



**Bob Taft, Governor**

**The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction**

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# **The Ohio Plan For Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction**

## **Reentry Mission Statement**

***The Reentry Initiative is a holistic and systematic approach that seeks to reduce the likelihood of additional criminal behavior. Beginning at sentencing and extending beyond release, reentry will assess, identify and link offenders with services specific to their needs. This will be accomplished through associations with community partners, families, justice professionals and victims of crime.***

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

**July 2002**



# Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

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Reginald A. Wilkinson, Director

July 1, 2002

Dear Colleagues:

The Department of Rehabilitation and correction is pleased to present *The Ohio Plan For Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction*. This plan represents the culmination of a major review of what is being done and what needs to be done, to support the successful return of offenders from prison to communities across Ohio.

The Ohio Plan calls for a coordinated systems approach to offender reentry involving every phase of the correctional system. The vision and commitment behind reentry starts with the question: what is needed to prepare this offender to go home and stay home in a crime free and productive manner? Answering this question requires continued and expanded collaboration with community partners and providers, victims, the faith community, families, law enforcement and other state agencies that have a responsibility for public safety.

The Ohio Plan provides a blueprint for future changes centering on offender reentry. Those stakeholders and partners who are interested in or may already be collaborating with the department are invited to assist us in moving forward on this important initiative, and thus to effect the long-term effectiveness of the changes that are adopted under the Ohio Plan.

During the course of the past year, a Reentry Steering Committee oversaw the work of six reentry action teams and the recommendations that now form the basis for moving forward on this important initiative. In concert with the Office of Offender Reentry and Correctional Best Practices, the Reentry Steering Committee will support and monitor the implementation of the Ohio Plan.

For more information, contact Edward Rhine at (614) 995-3599 or [Edward.Rhine@odrc.state.oh.us](mailto:Edward.Rhine@odrc.state.oh.us).

Sincerely,

Reginald A. Wilkinson, Ed.D.  
Director

# ***The Ohio Plan For Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction***

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The Ohio Plan For Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction* provides a comprehensive set of recommendations addressing the transition of offenders from reception to their parent institution to supervision in the community. The recommendations were formulated by six Reentry Action Teams working under the auspices of a departmental Reentry Steering Committee. The teams focused on six major areas affecting offender reentry: Offender Planning and Tracking, Offender Programming, Discharge Planning and Employment, Family Involvement, Offender Supervision, and Community Justice Partnerships. What follows presents forty-four recommendations organized by the area of reentry into which they fall.

### **RECEPTION, OFFENDER ASSESSMENTS, AND REENTRY PLANNING**

**Recommendation #1:** The reception assessment process shall be augmented to include a formal risk assessment and needs assessment.

**Recommendation #2:** Reentry Accountability Planning shall occur for offenders based on their risk level and time to be served while at reception, the parent institution, and, if applicable, during the period of parole or post-release control supervision.

**Recommendation #3:** Reception, Institutional, and Community Reentry Management Teams shall be responsible for developing and monitoring Reentry Accountability Plans for designated offenders throughout the reentry transition process.

**Recommendation #4:** A Department Offender Tracking System (DOTS) screen shall be developed that will contain the Reentry Accountability Plan accessible to appropriate staff at any stage in the reentry transition process.

**Recommendation #5:** A reception process standardization team with staff from each reception center and central office shall be formed to standardize the reception protocol, procedures, staffing and timelines for accomplishing their work.

**Recommendation #6:** The reception centers shall put a system in place to ensure that presentence investigation reports, violation reports, and offender background investigations, if applicable, are part of the master file.

**Recommendation #7:** The reception centers shall provide program recommendations to the Bureau of Classification to be considered in the offender's assignment to the parent institution, along with the offender's security level, length of sentence, bed space, and other such considerations.

**Recommendation #8:** The existing link on the Department's Internet website shall be revised to include the Adult Parole Authority (APA) regional Administrative Assistants and Regional Service Coordinators. The Administrative Assistant shall serve as the designated liaison for outside agencies and the courts. The reception centers shall also designate a liaison to work either with the APA Administrative Assistant or be a direct contact for outside agencies and the courts to be included on the Department's Internet website.

**Recommendation #9:** A comprehensive series of steps shall be taken to ensure that presentence investigation reports arrive with the offender at reception. To streamline the reception process, similar steps shall be taken to obtain violation behavior for returnees.

### **OFFENDER PROGRAMMING: TARGETING CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS**

**Recommendation #10:** New programs that are developed shall incorporate the principles that drive effective correctional programming, provide staff training prior to their adoption, and be guided by a training manual that directs all work relevant to the program. They shall be reviewed and approved subject to their compliance with a standardized protocol to be established in Departmental policy.

**Recommendation #11:** Existing programs shall be reviewed and maintained or eliminated based on the extent to which they address the dynamic domains used to assess offender needs as part of reentry planning. Departmental resources will be allocated over time to support existing programs that effectively address these areas, as well as to create treatment interventions in offender needs areas where additional programming is necessary.

**Recommendation #12:** An Ohio Offender Performance Merit System shall be developed and adopted that recognizes pro-social behaviors by offenders enrolled in reentry programming.

**Recommendation #13:** The Classification Policy (#111-07) shall be revised to allow appropriate offenders in medium and minimum levels the opportunity to receive points for reentry programming that is completed in order to earn a reduction in their security level.

**Recommendation #14:** An Interdisciplinary Special Needs Offenders Management Work Group shall be formed to oversee the adoption of a series of “best practices” associated with the reentry transition for offenders, including sex offenders, older offenders, mentally ill offenders, and mentally retarded or developmentally disabled offenders.

### **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN REENTRY**

**Recommendation #15:** A Family Orientation Program shall be implemented at each reception center with information disseminated on community resources.

**Recommendation #16:** Community-based support groups shall be developed for family members through the Offender Services Network and the Department’s faith-based initiative.

**Recommendation #17:** A Family Council shall be formed to address offender/family issues across the reentry continuum.

**Recommendation #18:** The policy on Inmate Visitation (#312-02) shall be revised to remove barriers prohibiting family members from visiting and provide for the reactivation of the visitation list for parole violators. Post specific training shall be provided for staff working in the visiting area to familiarize correctional officers with handling family members and the public.

**Recommendation #19:** The policy on Unit and Treatment Programming (#315-05) shall be revised to support the involvement of family members in institutional programs.

**Recommendation #20:** A new policy on family/child-centered programming for incarcerated mothers and fathers shall be developed that includes a provision for additional visits for participation in selected programming.

**Recommendation #21:** The curriculum for the current “Responsible Family Life Skills Program” shall be revised to include a lesson plan on child support and paternity.

**Recommendation #22:** A pilot program shall be established creating a treatment community in a designated institution focusing on family life education and reunification.

**Recommendation #23:** A family component shall be developed in cooperation with existing Therapeutic Community and institutional security staffs allowing immediate family members to participate in the rehabilitative process.

**Recommendation #24:** Adult Parole Authority (APA) policies #501-19, #501-30, and #501-35 shall be revised to include family members in the supervising officer’s planned visits with the offender and in the initial office visit, and to disseminate information explaining the responsibilities of the APA, as well as encouraging family involvement.

**Recommendation #25:** New collaborative arrangements shall be forged with the Department of Education and the Department of Jobs and Family Services addressing school/parent issues associated with the children of the incarcerated.

**Recommendation #26:** New collaborative arrangements shall be forged between child welfare and DRC to develop cross-system ties and training between the two agencies.

## **EMPLOYMENT READINESS AND DISCHARGE PLANNING**

**Recommendation #27:** A new policy called “Transitioning the Offender” shall be adopted to ensure that thorough discharge planning takes place to prepare offenders for release to the community. The policy shall include a new form entitled the “Discharge Planning & Employment Readiness Checklist,” to monitor the reentry transition process.

**Recommendation #28:** One comprehensive policy shall drive all programs dealing with offender release preparation entitled the “Release Preparation Program” (#313-01). This new policy combines and integrates two separate DRC policies (#313-03 and #313-04) that formerly governed all pre-release programs.

**Recommendation #29:** A Reentry Resource Center will be located in the library of each institution and each APA regional office. The current DRC policy on libraries (#106-01) shall be revised to include the establishment of such centers in prison libraries.

**Recommendation #30:** The Department will implement a Career Exploration Program at all institutions to assist offenders in making decisions regarding education, training, and employment. Career resource material will be available within the Reentry Resource Centers to support career exploration.

**Recommendation #31:** The inmate's work ethic shall be enhanced by the adoption of policy revisions involving (#108-02) "Classification and Reclassification Status Review," proposed revisions to the current Administrative Rule (#5120-3-08); the creation of a new policy called the "Offender Work Ethic," and revisions to the Job Coordinators' position description.

**Recommendation #32:** Comprehensive strategies and carefully targeted policy changes shall be adopted to improve the marketing of job ready ex-offenders, inclusive of the following.

- Revisions to the Career-Technical Education policy (#105-12) will be made to improve the dissemination of the Career Passport, a marketing tool for career –technical program completers;
- A new strategy for marketing job-ready offenders to be incorporated within the Release Preparation policy (#313-01) will include the use of quarterly employer interviews for career-technical, apprenticeship or advanced job training students nearing release;
- The use of the Ohio Job Net System will allow Job Coordinators to pre-register career-technical students and apprentices nearing release. This will improve the marketing of selected offenders by registering for work, using the intranet link to the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services;
- A new policy related to educational, vocational and employment follow-up of offenders after release from prison will be adopted. This policy will address the Code of Employee Conduct, specifically professional contact with offenders after release.
- Revisions shall be adopted in two APA policies (#501-49 and #501-31) that will support the collection of information on the employment status of parolees during the classification reassessment process and at termination from supervision.

