

The Montana Prisoner Reentry Initiative **State Level Organizational Structure**

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The Montana Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MT-ORI) was formed by the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) to respond to the challenges facing citizens in Montana who are returning to their communities from prison. The MT-ORI is a state/local partnership managed by the DOC's Office of Offender Reentry (OOR) and comprised of the DOC, the Montana Parole Board and other state departments, statewide human services organizations, and faith based groups whose missions are critical to prisoner reentry reform. The purpose of this document is to describe the state-level organizational structure of the MT-ORI.

THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS OFFICE OF OFFENDER REENTRY

In November of 2014, the Director of Corrections, Mike Batista, created the Office of Offender Reentry (OOR) to implement prisoner reentry reforms. Responsibilities of OOR include:

- To ensure successful offender reentry to the State of Montana, to reduce recidivism, to enhance public safety through collaboration among stakeholders and to assist in ensuring the appropriate and responsible use of cost savings realized by justice reforms through reinvestment in evidence-based, community-centered services.
- To collaborate and work with the Montana Offender Reentry Task Force, chaired by Director Batista, the State Parole Board, the Department of Behavioral Health, the Department of Labor and other non-governmental stakeholders to develop and execute a robust and systematic prisoner reentry plan for Montana to ensure the effective supervision and delivery of appropriate services to returning citizens.

In 2014, the National Governor's Association, through a grant from the Pew Charitable Trust, Center for the States, worked with the Montana Governor's Office, the Parole Board, other state agencies, and community stakeholders to conduct a review of Montana's corrections system and found that, while a good deal of laudable work was underway, increased coordination among the various efforts was needed to overcome the barriers to reducing recidivism. Given that finding, the DOC contracted with the Michigan-based Center for Justice Innovation to help facilitate development and implementation of a comprehensive reentry improvement strategy. After extensive data analysis and facilitated meetings with stakeholders, the DOC collaborated with key state agencies to create the Montana Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MT-ORI) Framework, which lays the foundation for a five-year effort expected to make Montana a national leader in recidivism reduction of returning citizens.

The MT-ORI is centered on the principle that every returning citizen released from prison should have the tools and support needed to succeed in the community. Its key objectives are two-fold: First, to improve public safety by reducing crimes committed by former offenders and thereby reducing the number of crime victims; and secondly, to increase success rates of Montana's citizen's leaving prison by providing them with a seamless plan of services and supervision, beginning at the time of their incarceration and continuing through their reintegration in the community. (See *The Montana Prisoner Reentry Framework* for detail).

CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MT-ORI

In order to address the Governor's directive for statewide collaboration, the OOR is developing a state level organizational structure that will fully engage reentry stakeholders across the state to participate in the on-going development and implementation of the MT-ORI. This state level structure begins with the

statewide Montana Prisoner Reentry Council and the MT-ORI Implementation Steering Team (IST) which will guide prisoner reentry reforms at the operational level through work groups and department-based teams.

THE MONTANA PRISONER REENTRY STATEWIDE COUNCIL

The Montana Prisoner Reentry Council (the Reentry Council) is comprised of individuals and organizations from whom the Council has sought – and will continue to seek - advice and counsel on how to improve the success of Montana’s returning citizens. These supporters and stakeholders will assist the reentry reforms by acting as conduits for communication and a mechanism for building community awareness, support, and participation. The Reentry Council will develop work groups and sub-committees, as needed, to address pertinent issues from the varied perspectives of community leaders – many of whom have been engaged in improving prisoner reentry for many years.

The Montana Native American Advisory Committee

The Montana Native American Advisory Committee will be comprised of representatives from groups and organizations which are dedicated to addressing the over-representation of Montana Natives in the adult prison system, led by the Montana Mental Health Trust Authority and the INSERT STATEWIDE ADVOCY GROUP, to help determine the most effective ways to address this enormous concern.

THE IMPLEMENTATION STEERING TEAM (IST)

In November of 2014, the initial phase of work on the MT-ORI involved a core team of state agency representatives from the Office of the Governor, the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget, the Montana Department of Corrections, the State Parole Board, the Montana Department of Behavioral Health, the Montana Department of Labor, the Montana Mental Health Trust Authority and community reentry stakeholders. This core team, the MT-ORI Implementation Steering Team (IST), is chaired by the Acting Director of the OOR, whose office provides staff support. The IST reports to the Reentry Council.

