



MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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Transitioning from Jail to Community: Improving Reentry Outcomes in Multnomah County, A Report

presented to the
Multnomah County Board of Commissioners
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The lives of those who cycle in and out of Multnomah County's jails are unstable at best. We know that linking supportive services such as housing, jobs, addiction treatment, health and mental health programs go a long way in preventing recidivism. With these kinds of supports, people are far less likely to end up in our County jail again. The passage of the Federal Second Chance Act and the commitment to provide comprehensive assistance to county governments in addressing offender recidivism issues heralds an opportunity for Multnomah County to step up its efforts to help persons leaving jail successfully reenter their communities. An informal work group was formed by Multnomah County Commissioner Lisa Naito with the leadership of Sheriff Bob Skipper and Department of Justice Director Scott Taylor in order to tackle the issue of reentry and to examine "best practices" in other communities. Commissioner Naito, Scott Taylor, Kathleen Treb (DCJ), Truls Neal (DCJ), Christine Kirk (Multnomah County Sheriff's Office), Joyce Hall (MCSO), Adam Levine (MCSO), and Local Public Safety Coordinating Council Director Carol Wessinger toured facilities and spoke to those in charge of the jails in Hamden County, Massachusetts and Montgomery County, Maryland on September 24 and 25, 2008. This report contains the observations and recommendations of those attending the fact-finding trip and other work group members including Byron Moore (MCSO), Tressa Kovachevich (MCSO), Bobbi Luna (MCSO), Kathy McCullough, and Public Safety Director Peter Ozanne.

1. Establish a Reentry Council to oversee and coordinate reentry services.

A Reentry Council should be established by the Board as it will need the support of County leadership to be effective. The Reentry Council will collaborate and bridge the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office's in-jail reentry programs with the out-of-jail reentry programs by the Department of Community Justice and services by community partners. It will identify gaps in programs and services and recommend changes to address those gaps. The Reentry Council would be organized under the auspices of the Multnomah County Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) and meet eligibility requirements for funding under the Federal Second Chance Act. The Reentry Council would be structured in two tiers, with a Policy Team and an Operations Team.

The **Policy Team** would meet quarterly and as needed to guide policy and report to LPSCC. Suggested co-chairs are the Sheriff and the Director of the Department of Community

Justice. Members should include the District Attorney, the Public Safety Advisor to the Board of County Commissioners, the Public Defender, the Presiding Circuit Court Criminal Judge, a representative of ROAR (Reentry Organizations and Resources), community service providers, representatives of faith-based organizations and others.

The **Operations Team** would meet monthly and as needed to address inter-agency coordination. Membership would include line staff and mid-level managers from DCJ and MCSO, as well as community providers.

2. Articulate a mission statement on jail reentry to reflect Multnomah County's commitment to promote positive change.

The Hamden County motto, "Preparation for Release Begins on Day 1," sets a positive, committed tone for their institution. This is reinforced by both detailed programming and supportive staff. Hamden County uses a reward system for inmates who engage in positive programming that results in a certificate of completion when they fulfill the goals set out by the programming. There is notable cooperation between uniform and non-uniform jail staff with targeted programming that is successful in changing inmate culture. Upon release, every offender leaves with an individualized plan and has the opportunity to learn about programs or services that will help them transition successfully back into the community.

3. Adopt a validated risk and needs assessment tool to ensure that reentry planning begins at jail booking.

DCJ has purchased and is currently using a comprehensive risk assessment and case management system, LSCMI/4th generation. It is a tool that provides a standardized technique for the assessment of offender needs and risks. MCSO is not using an assessment tool at this time but is currently considering Quest/5th generation. MCSO objectives for an assessment tool are different from DCJ and include classification, security in the facility and jail programming. However, there are benefits in using a consistent tool between County agencies and the Courts. Sharing and utilizing the same risk and need assessments could lead to better coordination of case planning and services for an inmate's community transition.