### **REENTRY-CENTERED OFFENDER SUPERVISION**

**Recommendation #33:** The Adult Parole Authority shall be guided by a philosophy of supervision that calls for a balanced approach in working with offenders. This approach emphasizes community safety, offender accountability, and community-based programming that facilitates effective reentry.

**Recommendation #34:** The Adult Parole Authority shall adopt community and neighborhood-based supervision strategies that include reporting centers in local neighborhoods and the use of geo-mapping to allocate staff and resources to where offenders reside.

**Recommendation #35:** The Citizens' Circle Model involving community-collaboration and partnerships with the Adult Parole Authority currently in operation in several sites shall be implemented in all parole regions.

**Recommendation #36:** Prior to release, parole officers will provide reentry orientation sessions at the institutions to convey the expectations of supervision, offenders' responsibilities, and the role and responsibilities of parole officers and Offender Services Network staff in supporting successful reentry.

**Recommendation #37:** Revisions shall be made in the Adult Parole Authority's Violations Sanctions Policy supportive of reentry goals and that structure and provide statewide consistency in the use of progressive sanctions.

## **COMMUNITY JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS**

**Recommendation #38:** A Faith-Based Advisory Council has been newly established to ensure that members of the faith community from across the state are actively engaged in the continuum of offender reentry. The Council shall develop a strategic plan and establish regional councils to assist in reentry initiatives at the local community level.

**Recommendation #39:** The Department of Rehabilitation and Correction shall sponsor an annual conference involving faith-based communities and other agencies from across Ohio to educate and provide information, and to identify issues and barriers relevant to offender reentry.

**Recommendation #40:** A comprehensive review of two Departmental policies (Volunteers #312-01 and Visitation #312-02) relevant to establishing relationships with offenders supportive of reentry shall be conducted and revisions shall be made to support faith-based, and other community partnerships throughout the reentry transition.

**Recommendation #41:** The Religious Services Department shall oversee the development of a uniform assessment instrument called an “Individual Faith Treatment Plan” that will be administered to offenders at reception.

**Recommendation #42:** The Office of Victim Services shall contact victims involved in identified higher risk cases to address victim safety planning needs.

**Recommendation #43:** The Office of Victim Services shall coordinate the development of a research instrument and the completion of research on victim awareness programming currently offered by the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

**Recommendation #44:** The Office of Victim Services shall develop a standardized curriculum for domestic violence programs within the institutions.





***The Ohio Plan  
For Productive Offender  
Reentry  
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## **REENTRY: RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE**

As it moves through the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) has embarked upon a comprehensive reexamination of offender reentry. In February 2001, the Department hosted a full day event announcing its commitment to develop *The Ohio Plan For Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction*. This event was also used to announce the creation of the Office of Offender Reentry and Correctional Best Practices. Since then a major review has been conducted of what is being done, and what needs to be done, to support successful offender reentry. What follows presents the fruition of that effort.

The notion of preparing offenders for community reentry is certainly not a new concept in the field of corrections. Through a wide array of management policies and programs, correctional systems in Ohio and elsewhere have attempted to provide offenders with a continuum of opportunities to succeed upon their release. All too often though preparations for offender release have been fragmented within institutions and between various sections of an agency diffusing both responsibility and accountability for managing this important transition.

Reentry refers to the system governing the return of prisoners to the community following a period of incarceration in a prison, jail, or detention facility. But it does not signify just “letting them go.” It connotes that offenders are *prepared* to be released. It means that they are better off at the time of release than at the time of their admission. It suggests that a period of community supervision will contribute to their crime-free lifestyle.

For a host of reasons reentry presents a unique challenge to corrections. The lack of a systems approach to offender reentry planning and preparation has already been noted. There is a need for more consistent communication, better sharing of information, and sustained and coordinated linkages between institutional staff and parole staff supportive of offender reentry. Such improvements need to occur starting at the point of reception into the prison system, ideally from the moment an offender is sentenced. Thereafter, sound linkages and steady communication need to be maintained as the offender progresses through the correctional system with a pronounced focus on planning for reentry. This ideal is achieved far too infrequently in most jurisdictions.

In Ohio and other states, significant prison population growth and an increase in those subject to parole supervision or post-release control have contributed to an unprecedented number of ex-offenders who are returning to communities having served their time. Too often they are returning to neighborhoods with discharge planning and support that may have started only weeks prior to their release. This leaves offenders ill-equipped, ill-prepared, and with only a modicum of support to make this transition successfully.

There is a growing recognition by correctional leaders, prominent academicians and influential public policy makers that the success of the reentry transition depends largely on integrating a continuum of services and programmatic interventions beginning at sentencing and admission to prison through confinement to discharge from parole or post-release control. The manner in which these linkages are formed must, of necessity, support the maintenance of offenders’ social and community ties even during the period of imprisonment.

In terms of DRC, what this means is that the process of planning for reentry must begin immediately through assessment and classification at the reception or diagnostic stage, not a few weeks, or even a few months, before release from incarceration. This change will require a dramatic shift away from the historical dichotomy that has evoked fragmentation between institutional and community supervision divisions within the correctional system. The challenge

is to achieve a more systemic approach that ensures a continuous transition of offender treatment and training from reception through the completion of supervision in the community. Additionally, it is necessary for the various components of corrections to cultivate the necessary partnerships with community agencies such as mental health, substance abuse, employment services, and local law enforcement to maintain the rehabilitative process well beyond the state's direction.

## **DRC ADOPTS NEW VISION GOVERNING REENTRY**

To effect this shift in paradigms and enhance the likelihood that offenders will succeed in their transition to the community calls for a new way of thinking. DRC has adopted a new vision governing offender reentry. The focus on reentry is clearly long-term. However, broad-based systemic changes will be incorporated in the months and years ahead building on existing programs and policies, as well as creating new programmatic and policy innovations that together will contribute to a stronger infrastructure for achieving the goals of reentry.

At the core of this new way of thinking is the notion that reentry is a philosophy, not a program. Reentry calls for a broad systems approach to managing offenders returning to the community. It requires the involvement of every phase of the correctional system beginning at reception, if not sentencing, and continuing through imprisonment to release discharge and supervision in the community. It is a commitment that starts with the question: *What is needed to prepare this offender for successful reentry?* The vision underlying this effort is stated below.

### **Vision of Reentry**

*Ohio's system of reentry will provide opportunities for offenders to successfully connect as productive members of society. Through active partnerships with all stakeholders, reentry will contribute to safer communities and an enhanced quality of life.*

This vision serves to reinforce the mission statement adopted by the Department and informing the focus of reentry. The *mission* underlying this effort is stated below.

### **Reentry Mission Statement**

*The Reentry Initiative is a holistic and systematic approach that seeks to reduce the likelihood of additional criminal behavior. Beginning at sentencing and extending beyond release, reentry will assess, identify and link offenders with services specific to their needs. This will be accomplished through associations with community partners, families, justice professionals and victims of crime.*

### **Slogan for Reentry**

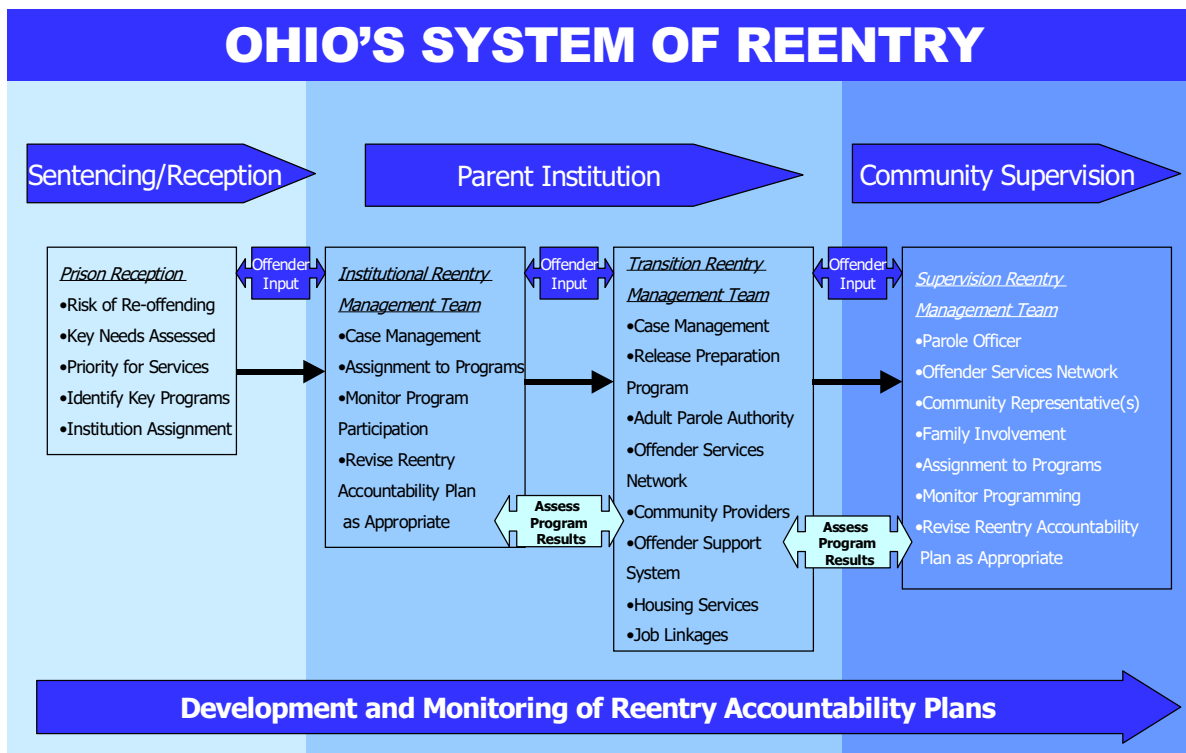
The essence of the Department's commitment to reentry may be summarized succinctly in a *slogan*, which states: *Reentry Means "Going Home to Stay."*

