the reentry process. Baseline 2 agencies implementing Ohio Risk Assessment System Tool

Strategic Performance Outcomes:

Increase the number of service providers who indicate a strong knowledge of existing resources, best practice information and task force activities.

CY 2010: 0 **CY 2011:** 25 **CY 2012:** 50 **CY 2013:** 75 **CY 2014:** 75

Increase the number of ex-offenders who indicate a strong knowledge of existing resources available to assist them in their reentry efforts.

CY 2010: 0 **CY 2011:** 50 **CY 2012:** 100 **CY 2013:** 150 **CY 2014:** 200

Development and implementation of an annual community Reentry Progress Report.

CY 2010: 0 **CY 2011:** 1 **CY 2012:** 1 **CY 2013:** 1 **CY 2014:** 1

Increased number of service providers trained and utilizing the Ohio Risk Assessment Systems Tool

CY 2010: 10 **CY 2011:** 20 **CY 2012:** 30 **CY 2013:** 40 **CY 2014:** 50

Development and distribution of an electronic semi-annual Franklin County Reentry Newsletter

CY 2010: 0 **CY 2011:** 2 **CY 2012:** 2 **CY 2013:** 2 **CY 2014:** 2

Issue: Public Perception

The general public has heard the term reintegration and has an operational understanding of its meaning, except as it relates to ex-offenders and the process of reentry. The stigma attached to ex-offenders reentering communities often stymies efforts to develop progressive policies and local programs that enhance public safety. It is crucial to the continued success of the reentry process for the Task Force to promote broader public understanding of reintegration as it relates to reentry and the important roles that the

public can take in supporting endeavors to create safer communities and productive citizens.

Recommendations

Develop and implement a multi-media campaign, including a reentry website and interactive community presentation that provides information about reintegration, the reentry process, and the challenges facing ex-offenders and their families. These presentations should be designed to reach audiences that are unfamiliar with the concept of ex-offender reentry and the issues facing individual reentering the community from jail or prison. These presentations could be held with business groups, professional associations, and government agencies, religious, civic, and social organizations. An essential requirement to changing hearts and minds about ex-offenders is putting a “human face” on the reentry process, therefore, the Task Force must involve speakers who were formerly incarcerated and are now productive members of the community, including those who have had issues with recidivism in the past.

Public Perception Goal: To implement a multi-media campaign presenting information about reintegration, the reentry process and the challenges facing ex-offenders and their families.

Objectives:

- a. Explore current status of State of Ohio’s media campaign and develop a complementary local outreach plan targeted to potential employers. Baseline: 0
- b. Identify formerly incarcerated individuals willing to serve as members of a reentry speaker’s bureau. Baseline: 0
- c. Create reentry resource packets that include information on a range of reentry topics.

Strategic Performance Outcomes:

Development of a local media outreach plan to guide implementation efforts.

CY 2010: 0 CY 2011: 1 CY 2012: 1 CY 2013: 1 CY 2014: 1

Development and distribution of reentry packets that include fact sheets providing information on a range of reentry topics. Measurement includes number of packets distributed.

CY 2010: 0 CY 2011: 0 CY 2012: 100 CY 2013: 200 CY 2014: 200

Creation, implementation and scheduling of speakers through a reentry speakers bureau. Measurement includes number of presentations scheduled.

CY 2010: 0 CY 2011: 0 CY 2012: 5 CY 2013: 7 CY 2014: 10

Issue: Health and Social Services

Ex-offenders need increased access to local services including physical health, drug treatment services, mental health treatment services, and cognitive behavior therapies. Franklin County ADAMH board is experiencing a short-fall in treatment dollars which tremendously affects the number of people who are able to obtain supportive treatment services that helps to maintain a healthy and sober lifestyle and prevent placement in state mental hospitals.

Recommendations

A quality reentry program is initiated at reception and continues until the ex-offender is released. A successful reentry program will ensure ex-offenders have access to a seamless network of services, such as substance abuse treatment, and health and mental health services that are in place during incarceration and immediately available to ex-offenders once released. Therefore, Franklin County Reentry Task will recommend that a tested and reliable risk assessment tool that evaluates mental health issues and alcohol and other drug abuse be utilized to assess risk and needs during classification, periodically during the course of an individual's incarceration, in preparation for discharge, and reintegration. The assessment tool should be used to provide additional information and assist all those involved in making informed decisions regarding the successful reintegration of the ex-offenders into the community.

This reintegration plan will be created during the discharge planning process that links individuals with medical, mental health and substance abuse treatment services for follow-up care and supplies an adequate amount of medication upon release, these services are crucial to reentry success.

The Reentry Task Force will create and distribute a resource packet to all ex-offenders returning to Central Ohio. It will be available at probation and parole authorities, correctional facilities, and through local service providers.

Health and Social Services Goal: Increase prison and jail-based reentry preparation through the creation of reentry case management teams that will work with ex-offenders three to six months prior to release to develop reentry plans.

Objectives:

- a. Increase the number of ex-offenders in Franklin County Correctional Institutions who participate in or have access to case management services.
- b. Increase the number of ex-offenders in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction facilities who participate in or have access to case management services.