Assessment provides a great deal of useful information aimed at knowing the needs of the jail population, targeting programs to those needs, and the ability to have data for outcome measurements. Who gets assessed and the level of assessment are vital questions with financial implications. Limited resources may define those who get a full assessment, but the knowledge of an inmate's needs will help target limited resources.

Reentry services should be based on risk and need level. For roughly two-thirds of the released inmates, reentry efforts will end upon release. Program services also should be provided for inmates on pre-trial status.

4. Return the jails to direct supervision in order to foster an increased connection between staff members, and between staff and inmates.

Both the Hamden and Montgomery County institutions had strong direct supervision systems. Some aspects of the observed programming are a result of the successful implementation of a direct supervision model. There was “ownership” of the dorm by both civilian and sworn staff, involvement of the dorm staff with the inmates, and programs and structures to engage inmates during waking hours. Returning to direct supervision for both sworn and civilian staff within the Sheriff’s Office is a foundational piece to the reentry initiative.

5. Reach In: Bring community programming into the jails to link inmates to programs prior to release.

Links to specific contact persons outside of the jail prior to release are important to help ensure jobs after release. The work group recommends the Sheriff adopt evidence-based programming with demonstrated positive results to allow limited jail access by community providers. While it is understood that the jails would need to balance security issues with “reach in” programming, there are potential benefits to be gained. For example, jail access could be enhanced for job developers and job readiness providers.

What has been instrumental in establishing successful links in the past has been the creation of “programming” modules. Such modules allow for containing “reach in” services to limited areas of the jail, making access easier to obtain while minimizing disruption to jail operations. By concentrating services, the staff works with Classification to get the appropriate offenders housed in the modules to deliver the programming. Parole officers and community providers also assist with programming in the jails.

“Reach in” programming should also seek to include an expansion of current educational services to support job skill development. Personnel commitment could be augmented by expanded computer lab and television programming. Cost is increasing Professional Services funding.¹

Additional “reach in” services should include:

- Development of employment readiness prior to release by inviting “one-stops” into the jails.
- Utilization of Goodwill Industries and other potential employers for employment opportunities.
- A process to obtain social security cards and birth certificates while the offender is in custody.
- Assistance in identifying benefits eligibility.

¹ Multnomah County Correctional Facilities currently offers education services provided by a contract with the Adult Community Learning Program Division at Mt. Hood Community College. The program contains three education programs – **ABE** / Adult Basic Education: helps adults acquire basic educational skills necessary for literate functioning. The basic skills of reading, writing, computing, listening and speaking are taught. **GED** / General Education Development: assists students working towards acquiring a GED certificate of high school equivalency. **ESL** / English as a Second Language: lower level English speakers are assisted in meeting personal goals of linguistic and cultural behaviors associated with the study of the English language.

- Partnering with Portland State University and/or other institutions of higher learning for interns in education and job training for inmates.
- Providing programs for pretrial detainees such as anger and conflict resolution, substance abuse awareness and victim impacts.
- Developing individual service plans along with programming to address criminogenic needs.

6. “Reach Out:” Increase the connections between the jail and community programs.

Connections to the community need to be made prior to an inmate’s release. Jail staff, including corrections counselors and deputies, should work directly with parole officers and community providers in the community.

Components of successful “reach out” services should include:

- Establishment of an educational satellite in the community. The existing contract with Mount Hood Community College should be enhanced. (*See footnote, page 3.*)
- Setting up health care referrals prior to release so inmates reentering the community will have access to adequate health care.

7. Plan for inmate transition to the community to prevent recidivism.

The process should focus on the four critical reentry issues including housing, employment, conditions and restrictions, and access to programs, services and supports.