## Reentry Goals

The goals that are sought through the Department's reentry initiative are far-reaching. They recognize that the best intentions, insights and skills acquired by inmates through prison-based programming fall apart if they are not similarly nurtured in the community. They acknowledge that to effectively address recidivism, it is necessary to develop strong partnerships with community providers, employers, the faith community, law enforcement and others. They also recognize that when it comes to offenders' reentry transition, being crime free is important, but it is not enough. As a result, the goals behind the Department's commitment to reentry include the following. To:

- *Develop a seamless and successful transition of offenders from prison to the street;*
- *Ensure that offenders are prepared to return home and that they are better off at the completion of reentry than at the time of their admission to the prison system;*
- *Reduce recidivism*
- *Equip offenders with marketable skills thereby enabling them to be productively employed in the long run;*
- *Assist offenders in returning as responsible parents, supporting their children and families;*
- *Provide offenders with effective life coping skills for successfully transitioning to the community; and,*
- *Enhance offenders' awareness of the impact of their crime and provide them with opportunities to make amends for the harm caused by their crime.*

The systemic changes associated with reentry are captured in the flowchart below. The most salient changes associated with the "Ohio Plan" and reentry are discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of this report.



What follows presents the major recommendations produced during the planning phase of the reentry initiative. These recommendations begin with a series of changes that will be adopted starting at reception focusing on offender assessments and reentry planning. The recommendations continue from there to offender programming, to family involvement in the various phases of reentry, and on to employment readiness and discharge planning, and offender supervision. They conclude by noting the extension of community partnerships designed to enhance the accomplishment of the goals established for reentry.

## **RECEPTION, OFFENDER ASSESSMENTS, AND REENTRY PLANNING**

***Recommendation #1: The reception assessment process shall be augmented to include a formal risk assessment and needs assessment.***

***Recommendation #2: Reentry Accountability Planning shall occur for offenders based on their risk level and time to be served while at reception, the parent institution, and, if applicable, during the period of parole or post-release control supervision.***

***Recommendation #3: Reception, Institutional, and Community Reentry Management Teams shall be responsible for developing and monitoring Reentry Accountability Plans for designated offenders throughout the reentry transition process.***

***Recommendation #4: A Department Offender Tracking System (DOTS) screen shall be developed that will contain the Reentry Accountability Plan accessible to appropriate staff at any stage in the reentry transition process.***

The Department's reentry initiative represents an ambitious and holistic endeavor to create a seamless transition from prison to the community. At the heart of the reentry initiative is the notion that reentry represents a "philosophy," not a program. To achieve such a redirection in philosophy, it is vital that reentry planning become an essential component of the initial reception assessment process. Accomplishing this will require that planning for reentry be conducted in an administrative manner equivalent to the classification process, medical, educational and mental health screening, and the issuance of clothing and personal hygiene items. The appropriate Deputy Warden at each reception center will be responsible for overseeing the changes associated with reentry.

Reentry planning at this stage redefines the way the mission of corrections is conceptualized such that it is necessary for staff to pose the following question: *"What is needed to prepare this offender for successful reentry?"* In Ohio the average time served in prison prior to release is approximately three years. For a significant percentage of offenders the term of confinement is even less. The critical need to begin active reentry planning upon admission is evident.

The system of reentry begins at sentencing at the time an offender receives a prison term. Active correctional planning for reentry, however, starts upon the offender's admission to one of the Department's three reception centers. At present, each offender receives a standard battery of tests and evaluations as part of the reception protocol. The reception assessment protocol will be augmented under the new system of reentry to include a formal risk assessment and a needs assessment. Initially, the primary focus of these assessments will target designated offenders based on their risk level and time to be served. Once these changes have been fully adopted, their use will be assessed with the

intent to include those offenders entering the prison system for whom reentry planning has yet to be done.

In phasing-in the new assessment tools, designated reception staff (e.g., Classification Specialists) will conduct a formal risk assessment based on six static risk variables currently used by the Parole Board for all offenders. A dynamic needs assessment targeting seven domains will be completed on those offenders who score high risk on the formal risk assessment and whose length of time to be served prior to release is over six months up to 36 months. Unit management staff will complete the dynamic needs assessment at the parent institution for all high-risk offenders whose length of time to be served prior to release is over 36 months. The seven dynamic domains referred to are those used by the Correctional Service of Canada for assessment and case planning purposes. They address areas that may require program intervention during the offender's confinement and/or period of supervision. They are discussed under the section on offender programming.

A new case-planning tool known as the Reentry Accountability Plan will be developed by an interdisciplinary or Reentry Management Team either at reception or at the parent institution based on the criteria established above. The Reentry Accountability Plan will provide the core document guiding reentry planning and programming for offenders as they transition from reception to their parent institution to release either at the end of their stated term (or expiration of their definite sentence), or upon their release and eventual termination from parole or post-release control. It will show the six static risk factors and the seven dynamic domains, the program goals and programming that the offender is to participate in, and the extent of progress that has been made towards completion of the programming specified in the plan. The format and content of this plan will be constructed as a DOTS screen under the heading "Reentry Accountability Plan".

The development of program goals will be completed with input from the offender by Reentry Management Teams either at reception (for high risk offenders serving over 6 months up to 36 months), or at the parent institution (for high risk offenders serving more than 36 months). Once these offenders are transferred from reception, they will meet with their institutional Reentry Management Team to determine the specific programming in which they will participate. The members of the reception and institution Reentry Management Team will vary depending on the needs of the offender, but will include unit management staff, and, as appropriate, staff from recovery services, religious services, medical, mental health, education, and Job Coordinators.

These Reentry Management Teams will be responsible for monitoring the offender's progress towards achieving the programming established in the Reentry Accountability Plan. Appropriate adjustments will be made in the plan as programs are completed or major changes occur in the status of the offender. The Reentry Accountability Plan will be monitored in accordance with a new policy established to guide and support reentry planning and reentry management teams. A reentry planning checklist will be completed for offenders who are serving six months or less to facilitate independent reintegration planning with support from institutional personnel.

The Adult Parole Authority will establish an important linkage to the institutional teams prior to the offender's transition to the community. The Regional Services Coordinator will be the region's point person for the institutional Reentry Management Team during the transitional phase in facilitating these offenders' discharge and reentry planning prior to release. However, the Parole Board Parole Officer will serve on the institutional Reentry Management Teams for these cases to inform the institutional Reentry Management Team on community supervision issues and regional parole operations. For those high-risk offenders subject to parole or post-release control, a reassessment of the dynamic domains will be completed by a member of the

institutional Reentry Management Team to aid in determining appropriate community-based programming.

Community Reentry Management Teams will be established in the Adult Parole Authority regions to ensure continuity in reentry planning and follow through. The leader of these teams will again be the Regional Services Coordinator. The teams will be comprised of the Offender Services Network, APA Field Services, and appropriate community linkage partners. These teams will review all incoming high-risk cases and the needs identified in the Reentry Accountability Plan. The teams will be responsible for connecting the offenders to housing, employment linkages, and other support services that are needed. The Community Reentry Management Teams will monitor and make appropriate adjustments in the Reentry Accountability Plans for these offenders. The composition of these teams will, as appropriate, consist of the offender, the offender's family/support system, the parole officer, Unit Supervisor, Offender Services Network staff, and community partners (where feasible, Citizens' Circles). Offenders released to parole or post-release control that are not identified as high risk will be supervised in accordance with the Adult Parole Authority's existing classification policy.

***Recommendation #5: A reception process standardization team with staff from each reception center and central office shall be formed to standardize the reception protocol, procedures, staffing and timelines for accomplishing their work.***

***Recommendation #6: The reception centers shall put a system in place to ensure that presentence investigation reports, violation reports, and offender background investigations, if applicable, are part of the master file.***

***Recommendation #7: The reception centers shall provide program recommendations to the Bureau of Classification to be considered in the offender's assignment to the parent institution, along with the offender's security level, length of sentence, bed space, and other such considerations.***

A "Reentry and Reception Process Implementation Team" has been established to oversee the implementation of the policy, and the operational changes required to adopt risk and needs assessments, reentry planning, and the creation of reentry management teams at reception, the parent institutions and in the parole regions under the Adult Parole Authority. Once these changes are implemented, a subcommittee will be formed to develop a longer-term plan for bringing greater standardization to the reception process. This effort will involve the adoption of procedures whereby program recommendations are provided to the Bureau of Classification to be considered when offenders are assigned to a parent institution, alongside the offender's security level, and other such issues that are presently considered. This group will also put a system in place to ensure that the presentence investigation reports, violation reports, and offender background investigation reports are included in the master file.