- c. Increase the number of offenders who have linkage to medical and mental health services and substance abuse treatment upon release. Baseline: 0
- d. Expansion of training opportunities for case managers and other service providers.

❖ ***Baseline numbers and strategic performance outcomes pending further collection of data and resource information.***

Strategic Performance Outcomes:

Implementation of a comprehensive case management program within Franklin County Correctional Centers

CY 2010: 0 **CY2011:** **CY2012:** **CY2013:** **CY2014:**

Implementation of a comprehensive case management program within the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

CY 2010: 0 **CY2011:** **CY2012:** **CY2013:** **CY2014:**

Increase the number of ex-offenders who benefit from case management services while incarcerated in Franklin County Correctional Centers

CY 2010: 20 **CY2011:** 40 **CY2012:** 50 **CY2013:** 60 **CY2014:** 75

Increase the number of ex-offenders who benefit from case management services while incarcerated in Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

CY 2010: **CY2011:** **CY2012:** **CY2013:** **CY2014:**

Increase the number of ex-offenders who have identification and social security cards upon release from the Franklin County Correctional Centers.

CY 2010: **CY2011:** **CY2012:** **CY2013:** **CY2014:**

Increase the number of ex-offenders who have identification and social security cards upon release from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

CY 2010: **CY2011:** **CY2012:** **CY2013:** **CY2014:**

Increase the number of ex-offenders released from Franklin County Correctional Center with a comprehensive reentry plan.

CY 2010: 15 **CY2011:** 30 **CY2012:** 40 **CY2013:** 50 **CY2014:** 65

Increase the number of ex-offenders released from Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction with a comprehensive reentry plan.

CY 2010: CY2011: CY2012: CY2013: CY2014

Increase the number of training opportunities sponsored for case managers and other reentry service providers

CY 2010: CY2011: CY2012: CY2013: CY2014

Increase the number of participants who attend the sponsored trainings.

CY 2010: CY2011: CY2012: CY2013: CY2014

Issue: Housing

For many ex-offenders with or without histories of chronic substance abuse and/or mental health issues experiences with homelessness and incarceration is a vicious cycle. Housing is one of the most important needs facing ex-offenders upon their return to the community. Yet, the majority of reentry programs do not provide housing for ex-offenders, forcing them into shelters or other unstable housing situations that may contribute to them being exposed to the criminal element that contributed to their initial incarceration and leave them at risk of becoming homeless.

Recommendation

Franklin County Reentry Task shall explore strategies that will utilize local, state and federal funding programs that encourage for profit and non-profits owners and developers to increase and/or make available affordable and supportive housing options for persons returning from jail or prison to Franklin County, especially those individuals who require additional assistance in obtaining and maintaining housing such as those with histories homelessness, severe mentally illness and/or chronic substance abuse.

Housing Goal: Increase and improve the housing placement of ex-offenders returning to the community upon release from jail or prison

Objectives:

- a. Reduce the number of formerly incarcerated people's incidence of homelessness or use of emergency shelters upon release.
- b. Increase the number of ex-offenders who are accepted into supportive housing prior to or upon release from jail or prison.

- ❖ *Baseline numbers and strategic performance outcomes pending further collection of data and resource information.*

Strategic Performance Outcomes:

Increase the number of ex-offenders successfully obtaining transitional, community-based half-way and permanent supportive housing when released from jail or prison

CY 2010: CY2011: CY2012: CY2013: CY2014:

Conclusion

A study conducted by Taxman et al (2002), suggests that correctional systems do not have the sole capacity to assist inmates in developing a plan to facilitate their return to the community. The study found that the current process makes the ex-offender wholly responsible for reentry and reintegration. The researchers suggest that the reentry system is built on three unrealistic assumptions about the ex-offender: (1) the ex-offender can return to his/her place of residence with ease; (2) he/she is able to make the necessary arrangements for supportive and social services from prison; and (3) the ex-offender can transition from being dependent (institutionalized – having all decisions and movements controlled by the prison environment) to independence effortlessly and immediately upon release. Flaws in the current reentry paradigm are clearly demonstrated by the fact more than half (66%) of all the nation's ex-offenders returned to prison.

Mindful of the need for a paradigm shift, The Franklin County Reentry Task Force (RTF) is dedicated to forging a shared commitment to changing practices (open communication and pooling of resources) and eliminating the broken, fragmented, and disjointed service delivery to ex-offenders that will reduce recidivism and enhance public safety. In addition, the Franklin County Reentry Task Force expects to devise a seamless interdisciplinary County reentry network that produces opportunities to proactively engage the ex-offender, matching needs and service to produce pro-social behaviors and skills that result in safe neighborhoods and productive citizens.

To successfully create a new and improved reentry paradigm, the Reentry Task Force devised a comprehensive five year strategic plan. The purpose of the strategic plan is to provide guidance and focus on the process of reducing recidivism by 50% over the next five years. This strategic plan will be a working document that the Task Force will revisit and revise periodically to ensure our projections are realistic and our objectives and goals are relevant and timely. To this end, the Reentry Task Force will produce an annual progress report documenting our accomplishments, lessons learned, our goals, objectives and activities for the following year. Finally, the actions taken by the Reentry Task Force will always reflect its mission, vision, and guiding principles.

RESOURCES

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