

THE COLLABORATIVE ON REENTRY 2009 Action Agenda

Charge:

The Collaborative on Reentry will address the complex issues raised by the large numbers of men and women leaving state prison and county jails each year and returning to local communities, as well as the unacceptably high recidivism rates. Members of the Collaborative will use their expertise, judgment, and insight to advance policy and systems change in the state. Specifically, the members will be asked to participate in workgroups to plan upcoming meetings and to attend four additional collaborative meetings this year designed to:

- Determine the current status of reentry efforts – both policies and practices;
- Collect data and best practices about offender reentry;
- Examine ways to leverage new dollars, and pool existing resources and funding streams to reduce incarceration and promote lower recidivism rates for returning offenders;
- Enhance the existing recommendations and develop new policies and practices that could serve as a reentry plan for the Second Chance Act; and
- Design focused advocacy efforts to implement recommendations.

Illinois Second Chance Act Plan:

In March 2009, The Bureau of Justice Assistance announced its schedule for issuing Requests for Proposals under the Second Chance Act. Decisions regarding RFPs for both State and Local Reentry Demonstration Grants and Mentoring Grants to Non-Profit Organizations and funding decisions are expected to be made by fall 2009. Applicants from Illinois include a joint effort by Cook County and the City of Chicago, in addition to proposals submitted from the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

The Collaborative Workgroups:

Workgroups have been established to design and plan the four quarterly meetings for the Collaborative, specifically around the issue areas that were discussed at the Joint Reconvening of the Mayoral Policy Caucus and Governor's Commission on Reentry on December 1, 2008. Volunteers have participated in the planning and structure of each meeting, as well as in the development of recommendations and action plans relative to those issues.

The issue areas that evolved from the December 1st meeting are as follows:

- **Alternatives to Incarceration/No Entry:**
Establish a common, effective assessment instrument for those in the criminal justice system and expand the continuum of community-based options for supervision and support services to provide appropriate offenders with effective alternatives to incarceration while addressing issues which deter criminal behavior.

Members of the Workgroup will be forming subcommittees to begin work on (1) a roadmap of the current diversion options available in Illinois' criminal justice system including how many are served (vs. demand), how much the programs cost, etc.; and (2) a review of model programs and best practices in other states around risk assessment and alternatives to incarceration.

- **Employment and Education:**
Create comprehensive strategies focused on employment options that are linked to an evolving workforce, which would include education and skills training for prisoners and formerly incarcerated individuals in areas such as green jobs, technology, etc.

The Workgroup will be addressing the following issues as preliminary recommendations: 1) Universal access to education (ABE, GED/High school credentials, Bridge programs, and distance learning), 2) Restoration of post-secondary correctional education, 3) Eliminating barriers for people with criminal records, and 4) How to engage the business community and build public awareness around providing employment for people with criminal records. The group perceived business involvement to be a highly important issue for employment. Currently, the workgroup is gathering data and information that will help move forward recommendations for the four identified issue areas.

➤ Housing:

Develop initiatives to remove barriers to housing by increasing supportive housing options and addressing policies and procedures that prevent individuals from accessing subsidized housing.

This group is represented by individuals throughout the state. Central to the group's work is an understanding that people with criminal records vary widely in their need for housing and support services. To address the diversity of housing needs, the group is focusing on four issue areas: 1) Public Housing / HUD Restrictions, 2) Creating Standards for Reentry Housing, and Expanding Permanent Supportive Housing, 3) Reviewing funding sources and building partnerships, and 4) Public Awareness to build community acceptance of offenders reentering so that expansion of housing access will not conflict with community attitudes towards the formerly incarcerated. To support the workgroup's research, a document is also being created that provides a community update of the issues related to reentry in each of the high impact areas

➤ Juvenile Reentry:

Create policies and programs within the juvenile justice system that utilize a positive youth development approach, incorporate balanced and restorative justice practices in juvenile rehabilitation, and provide comprehensive community support services during the aftercare process for juveniles returning to the community.

Issues this group is pursuing include finding access to funding for new or the expansion of current programs, the creation of a separate aftercare system, enhancing community based services, graduated and intermediate sanctions, data and information sharing, and agency communication and cooperation. The Workgroup has decided to form two subcommittees, one to look at state-level issues in juvenile aftercare involving the Department of Juvenile Justice and one to focus on local (city/county-level) issues as it relates to detention and diversion alternatives.

For each session, the goal of the Collaborative is to engage the group in analyzing the current policies and programs and make recommendations about systems change by examining the following variables as they apply to each of the four issue areas:

- Systems coordination and collaboration;
- Data information and sharing;
- Engaging the community in public awareness;
- Funding streams;
- Program administration / implementation;
- Legal issues;
- Service delivery; and
- Sustainability of initiatives / capacity building.

The Collaborative Will Produce Three Products:

1. Each of the four topic areas will produce a set of 3-5 specific actionable implementation plans. These will include:
 - The specific actions to be taken to implement recommendations;
 - The name of the people/entities responsible for taking those actions;
 - The approximate costs and where resources will come from; and
 - The time table for action.
2. A matrix of the existing available services for that issue area (samples have been provided)
3. A set of recommendations of a more general nature that include new issues, such as Juvenile Reentry, that have emerged from this process, which were not included in either the *Inside Out* or the *Restoring Hope* reports.

Meeting Dates:

The Collaborative will meet four times during a one year period. All sessions will be hosted at the Federal Reserve Bank, 230 South LaSalle Street, 3rd floor.

Session 1: Strategic Corrections: Alternatives to Incarceration/No Entry
March 25, 2009

Session 2: Employment and Education
June 15, 2009 (**Please note this date has been changed from June 24 to June 15*)

Session 3: Housing
September 30, 2009

Session 4: Juvenile Reentry
December 16, 2009