***Recommendation #8: The existing link on the Department's Internet website shall be revised to include the Adult Parole Authority (APA) regional Administrative Assistants and Regional Service Coordinators. The Administrative Assistant shall serve as the designated liaison for outside agencies and the courts. The reception centers shall also designate a liaison to work either with the APA Administrative Assistant or be a direct contact for outside agencies and the courts to be included on the Department's Internet website.***

As members of the Reentry Tracking and Planning Action Team explored the flow of information from county and outside agencies, they determined that it was often difficult to communicate concerns with the Department. To more effectively address any issues that may arise, the Department's Internet website shall be revised to show the three reception centers with an explanation of which counties each receives offenders from, the Administrative Assistant (or designee) in each parole region who shall serve as the designated liaison for outside agencies, and reception center liaisons who shall also be designated for this purpose.

***Recommendation #9: A comprehensive series of steps shall be taken to ensure that presentence investigation reports arrive with the offender at reception. To streamline the reception process, similar steps shall be taken to obtain violation behavior for returnees.***

It is critical that presentence investigation reports arrive with the offender upon admission to the reception center. The various assessments that are now completed, the revisions to the reception assessment protocol encompassing risk and needs assessments, and offender reentry planning will be enhanced to the extent reception center staff have such information available to review. Towards this end, a series of forward-looking measures will be taken by the Adult Parole Authority, not the least of which includes working with all the courts and sheriffs' departments to advise them of the department's reentry initiative and the need for such reports. Counties that receive full services from the APA will not be required to forward an additional PSI, as it will have been uploaded and is available to reception staff. In addition, the APA regional Administrative Assistants will establish contact with the county courts, clerk of courts, and/or sheriff's departments to secure such reports where there is a problem. Similar steps shall be taken relative to those offenders who are returned on violations.

#### **OFFENDER PROGRAMMING: TARGETING CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS**

***Recommendation #10: New programs that are developed shall incorporate the principles that drive effective correctional programming, provide staff training prior to their adoption, and be guided by a training manual that directs all work relevant to the program. They shall be reviewed and approved subject to their compliance with a standardized protocol to be established in Departmental policy.***

***Recommendation #11: Existing programs shall be reviewed and maintained or eliminated based on the extent to which they address the dynamic domains used to assess offender needs as part of reentry planning. Departmental resources will be allocated over time to support existing programs that effectively address these areas, as well as to create treatment interventions in offender needs areas where additional programming is necessary.***

In the past ten or fifteen years, a great deal of material regarding the characteristics of effective correctional programs has appeared in the professional literature. This now well-established literature speaks to "what works" in terms of rehabilitative programming. Even more significantly, it has identified a number of principles that drive effective correctional programming. These principles state that interventions should target the known predictors of crime and recidivism for change; provide treatment services that are behavioral in nature; and ensure that treatment interventions target the criminogenic needs of high risk offenders for change (that is, the dynamic risk factors or domains to be used in reentry planning). The effectiveness of treatment is also enhanced to the extent that the interventions are reinforced and continued into the community rather than in an institution; using well-trained, adequately



supervised staff; providing structured “relapse prevention” aftercare services; and matching styles of treatment services to the specific learning styles of offenders.

A crucial element of this literature is the importance it attaches to understanding “criminogenic needs.” These are dynamic risk factors – characteristics of offenders that can change (in contrast to static risk factors which cannot change). These dynamic risk factors, identified by an objective assessment instrument, help predict an offender’s likelihood or risk of reoffending. Such factors include anti-social attitudes, values, and beliefs; anti-social peers and associates; substance abuse; educational deficiencies; vocational deficiencies; mental health; and anti-social personality factors (e.g., risk-taking, aggression, impulsivity, low self-control). Programming that targets these dynamic risk factors may reduce the probability that an offender will reoffend.

As indicated in an earlier section of this report, the development of Reentry Accountability Plans for offenders will draw on a risk and needs assessment. The latter consists of seven dynamic risk factors or domains developed by the Correctional Service of Canada. These domains, which represent criminogenic needs, include the following dynamic risk factors:

- *Employment – This domain looks at the value placed on work and the role of work in the offender’s life; it includes education and vocational skills.*
- *Marital/Family – This domain covers the value placed on being with family members and the support an offender derives from them.*
- *Associates/Social Interaction – This domain covers the value placed on non-criminal associates and the opportunity for positive interaction.*
- *Substance Abuse – This domain addresses the value placed on living without reliance on alcohol and/or drugs.*
- *Community Functioning – This domain covers the value placed on having the knowledge and necessary skills for daily living; it includes acceptable residence, health, personal budgeting, leisure activities, and the use of social services*
- *Personal/Emotional Orientation – This domain looks at the value placed on being in control of one’s life; it includes decision-making, coping with stress, and mental health.*
- *Attitude – This domain covers the value placed on living in law-abiding ways.*

Drawing from the above, a policy shall be adopted guiding the development and approval of new programs based on the principles that drive effective correctional programming. This policy will incorporate clear review criteria against which new program submissions will be assessed to ensure they target offenders’ criminogenic needs. New programs that are developed will be required to provide staff training prior to their adoption, and offer a training manual that directs all work relevant to the program.

A protocol and a standardized tool will be established in Departmental policy to guide the review and approval process for new programs. Several of the more important indicators reflect characteristics that are included in an instrument called the “Correctional Program Assessment Inventory.” Modified to meet the Department’s need for reasonable standardized criteria, these include the following.

- *The program is based on information documented in recognized professional journals and publications; the program is based on theory.*
- *The program has a documented rationale, philosophy and/or mission statement.*
- *The program was adequately piloted prior to formal implementation.*
- *The types of offenders treated by the program are appropriate for the program content.*
- *The treatment program is behavioral in nature.*

- *The highest risk offenders receive the highest intensity and duration of service.*
- *The criteria for program termination are clearly stated.*
- *Program staff have appropriate backgrounds and are well trained in the intervention.*

Existing programs are offered within the Department that addresses all seven domains. Traditional correctional activities such as academic education, vocational training, mental health services, and drug and alcohol abuse treatment offer core programming to offenders. The Offender Programming Action Team found that the domains that have the strongest programming are Employment, Substance Abuse, and programs that fall under the Personal/Emotional Orientation domain. The remaining domains will need new programming to be developed or will need to take existing programming and increase the number of institutions that offer the programming. Expansion of programming in interpersonal relations for those inmates that are easily influenced by others will be considered, as will more programming in the area of criminal thinking or cognitive behavioral restructuring.

The framework for review established under the policy on new programs shall also address existing programs. A special committee will be formed to review new program proposals and existing programs. The review of existing programs will start initially with those offered by Unit Management staff. There are nearly 400 such programs throughout the Department. Under the guidance of the program policy mentioned above, this committee will use a standardized assessment process to determine those programs that should be retained and, if not implemented in other institutions, and recommend eliminating programs that do not address offenders' criminogenic needs and thus do not contribute to reentry goals.

***Recommendation #12: An Ohio Offender Performance Merit System shall be developed and adopted that recognizes pro-social behaviors by offenders enrolled in reentry programming.***

The "what works" literature in corrections notes that incentives are important in changing offender behavior, as well as for reinforcing buy-in and compliance with program goals and reentry expectations. An "Ohio Offender Performance Merit System" will be developed and implemented that is performance-based and designed to recognize constructive, pro-social behaviors demonstrated by offenders enrolled in reentry programming. This will be accomplished by affording offenders the opportunity to earn points for successful program performance and participation in reentry program-related activities, including but not limited to, participation and successful completion of education, treatment, self-improvement programs, and work assignments, while remaining free of disciplinary reports.

A merit evaluation will be used to measure and provide a clearly defined range of incentives contingent on the institution the offender is housed at, his progress in reentry programming, and any evidence of anti-social behavior. Incentives will be redeemable the month following the earning of the required merit evaluation points. The types of incentives that may be awarded include, but are not limited to, additional visits, extended visits, an increased commissary spending limit, after hour phone privileges, and more. A sample merit evaluation form has been designed to measure and assess an offender's level of program performance and participation. These assessments will be conducted by the appropriate institutional Reentry Management Team, once the system is in place. A multi-disciplinary team consisting of institutional and central office personnel will be formed to oversee the development and adoption of this system.

***Recommendation #13: The Classification Policy (#111-07) shall be revised to allow appropriate offenders in medium and minimum levels the opportunity to receive points for reentry programming that is completed in order to earn a reduction in their security level.***

A survey was developed and sent to six institutions to obtain their feedback on the security instrument that drives the Department's current Classification Policy (#111-07). The responses pointed to the difficulty in keeping the minimum number of inmates needed to operate the honor camps. They also revealed a desire to reduce security levels based, at least in part, on an offender's program performance. That is, inmates should be encouraged to participate and complete skill-building, educational and other programming that will contribute to their successful reentry through the possibility of a reduction in their security level. At present, the security instrument is viewed mainly as disciplinary in nature and does not place any emphasis on programming as a priority.

The current classification policy will be revised to include a potential reduction in security level based on the accumulation of programs completed and the points obtained thereby. The determination of whether an inmate has earned such points will be made by the appropriate institutional Reentry Management Team during its regularly scheduled meetings subject to the approval of the Warden.