- Waiting lists for alcohol and drug treatment should be eliminated and alcohol and drug treatment lists should be consolidated for easier access from jail. There is currently a six month waiting list for these services. Treatment readiness is needed in jail for effective treatment once an inmate transitions into the community.
- The County should consider issuing a community re-entry card for sentenced offenders valid for 60 to 90 days to serve as identification and to serve as a Tri-Met bus pass. Government issued identification is a significant problem for people seeking employment upon release.
- Ensure re-entry staff is advised if an offender is being released for a community link. Jail staff should develop a simple form that advises agencies the offender is in the reentry program and request a phone call to a central phone number if the offender is given a sentence or released in court.
 - Contact Defense Attorney and send a written notice that the offender is in the reentry module with a central phone number to call if the offender receives a sentence or release in court.
 - Contact district Attorney’s staff to enter a “person flag” in the computer and send a written notice, to be added to the case file, that the offender is in the re-entry module with a central phone number to call if the offender receives a sentence or release in court. Requires coordination and agreement with the DA’s office.
 - Contact the Judge’s office and advise staff that the offender is in a reentry program with a central phone number to call if the offender receives a sentence or release in court.

- While it may seem redundant to notify the defense attorney, District Attorney and judges that the offender is in the program, past history indicates it is the best way to insure that the information is received by jail staff.
- Develop a means to have court notification if an offender in the re-entry module will be released early to activate community links.
- Coordinate release of inmates when services are available, such as the probation office, alcohol and drug treatment, employment, housing and mental health services.
- Develop Mentors to assist the inmate's transition from jail.
- Communicate and coordinate the release of inmates between MCSO, DJC and community providers.

8. Establish a pre-release “Work Release Center” to increase stable employment opportunities prior to returning to the community.

A pre-release “Work Release Center” would provide an opportunity for participants to earn funds for fees for identification, victim's compensation, and child support while in custody. This service needs to be a true reentry facility, *not* a population management facility. Previous work release programs have been driven by the need to fill these program beds for both population control and expense reasons as they can be the least costly beds. The quickness of movement provides a challenge for successful in-jail programming. Future work release program beds need to be filled based on the bed being leveraged so the offender first is assessed, next receives programming and then moves to work release. Otherwise, the work release bed becomes a competition between outside work crew, program beds, etc.

9. Institute a community-based One-Stop Reentry Center to support ex-offenders.

In the Hamden County model, the After Incarceration Support Systems Program (AISSP) provides one-stop drop-in services to any individual who has had a connection with the criminal justice system. Ex-offenders are assigned a counselor who works to address his/her needs for assistance and makes the appropriate referrals and community connections, including connections to housing, education, employment and health services. The one-stop center also provides support group opportunities in English and Spanish, and fosters family connections.

Multnomah County should partner with ROAR in its efforts to make certain that those returning to the community from jail do not fail for lack of support and services.

10. Evaluate the outcomes of the reentry programs by utilizing performance measures and quality assurance evaluations.

MCSO has established performance measures and quality assurance criterion. It is critical that the performance of any new jail-to-community reentry program be evaluated for its success. Success can be measured by:

- Released Multnomah County inmates commit fewer crimes;
- Fewer released Multnomah County inmates are re-arrested into Multnomah County jails;
- Length of time before return to Multnomah County jails is increased;
- Fewer technical violators are returned to Multnomah County jails.

Desirable program outcomes include employment, housing, decreased substance abuse, decreases anti-social attitudes, decreased pro-criminal associates, increased self-control and increase family support. Re-entry program participants should be measured against non-program participants at six months, and then one year out.

To ensure quality assurance we must be clear about our overall vision, train staff adequately and have clear expectations for them, and make certain that leadership on the team is apparent. We must also use quality to control to ensure fidelity of the process.

11. Establish a Youthful Offender Unit

Montgomery County has a highly structured Youthful Offender Unit for inmates under 22 years of age that utilizes Moral Recognition Therapy (MRT). Each inmate is assigned to an MRT group which meets three times each week. Inmates who have not acquired their high school diploma or their GED are required to attend GED classes. Occasionally, an inmate may meet the criteria to continue to pursue his high school diploma while incarcerated. A full-time MRT trained counselor is assigned solely to this unit. The counselor conducts additional groups such as Cage Your Rage (an anger management program geared towards inmates), Building Bridges (a conflict resolution curriculum which encourages respect for other cultures), and Victim Impact Classes. Community meetings are conducted weekly or as needed.