Now that the Council has adopted the Framework as the roadmap for the MT-ORI, the IST will expand to include Human services organizations, non-profit institutions and faith-based partners. These additions will enhance the team’s perspective and help it expand and become firmly established statewide. Thus, for practical purposes, the Framework should be viewed as a *preliminary* plan that will be strengthened dramatically through full community engagement. The IST will function through three Workgroups, one representing each of the three Phases in the MT-ORI. Each of the workgroups has co-chairs appointed by the Governor and will be facilitated and staffed with a representative from the OOR. The IST will:

- Identify barriers in each department or agency that may hinder the successful transition of returning citizens and develop policies, procedures, and programs to overcome such barriers.
- Identify methods to improve collaboration and coordination of offender transition services, including cross-training, information-sharing systems, and policies, procedures, and programs that measure offender reentry management with well-defined, performance-based outcomes.
- Consult with state and local agencies, organizations, and community leaders with expertise in the areas of prison facilities, parole decision-making, reentry, and community supervision to collaborate on offender transition issues and ways of improving operations.
- Consult with representatives from professional associations, volunteer and faith-based organizations, and local treatment and rehabilitation agencies to collaborate on offender transition issues and ways of improving operations.
- Provide recommendations as to how the Governor and other state departments and agencies may assist the Council in overcoming the barriers it has identified to the successful transition and reintegration of offenders returning to communities.
- Provide recommendations on how state laws and may be improved in order to contribute to the successful transition and reintegration of offenders into society and reduce recidivism.

Departmental MT-ORI Implementation Resource Teams

In order to effectively implement the MT-ORI Framework, each service delivery department represented on the IST will form an Implementation Resource Team (IRT). This team is comprised of top level managers who are responsible for moving the MT-ORI Framework into the policies and procedures of their department and assuring that the Framework is fully implemented at both the state and local level. The Implementation Resource Teams are responsible for interpreting how their departments' functions will need to be adapted to correspond with every aspect of the MT-ORI Framework and assuring efficient implementation. Active participation of the IRT Team Leader on the IST is critical for their clear understanding of the forces driving the development and implementation of the Framework.

MT-ORI Implementation Resource Teams will propose solutions to their department directors on how to respond to the challenges that inevitably will arise as their departments' reform their approaches to addressing the needs of citizens returning to Montana's communities so that crime in Montana is reduced. Regular meetings of the departments' Implementation Resource Teams will ensure that key policies, processes and functions are adapted, reformed and managed in a timely and coherent manner and that these changes are fully communicated throughout their agencies.

The Transition Planning Accountability Committee

Given the critical important of transition planning across the spectrum of the reentry process from intake to prison through discharge from correctional authority, the Transition Accountability Planning (TAP) process requires, a work group that is comprised of prison, community supervision and community justice leaders and service providers is needed to implement the process with fidelity. This committee will work to ensure that all stakeholders' perspectives and inputs are taken into account when developing the new processes and policies around transition planning.

The Housing and Employment Committees

Housing and employment for returning citizens are paramount for improved offender and system outcomes. These two service areas are the top priority of the Reentry Council and as such will benefit from specific forums for agency and community stakeholders to meet and determine the state's and each community's assets, barriers and gaps around housing and employment and work to maximize the assets, overcome the barriers, and eventually reduce the gaps in the service milieus of these two service areas.

The Grants Development and Management Committee

One of the benefits of having explicit expectations for improving prisoner reentry through the MT-ORI and its state and local structures and guidelines is an enhanced ability to be very competitive for local, state, federal and foundation grant dollars. This committee will serve the purpose of determining the availability of funding from all sources, determine those that are important to pursue and provide the structure, discipline and capacity to pursue and achieve enhanced funding. Federal grant making for prisoner reentry under the Second Chance Act, for example, has grown dramatically over the past decade and states with clear designs, strategies and tactics to reduce recidivism have an excellent track record for grant awards.

The Data, Information, Evaluation, and Performance Committee

The ability to track, record, monitor, report and share data between stakeholders that provides needed accountability for improved reentry services is paramount to success. This committee will serve as the forum for policies, processes and protocols for data system development and implementation.

State Organizational Structure of the MT-ORI