***Recommendation #14: An Interdisciplinary Special Needs Offenders Management Work Group shall be formed to oversee the adoption of a series of "best practices" associated with the reentry transition for offenders, including sex offenders, older offenders, mentally ill offenders, and mentally retarded or developmentally disabled offenders.***

The Offender Programming Action Team identified special populations of offenders whose unique needs, if not properly addressed, could jeopardize their successful reentry into the community. Five groups of special needs offenders were identified: sex offenders, substance abusers, offenders with mental health problems, offenders who are mentally retarded or developmentally disabled, and older offenders. Focus groups consisting of individuals knowledgeable in each special needs area were conducted. Several themes emerged from these groups, including the barriers created by inconsistent or infrequent communication, and the lack of information sharing and partnerships with outside service providers, and between institutional staff and the Adult Parole Authority.

Specific and detailed recommendations were made to enable the Department to move toward the achievement of identified "best practices" elements to facilitate the reentry of offenders into the community. The recommendations identify who will be responsible for implementation, and a time frame for doing so, while avoiding changes that would require a substantial investment of new resources or staff. An Interdisciplinary Special Needs Offenders' Work Group shall be formed to oversee and monitor the adoption of these recommendations, inclusive of policy revisions and changes in operational procedures that will be necessary to effect the changes over time.

## **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN REENTRY**

***Recommendation #15: A Family Orientation Program shall be implemented at each reception center with information disseminated on community resources.***

***Recommendation #16: Community-based support groups shall be developed for family members through the Offender Services Network and the Department's faith-based initiative.***

***Recommendation #17: A Family Council shall be formed to address offender/family issues across the reentry continuum.***

In recent years, DRC has recognized the systemic value of engaging families during important or critical times of an offender's incarceration (e.g., birth of a child, attendance at graduation ceremonies for a GED or other programs). The Department has already developed significant family-focused innovations by developing a long-term prison nursery program for mothers and newborns, creating children reading rooms in visiting areas, providing a standardized parenting program for inmates and encouraging child-bonding programs in male facilities. However, focus groups conducted by the Family Involvement Reentry Action Team show that *incarceration is a family affair*. Research and sound correctional practice requires that more be done.

Towards this end, a Family Orientation Program shall be developed at all three Reception Centers. This program will provide family members with an orientation to DRC and institutional services, programs, and procedures. It will be interactive and allow family members to ask questions and receive information that will assist them in staying involved with the incarcerated offender throughout his or her term of confinement. The goal is to begin to establish positive communication and provide family members with a better understanding of what to expect during the offender's confinement. A Departmental policy will be adopted to guide this program.

Focus groups conducted with family members of inmates revealed a strong need for support groups and a resource center or clearinghouse for services available to family members. Over time support groups will be identified through the Offender Services Network (OSN) that already exist in the community. They will also be developed through the department's faith-based initiative under reentry. Information on community resources will be provided to family members during the family orientation program.

To ensure that offender/family issues are addressed from a system-wide perspective covering reentry from reception through confinement through parole, a Family Council will be formed. The membership of this council will consist of Department staff and family members of those who are presently confined or under parole or post-release control supervision. The Council will be expected to provide recommendations on how to educate and productively involve family members throughout the system, and to promote family-focused strategies that will contribute to successful reentry.

***Recommendation #18: The policy on Inmate Visitation (#312-02) shall be revised to remove barriers prohibiting family members from visiting and provide for the reactivation of the visitation list for parole violators. Post specific training shall be provided for staff working in the visiting area to familiarize correctional officers with handling family members and the public.***

***Recommendation #19: The policy on Unit and Treatment Programming (#315-05) shall be revised to support the involvement of family members in institutional programs.***

***Recommendation #20: A new policy on family/child-centered programming for incarcerated mothers and fathers shall be developed that includes a provision for additional visits for participation in selected programming.***

***Recommendation #21: The curriculum for the current “Responsible Family Life Skills Program” shall be revised to include a lesson plan on child support and paternity.***

***Recommendation #22: A pilot program shall be established creating a treatment community in a designated institution focusing on family life education and reunification.***

***Recommendation #23: A family component shall be developed in cooperation with existing Therapeutic Community and institutional security staffs allowing immediate family members to participate in the rehabilitative process.***

This cluster of recommendations pertains mainly to family involvement during the offender’s term of incarceration. Starting with the visitation process, but extending to programming in the institution, these recommendations once adopted will provide for more meaningful and productive contacts between offenders and their family members. These changes will contribute to reentry goals by providing family members with opportunities to be constructively engaged with the offender during his or her confinement.

The visitation process is the most direct means of interaction between inmates, family members and corrections staff. Though the majority of visits occur without incident, it is important that visitors be well informed about the rules, procedures, and dress code that apply. To ensure that this occurs, such information will be disseminated through a variety of means, including posting such information on the Internet, in addition to what is currently being done. Likewise, the current visitation policy will be revised to facilitate contacts between offenders and those individuals who are closest to him or her even if they are not married or a blood relative, and to allow for the reactivation of the visitation list for parole violators. Post-specific training will be offered to staff assigned to the visiting area to familiarize corrections officers in appropriately handling family members and the public.

One of the key goals associated with reentry is to encourage and support family members who wish to participate in designated prison-based programs by incorporating family components. The current policy on Unit and Treatment Programming (#315-05) will be revised to support and reinforce such involvement in institutional programs. A new policy will be developed that targets family/child-centered programming for incarcerated mothers and fathers that includes a provision permitting additional visits for participation in selected programming. In addition, the curriculum that is presently used in the institutions to instruct offenders under the “Responsible Family Life Skills Program” will be revised to include a lesson plan that addresses “Child Support and Paternity.”

Another change will involve the development of a pilot program on a housing unit in an institution near a metropolitan area of the state through the creation of a Family Life Education and Reunification treatment community. Comparable to the Department’s faith-based dormitory at Marion Correctional Institution, this program will engage immediate family members in the treatment process by focusing on family issues and needs as the offender prepares for reentry.

This program will incorporate the content of the “Responsible Family Life Skills Program,” and address incarceration and offense-related issues, as well as other social and emotional concerns that may impact on family support and offender adjustment during the transition from confinement to the community.

Another significant pilot initiative will involve the development of a family component in an existing therapeutic community. The rehabilitative portion of the therapeutic community program will be expanded to permit the participation of immediate family members as part of the offender’s treatment regimen. Like the treatment community above, this innovative change will provide offenders with tangible family support and assistance as they plan for their reentry transition.

***Recommendation #24: Adult Parole Authority policies #501-19, #501-30, and #501-35 shall be revised to include family members in the supervising officer’s planned visits with the offender and in the initial office visit, and to disseminate information to family members explaining the responsibilities of the APA, as well as encouraging family involvement.***

It is important that family involvement and support begun in the institution carry over to parole or post-release control supervision. It may also be during this period of community supervision that family members get involved for the first time. Parole officers and staff from the Offender Services Network generally recognize the value of working with family members in terms of tracking the whereabouts of offenders after their release. Engaging families in the process of supervision can improve compliance with the conditions of supervision. The policy revisions that are called for above will provide guidance and direction on using family members as a partner in supporting the expectations of supervision and in providing critical information on community-based organizations, resources, and services to assist in the offender’s successful reentry transition. The Offender Services Network will assist these efforts in each region by developing support groups for family members drawing on community groups and the faith community.

***Recommendation #25: New collaborative arrangements shall be forged with the Department of Education and the Department of Jobs and Family Services addressing school/parent issues associated with the children of the incarcerated.***

***Recommendation #26: New collaborative arrangements shall be forged between child welfare and DRC to develop cross-system ties and training between the two agencies.***

A small group of schools contacted in Ohio showed that few, if any, have a formal method to identify or offer support services to students of incarcerated parents. None of the schools contacted have a program that allows the incarcerated parent to have regular verbal contact with teachers or other school personnel. The collaboration to be undertaken will develop guidelines, policies and procedures for establishing and maintaining offender-school/teacher contacts, especially when family reunification is possible. A comparable collaboration will be undertaken with respect to child welfare and DRC staff relative to forming an interagency work group to identify current policies and practices that present barriers to focusing on and supporting family needs during offenders’ incarceration or supervision by the Adult Parole Authority.

## **EMPLOYMENT READINESS AND DISCHARGE PLANNING**

***Recommendation #27: A new policy called “Transitioning the Offender” shall be adopted to ensure that thorough discharge planning takes place to prepare offenders for release to the community. The policy shall include a new form entitled the “Discharge Planning & Employment Readiness Checklist,” to monitor the reentry transition process.***

Until last year, offenders received pre-release programming during the last six weeks of their incarceration. The program, which was referred to as “pre-release,” was considered to be sufficient from a reentry point of view. The program extended over three weeks, for one-half day each day. The major areas of concentration were employment readiness, life-coping skills, and community resources and services. Many of these programs were administered by contract employees. However, the contracts for such services were terminated in June 2001 due to budgetary reasons.

Currently, services at all but six institutions have operated under an interim service plan for release preparation. The interim plan has been in effect since July 2001 to ensure the availability of “pre-release services” during the planning phase of the Department’s reentry initiative. The interim plan is an interdisciplinary approach to delivering release preparation via monthly workshops in the area of employment applications and resumes, interviewing skills, community resources, substance abuse, and a faith-based workshop. The experiences gained since its adoption show that the release preparation procedures vary widely from institution to institution.

The new policy on “Transitioning the Offender” is designed to maintain an interdisciplinary approach while providing more structure and consistency to the process. This policy will provide the guidelines and timeframes regarding the transition process for all offenders. It identifies the special areas that need to be addressed prior to any offender’s release. Under the policy, a “Discharge Planning and Employment Readiness Checklist” will be initiated at 180 days prior to release, regardless of supervision type. The issuing of the checklist will serve to initiate required processes for assisting offenders with their critical needs six months out from release. This policy includes directions for obtaining and maintaining the checklist and the steady monitoring of its completion. It provides a standardized guide for all department staff to use when discussing release plans with offenders.

The case manager with input from the offender will continue to play a critical role in relation to completing components of the checklist at designated time intervals. The components include the offender’s housing plans, and such items as social security cards, birth certificates, information relevant to potential veterans’ benefits for eligible offenders and community linkages and services. It is expected that these components will be completed and/or finalized at defined points prior to the offender’s release.

Some components of the “checklist” will be furnished by staff representing other disciplines and programs within the institution. However, it will be the *inmate’s responsibility* to participate in, if not complete, these components. These include a recovery services transition plan and notification of release to community linkage social workers, where appropriate, and to attend a series of release preparation modules on employment readiness, community resources, employment linkage activities, referrals, and transitional linkages. When the case manager meets with the offender at the 60-day point, he or she will review the offender’s progress towards completion of the checklist, and highlight what still needs to be completed and finalized in preparation for release.

***Recommendation #28: One comprehensive policy shall drive all programs dealing with offender release preparation entitled the “Release Preparation Program” (#313-01). This new policy combines and integrates two separate DRC policies (#313-03 and #313-04) that formerly governed all pre-release programs.***

The “Transitioning of the Offender Policy” emphasizes the broad range of activities that need to occur and at what time intervals to ensure that each offender benefits from thorough discharge planning. The “Release Preparation Program” is more specific and will replace the current DRC Policies #313-03 and #313-04 which previously guided the handling of the Department’s pre-release programming. The new policy delineates the program areas to be covered under release preparation and maintains compliance with the appropriate ACA standards. It emphasizes an interdisciplinary team approach to program and service delivery. The interdisciplinary approach emphasizes that a wide range of staff are responsible to see that all offenders are prepared for release. To ensure consistency in the delivery of workshop material standardized lesson plans have been developed for the various components of the Release Preparation Program. The lesson plans will be printed and distributed along with providing regular training and in-service training on their use to better ensure that all offenders receive consistent instruction and material relative to employability skills, and community resources.

Other programming will include components provided by education in the area of resume development and the proper completion of applications. Unit staff such as the case manager will provide programming in the area of community resources and interview skills. The Recovery Services Coordinators will be an integral component since many offenders have substance abuse problems when they enter prison. They will offer workshops covering the area of relapse prevention and linkages to community treatment. The gathering of an offender’s work history will be compiled at the parent institution by the Job Coordinators or case managers to facilitate the building of a resume when offenders are nearing release. The Job Coordinator shall be responsible for implementing a workshop on job retention that will not only serves as a component dealing with institutional jobs, but as part of the employment readiness component. The Chaplains will continue to provide a faith-based resource and motivational workshop. Within each institution, offender job linkages will market job ready offenders using employer videoconferencing, job fairs, and by linking vocational completers and/or apprentices to employers as they near release.

***Recommendation #29: A Reentry Resource Center will be located in the library of each institution and each APA regional office. The current DRC policy on libraries (#106-01) shall be revised to include the establishment of such centers in prison libraries.***

It is important that offenders have access to information and resources to facilitate their successful transition to the community. The development of reentry resource centers will assist in accomplishing this goal. Each resource center will be expected to maintain a repository of mandatory resource materials and directories, as well as a suggested list of resources available in the community. *The department wide adoption of the “Ohio Community Justice Resource Network” shall be utilized as one of the essential resources for staff to link offenders with community-based services.* This on-line resource provides a linkage to resources utilizing the DRC Intranet.



The regional offices of the Adult Parole Authority will establish such centers or resource libraries in compliance with the appropriate American Correctional Association standards. The prison libraries and regional APA offices shall revise and update their reentry resource center annually.

Each APA regional office through Offender Services Network staff will develop and maintain a resource guide listing agencies and services recommended within their region. Information will be included in the following areas: substance abuse services, employment services, mental health, sex offender programs, housing, transitional housing, halfway house programs, post release service centers, affordable/ sliding fee medical care, educational and crisis counseling services. The regional resource guide will be provided to any offender upon request or at their first visit following release. The resource guides will be made available to the institutional reentry resource centers, as well.

An interdisciplinary team composed of unit management, librarians, Adult Parole Authority staff and Offender Services Network staff shall meet on an annual basis to discuss updates and additional resources needed for the Reentry Resource Centers. This team will oversee the implementation of the resource centers and the training of staff necessary to effect this change. The head librarian for the Ohio Central School System and the Ohio Institute on Correctional Best Practices will chair this team. The library staff will provide training to offenders on the reentry resource center during initial "Library Orientation" at each library and during daily use.

***Recommendation #30: The Department will implement a Career Exploration Program at all institutions to assist offenders in making decisions regarding education, training, and employment. Career resource material will be available within the Reentry Resource Centers to support career exploration.***

A Career Exploration Program shall be phased in over time across all institutions to provide career assessment and guidance to eligible offenders. Based on a pilot program that was run during the planning phase of the department's Reentry Initiative, the Self-Directed Search (SDS), an interest inventory, will be used as part of the Career Exploration Program. A team, including guidance counselors, will select additional cost-effective assessments that will provide both career interest and aptitude assessments to be used in the program. Implementation of the Career Exploration Program will start with those institutions participating under the federal reentry grant. Training in the use and interpretation of the assessment process and implementation will be phased in over the next year for the remaining institutions.

The target population for the Career Exploration Program will be offenders serving sentences of greater than 12 months, and who have an education level of 8<sup>th</sup> grade or above. These offenders will likewise have little or no marketable skills, a limited work history and/or their incarceration or other disability precludes their return to their original career. They will be directed to career assessment and exploration assistance. Intensive career assessment and guidance may start once an inmate is within 5 years of release for those serving longer sentences.

Career exploration resource material will be located in the library at each prison/site, consistent with the reentry recommendations regarding the location of other reentry resources or reference materials. A standardized list of materials will be recommended for inclusion in the Reentry (Career) Resource area.

***Recommendation #31: The inmate's work ethic shall be enhanced by the adoption of policy revisions involving (#108-02) "Classification and Reclassification Status Review," proposed revisions to the current Administrative Rule (#5120-3-08); the creation of a new policy called the "Offender Work Ethic," and revisions to the Job Coordinators' position description.***

The practices used in the job classification process are not consistent, and the directives are now out of date. The policy revisions will ensure uniformity and consistency in the offender job assignment process. Job Coordinators will exercise functional oversight of the reclassification of inmates into jobs based on the minimum qualifications of the inmate job description. The Job Coordinator, in concert with unit management, will have final review and approval of all reclassification recommendations with appeals to be reviewed by the Deputy Warden of Special Services.

The new "Offender Work Ethic" policy will empower the Job Coordinator to play a major role in providing programming for inmates relative to the development of a positive work ethic. A mandatory work ethics program will be delivered to offenders who are referred by the Rules Infraction Board for work-related violations. A standardized lesson plan and program will be developed to support this. A compact version of the work ethic program will be delivered to all inmates during orientation. Work supervisors will be encouraged to promote a positive work ethic by being role models, offering appropriate training and follow-up, and in addition, by providing effective evaluation and feedback to the offender. Work supervisors will be authorized to post job vacancies (above pay category 6A), interview prospective applicants, and submit recommendations to the Job Coordinator to fill positions. In addition, the policy will authorize institutions to develop incentives and rewards to reinforce a positive work ethic.

A Central Office liaison will be appointed to provide direction, oversight and to meet with the Job Coordinators no less than semi-annually. To further improve the flow of information and to facilitate their duties and responsibilities, the Job Coordinators will be given access to computers, e-mail, intranet access and specialized software within existing budgetary limitations.

***Recommendation #32: Comprehensive strategies and carefully targeted policy changes shall be adopted to improve the marketing of job ready ex-offenders, inclusive of the following.***

- ***Revisions to the Career-Technical Education policy (#105-12) will be made to improve the dissemination of the Career Passport, a marketing tool for career-technical program completers;***
- ***A new strategy for marketing job-ready offenders to be incorporated within the Release Preparation policy (#313-01) will include the use of quarterly employer interviews for career-technical, apprenticeship or advanced job training students nearing release;***
- ***The use of the Ohio Job Net System will allow Job Coordinators to register career-technical students and apprentices nearing release. This will improve the marketing of selected offenders by registering for work, using the intranet link to the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services;***
- ***A new policy related to educational, vocational and employment follow-up of offenders after release from prison will be adopted. This policy will address the Code of Employee Conduct, specifically professional contact with offenders after release.***
- ***Revisions shall be adopted in two APA policies (#501-49 and #501-31) that will support the collection of information on the employment status of parolees during the classification reassessment process and at termination from supervision.***

The Department will build on its strategies for marketing ex-offenders through the changes noted above, and by exploring the sharing of employment information via a file transfer protocol with other state agencies that collect this information, such as the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services. The change in the Career Passport process will ensure that the offender, if supervised, receives his career passport from their parole officer. This change will provide the parole officer information on the offenders' vocational qualifications, not readily available before.

Offender job linkage activities will be expanded beyond annual job fairs and monthly employer videoconferencing. Career-technical instructors, release preparation staff and apprenticeship coordinators will coordinate the on-going interview process, in order to promote the hiring of trained ex-offenders who have benefited from vocational or apprenticeship or college level training while incarcerated. They will utilize already existing Advisory Committees as a resource to interview their students and apprentices as they near release to assist with marketing the ex-offender. In addition, the Job Coordinators will register these offenders by using the state links to ODJFS-OHIO JOBNET for job placement/matching assistance.

The ability to gather data on the employment status of exoffenders, who is hiring, and what vocational programs are successful (i.e., leads to the offender becoming employed), is an important factor in marketing. Funding sources through the Ohio Department of Education Career –Technical require such follow-up, as well as the “Youthful Offender Grant for College Level Programming.” The upcoming federal reentry grant likewise requires such reporting and follow-up for a period of one year after release. The revisions in the APA policies (#501-49, and #501-31) will facilitate the gathering of this data.

### **REENTRY-CENTERED OFFENDER SUPERVISION**

***Recommendation #33: The Adult Parole Authority shall be guided by a philosophy of supervision that calls for a balanced approach in working with offenders. This approach emphasizes community safety, offender accountability, and community-based programming that facilitates effective reentry.***

The Offender Supervision Reentry Action Team conducted a survey of field staff preliminary to crafting a philosophy of supervision. The input showed that many parole officers viewed their role primarily as that of a protector of society. The theme of law enforcement with a limited focus on social work was reflected in the results. There was, however, a clear and expressed desire to conduct supervision in the community in a manner that reinforces rehabilitation programs and through active partnerships with law enforcement.

A clear philosophy provides direction to supervision in the community and to effective reentry practices. The Adult Parole Authority will be guided by a philosophy of supervision that calls for a balanced approach in working with offenders as they transition from prison to the community. This approach emphasizes community safety, offender accountability and community-based programming that facilitates effective reentry. It combines the role of law enforcement complemented by a commitment to offender rehabilitation and welfare. Parole officers must play multifunctional roles that serve to safeguard the community as well as assist offenders in successfully transitioning home and staying home. This approach embraces the “Broken Windows” model of community supervision by creating opportunities for parole officers to be actively engaged in neighborhood-based supervision activities. As the department’s reentry

initiative is implemented, proactive strategies will be established by the leadership of APA to market, advocate and implement this philosophy at all levels of field operations.

***Recommendation #34: The Adult Parole Authority shall adopt community and neighborhood-based supervision strategies that include reporting centers in local neighborhoods and the use of geo-mapping to allocate staff and resources to where offenders reside.***

As was mentioned, the approach adopted by the Adult Parole Authority incorporates the “Broken Windows” model of supervision by seeking and creating opportunities for parole officers to move out of their offices into the neighborhoods and communities in which offenders reside. This approach supports and encourages parole officers and offenders to be visible in the community and to be responsive and responsible to the neighborhoods where they live or work. This approach also calls for active collaboration with local law enforcement, faith-based organizations, victims groups, families, local residents and others who are positioned to augment the otherwise limited resources and leverage available to parole officers in supervising offenders. Such collaboration improves communication and increases the likelihood that offenders will succeed by reinforcing the expectations of supervision.

At present, a Community Justice Center Pilot Program is underway in a high crime/inner city area of Cleveland, Ohio involving a state contracted halfway house facility and an APA parole unit. This partnership has expanded the scope of programming and treatment available subsequent to an offender’s release and has brought in a wide array of local community partners. The Adult Parole Authority will expand this model to other regional parole sites. The partnerships that are formed may include other halfway house facilities, police substations and/or private contract providers. Office sites shall be concentrated in neighborhoods that will best be served by expanded supervision and offender accountability, namely, in those areas that are receptive to such partnerships and who have the greatest concentration of high-risk offenders. Community support for such undertakings is critical.

Another area of focus will be the use of geo-mapping, that is, reliance on the use of geographic information to assist Adult Parole Authority administrators and field staff in the supervision of high and low risk offenders. Geo-mapping provides an opportunity to improve and increase information sharing with law enforcement. It also allows for the more rational allocation and strategic targeting of parole officers and their caseloads based on where most offenders reside and are concentrated. Geo-mapping will be piloted initially in one region and then utilized as a supervision tool through the whole of the APA’s regional operations.

***Recommendation #35: The Citizens’ Circle Model involving community-collaboration and partnerships with the Adult Parole Authority currently in operation in several sites shall be implemented in all parole regions.***

Citizens’ Circles involving community partnerships and active collaboration with the Adult Parole Authority and DRC Institutions have been established in Marion, Lorain and Richland Counties. Further expansion is underway in Allen, Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Lucas counties. The Citizens’ Circle is a forum that builds better relationships between the Department, local citizens, and offenders. Its primary goals are to involve local citizens in the rehabilitative and reentry process while clearly communicating expectations to offenders. The circle helps offenders understand that acceptance back into a community requires the fulfillment of certain obligations and commitments. The circle, comprised of community members, the offender, and family members of the offender assist in developing a reentry plan that involves substance abuse/mental

health services, educational needs, job planning/placement services, housing, mentoring, community service and restitution requirements, along with peer support groups.

The Citizens' Circle model will be expanded to all parole regions based on community sponsorship wherein local citizens or organizations contact DRC for support, and/or through DRC-sponsored sites relying on offender geo-mapping or other tools targeting communities or even neighborhoods most impacted by offenders returning home. The Department may also enhance existing reentry initiatives with the introduction of the Citizens' Circle model (e.g., Richland County Reentry Court Partnership), and/or in those sites selected for participation under federal reentry grant funding (Allen County, Cuyahoga County, and Franklin County).

***Recommendation #36: Prior to release, parole officers will provide reentry orientation sessions at the institutions to convey the expectations of supervision, offenders' responsibilities, and the role and responsibilities of parole officers and Offender Services Network staff in supporting successful reentry.***

One of the major goals of the Department's reentry initiative is that linkages be established between institutional staff and parole staff. The importance of the institutional and community reentry management teams has already been discussed. An additional linkage with institutional staff will be the establishment of reentry orientation sessions prior to an offender's release that will introduce the expectations of community supervision conducted by a parole officer. An outline of topics to be considered has been developed and will form the basis for the orientation to supervision lesson plan. Allocating a parole officer to conduct reentry presentations affords the offender an opportunity to ask questions directly to a parole officer and it provides a crucial link between the officer and institutional staff. These sessions will be incorporated in the transition discharge planning conducted by each institution.

***Recommendation #37: Revisions shall be made in the Adult Parole Authority's Violations Sanctions Policy supportive of reentry goals and that structure and provide statewide consistency in the use of progressive sanctions.***

Since the inception of Senate Bill 2, the Adult Parole Authority has come to recognize that there is significant variation across the state in responding to offenders who violate the terms and conditions of their parole or post-release control supervision in some instances. Progressive sanctions are used inconsistently as well relative to keeping offenders connected to the community where appropriate. Parole officers are dissatisfied with what they perceive to be a loss of sanctioning authority when dealing with offenders who commit repeated violations.

A work group has been formed and is currently working on assessing current policy and practice in this area. Research will be conducted on profiling release violators who are returned to prison, versus those who violate but are permitted to remain in the community. Based on these findings, the workgroup will revise current policies to support effective sanctioning practices. These policy revisions will include defining the goals of the revocation process to ensure that responses to violations consider both the offender's risk and the severity of the violation behavior, and that parole officers, regardless of where they are assigned, return to prison only those offenders who pose an unreasonable risk to the community. The new policies will be piloted in one parole region, evaluated, and subject to further revisions in the Violations Sanctions Policy based on the results, adopted statewide.

## **COMMUNITY JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS**

***Recommendation #38: A Faith-Based Advisory Council has been newly established to ensure that members of the faith community from across the state are actively engaged in the continuum of offender reentry. The Council shall develop a strategic plan and establish regional councils to assist in reentry initiatives at the local community level.***

***Recommendation #39: The Department of Rehabilitation and Correction shall sponsor an annual conference involving faith-based communities and other agencies from across Ohio to educate and provide information, and to identify issues and barriers relevant to offender reentry.***

The Department has long embraced community or restorative justice as a framework governing correctional practices in the institutions and in the parole regions. In many prisons, inmates participate in victim impact panels where crime victims and survivors of crime describe their encounters with criminal offenders. Victim/offender dialogues have been instituted to help repair the harm to crime victims. Behind each of these activities is a strong commitment to community and citizen participation. The core assumption behind this is that communities are strengthened and the quality of life is improved through active citizen participation in corrections. When the responses to crime are tailored to the preferences and needs of victims, communities and offenders, reentry transitions are likely to be more successful.

Through the “Ohio Plan” the department is addressing the further expansion of such linkages across the state. Some have been mentioned above, namely, in relation to the creation of a Family Council, greater family involvement in reentry, and through the Citizens’ Circles under the Adult Parole Authority. One additional and key area of focus, however, is the development of a statewide strategy for engaging faith communities throughout Ohio in reentry. The intent is to establish viable connecting points across the prison-community divide relative to reentry from the point of sentencing and admission to prison through release and supervision in the community. Despite impressive efforts already well established (e.g., Horizon Interfaith at Marion Correctional Institution, Prison Fellowship Ministry in numerous institutions), there is a need to do more.

A Faith-Based Advisory Council has recently been established under the Department’s reentry initiative. The Council will meet on a quarterly basis and over time provide reentry recommendations and proposals for consideration by the Director. Through the efforts of a statewide steering committee within the Council, a 10-year strategic plan will be developed and adopted. It will include a mission and vision and a series of action-oriented goals that will augment the department’s reentry efforts. This plan will become an integral part of the Religious Services’ Department strategic plan.

As part of the Council’s overall organization, regional councils will be established in North, South, and Central Ohio that will be linked with the institutions and parole offices in the respective regions. Through its activities, members of the faith community will be invited to provide mentoring, and support groups for families and offenders. They will also become engaged in securing or assisting in securing housing and other services essential to the reentry transition. Likewise, they will be asked to participate in Citizens’ Circles as they are formed in different regions of the state.

It is essential that the faith community and other agencies become better informed about the department’s goals and expectations, as well as its system governing offender reentry. It is important that these individuals and groups that are represented become knowledgeable

about the department's operations, and how they may support the reentry transition process. Annual conferences shall be sponsored at the Ohio Institute on Correctional Best Practices. Staff from the department will be involved in planning this event from the Office of Prisons, Mental Health, Sex Offender Services, the Adult Parole Authority, chaplains, Religious Services Coordinators, and representatives from the local faith communities.

***Recommendation #40: A comprehensive review of two Departmental policies (Volunteers #312-01 and Visitation #312-02) relevant to establishing relationships with offenders supportive of reentry shall be conducted and revisions shall be made to support faith-based, and other community partnerships throughout the reentry transition.***

It is evident that some areas of policy create unnecessary barriers to the development of relationships that might otherwise be supportive of offender reentry. For example, volunteers from the faith community who meet with inmates in prison are prohibited from having any type of relationship with such offenders when they are released. Procedures for volunteers' access to visit inmates in prison are not consistent. In addition, it appears that the provisions in the department's policy on visitation (#312-02) and those that are found in the Department's policy on volunteers (#312-01) are not clearly understood. In essence, volunteers are often defined as visitors and thus governed by the rules and restrictions that apply. These restrictions impact on community supervision as well.

The issue then is clarifying the boundaries and parameters within these policies that apply to establishing relationships with offenders supportive of reentry goals. A work team composed of representatives from the Office of Prisons, institutional chaplains, Religious Services Administrators, and the Adult Parole Authority will be formed to review and make recommendations that will facilitate supportive and appropriate relationships between volunteers and offenders planning for or experiencing reentry. These revisions shall be incorporated in the appropriate policies and shared with staff as part of the Department's commitment to successful reentry transitions.

***Recommendation #41: The Religious Services Department shall oversee the development of a uniform assessment instrument called an "Individual Faith Treatment Plan" that will be administered to offenders at reception.***

Many offenders identify with a particular faith group, and they will return to that particular faith group once released from prison. It is important that an "Individual Faith Treatment Plan" be developed that allows staff at reception to assess the offender's spiritual background and desires and that the results of this assessment become part of the inmate's master file. The information that is obtained may be helpful in linking offenders to the faith community as they prepare for their reentry transition. This initiative may be taken on by one of the upcoming Executive Leadership Teams. One of these teams shall be given the task of working with the Institutional Chaplains to design, develop, test, and plan for the implementation of the "Individual Faith Treatment Plan."

***Recommendation #42: The Office of Victim Services shall contact victims involved in identified higher risk cases to address victims' safety planning needs.***

***Recommendation #43: The Office of Victim Services shall coordinate the development of a research instrument and the completion of research on victim awareness programming currently offered by the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.***

***Recommendation #44: The Office of Victim Services shall develop a standardized curriculum for domestic violence programs within the institutions.***

Currently, there is no formal process by which victims' safety planning needs are identified for higher risk offenders (that is, sex offenders and domestic violence offenders). The Office of Victims Services (OVS) will identify and contact the victims in such cases six months prior to the offender's release. In conjunction with one of the Citizens' Circles already formed by the Adult Parole Authority, a comparable process will be piloted for the victims to identify and attempt to meet any safety planning needs they may have. The circle will include appropriate department staff, as well as community-based organizations, capable of addressing victims' safety planning needs.

Victim awareness programming is being offered throughout the Department. While this is a nationally recognized program, there is no validating research that establishes or proves its impact on offenders. OVS is working with several other states (including Alaska, Washington, and North Carolina) to develop a research instrument for assessing the value and effectiveness of victim awareness programming. Planning is underway to conduct research the outcome of which will be used to modify and enhance victim awareness programming within the institutions.

Domestic violence programming is available for offenders in some institutions within the Department, but there is no consistency or standardized curriculum. Some of the information shared in domestic violence classes has actually been identified as being possibly harmful to victims and the community. OVS will examine all materials currently being used by facilitators for domestic violence programming within the institutions. A standardized curriculum will be developed and implemented in partnership with batterers' treatment providers and the Ohio Domestic Violence Network.

### **COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND REENTRY: PARTNERS IN THE PROCESS**

As was noted, the Department has demonstrated a strong commitment to community justice for many years. Community justice is concerned with fostering partnerships between and among the public agencies that share responsibility for public safety, supporting victims *and* with forging new relationships with community members and local providers. The pursuit of community justice requires the formation of working partnerships amongst those agencies and groups that have a stake in crime reduction, and in improving citizens' quality of life. It places a very strong emphasis on repairing the harm done to victims of crime by requiring that offenders take responsibility for their crimes. A commitment to community justice recognizes that communities and victims should be active participants in facilitating outcomes that contribute to law abiding and pro-social offender behavior.

Reentry shares this commitment as well by requiring a strengthening of existing partnerships and the creation of new ones to ensure a seamless transition as offenders move from the institution to the community. Offenders' families play a significant role in the reentry process too. Their presence and active participation in supporting reentry programming and planning is very important. Their involvement, as well as that of community providers, both public and private, in addition to the faith community and law



enforcement, is vital to establishing an extended system of support and accountability for offenders returning home.

Offender accountability is a core component of both community justice and reentry. If offenders are going to succeed in living a crime free life they must first be willing to accept responsibility for their past behavior. They must understand the choices they have made and the harm their actions have caused others. The development of Reentry Accountability Plans will require that offenders take responsibility for preparing for their transition and, at the same time, hold them accountable for making decisions that contribute to successful reentry outcomes.

Ultimately, crime is a community issue. It is most effectively addressed when those most impacted by criminal behavior become involved in shaping outcomes that contribute to community well being, victim restoration, and offender integration. A wide variety of community partners from across the state are already involved in such efforts with the Department. Many more want to become involved. Though some of their specific goals may vary, the supporting principles that underlie community justice and reentry are complimentary. The Department's comprehensive approach to reentry will in the long run reinforce and draw from its commitment to community justice.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The Department's commitment to reentry and the "Ohio Plan" is long-term. It speaks to a redirection in focus that views reentry holistically, that is, as a philosophy governing changes in practice that impact each and every phase of the entire correctional process. Each of the recommendations discussed above will upon implementation assist in shaping the new system of reentry. A significant number of the recommendations will be adopted over the next nine to twelve months. Some, however, will require more time to implement given the systemic nature of the changes that are envisioned.

The "Ohio Plan" represents a strategic plan and a dynamic document. The short- and long-term changes produced under this plan will require careful coordination and a multi-phased process for implementation. The Office of Offender Reentry and Correctional Best Practices (Office of Offender Reentry) will monitor the phasing-in of the systemic changes called for under the "Ohio Plan." It will oversee the adoption of the recommendations and provide regular and annual reports on the status of the implementation efforts that are underway.

The Reentry Steering Committee, the main body formed at the start of the planning process to review the recommendations under the "Ohio Plan," will meet on a quarterly basis to assist the Office of Offender Reentry and Correctional Best Practices in monitoring the progress being made. It will also address any issues or concerns that are relevant to the reentry implementation process. Each of the major recommendations has an associated set of tasks and timelines for implementation. These tasks and timelines will be carefully monitored to ensure that implementation is proceeding on schedule and to make appropriate adjustments, as necessary. An evaluation will be conducted to assess the extent to which the changes targeted under reentry are implemented as intended and that they are effective relative to achieving the goals established at the outset of the overall initiative. Finally, as a dynamic document the "Ohio Plan" will be reviewed and amended on an annual basis to ensure the long-term viability and success of the Department's commitment to reentry.

## **REENTRY STEERING COMMITTEE AND REENTRY ACTION TEAMS**

Active planning for the Department's reentry initiative was carried out by six Reentry Action Teams under the auspices of a Reentry Steering Committee (RSC). Each team had a chair that also served as a member of the RSC. The teams prepared a series of recommendations that were reviewed by the RSC. These recommendations, with modest revisions, were subsequently incorporated into *The Ohio Plan For Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction*. The overall planning effort was chaired by the Chief of the Office of Offender Reentry and Correctional Best Practices.

### **REENTRY STEERING COMMITTEE**

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Gary Croft  
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Harry Hageman  
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