

MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE OFFENDER REENTRY PLAN

The Challenge

Minnesota, like many other states, is experiencing dramatic growth in the number of offenders entering prison. Successfully preparing offenders for reentry is an investment in public safety and the social and economic health of families and communities throughout the state.

History

The State of Minnesota, in cooperation with Hennepin County, was the recipient of a Department of Justice Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) demonstration grant in 2003-2004. Under the title of Project SOAR, Minnesota's initiative sought to demonstrate the benefits of early engagement of offenders to plan their post-release reentry and develop a seamless transition from incarceration to successful community reentry.

- *27% increase in the prison population in the last five years (FY2002-2007)*
- *2% projected increase in the prison population each year to 2012*
- *95% of incarcerated offenders return to the community (6,857 in fiscal year 2005)*
- *36% reconviction rate three years post-release*

As the SVORI grant came to an end, the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) developed a long-term reentry strategy based on three components: a rational planning process, offender management practices, and multi-agency collaboration.

The Planning Process

The Minnesota reentry strategy is built on three major schools of thought: lessons learned from the SVORI grant, work from the National Institute of Corrections' Transition from Prison to Community Initiative, and the National Governors Association (NGA) Reentry Policy Council Report.

A target population has been identified for the first phase of the initiative. This population will consist of a selected number of offenders who will return to Hennepin, Ramsey and Olmsted counties, communities that receive the highest number of returning offenders.

Minnesota was one of five states chosen to participate in the NGA Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy, offered in 2007. Participants will receive ongoing technical assistance and take part in information-sharing that will provide support and strategy for Minnesota to move its offender reentry initiative forward.

Offender Management Practices

Successful offender reentry begins when an offender first enters prison

and continues through his or her reentry to the community as a productive, law-abiding citizen. To better prepare offenders for successful reentry, the DOC is organizing around three phases: the institution phase, the transition phase, and the community reintegration phase.

Two reentry managers oversee planning for a target population of offenders selected for the first phase of the initiative. Currently the department and community have multiple services in place designed to aid offenders in transition and reentry. One goal of this initiative is to coordinate those services into a comprehensive approach.

Multi-Agency Collaboration

In February 2005, the DOC created the Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Plan (MCORP), a strategic initiative between invested state agencies, the courts, and the community to plan and oversee the statewide offender reentry approach. Joining the DOC, the following agencies have committed to the success of MCORP:

- Education
- Employment & Economic Security
- Health
- Housing Finance
- Human Services
- Public Safety
- State Courts Administration
- Veterans Affairs



The mission of MCORP state agencies is to identify points of intersection and collaboration for state and commu-

nity-provided services to the target population of released offenders. Services will be organized around the criminogenic needs of the target population as measured by the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R). Case plans will be developed and reviewed that target the high-risk/need areas for each offender.

MCORP Accomplishments

- A steering committee is in place and overseeing the MCORP initiative.
 - A website posts all agendas, minutes, and announcements (www.forums.doc.state.mn.us/mcorp/default.aspx).
 - A gaps analysis was conducted to guide the targeting of an offender population.
 - A target population has been selected based on LSI-R data linked to county of residence.
 - Advisory groups, made up of local leaders and service providers, have been established in each pilot county.
 - Collaboration between the Department of Human Services and the DOC has resulted in the creation of a position to identify incoming offenders with child support payment arrears and to assist them in matters related to child support while they are incarcerated.
 - An MCORP budget was proposed by the governor and incorporated into the DOC budget. Funding was appropri-
- ated by the 2007 legislature to help enact reentry projects within MCORP.
 - The DOC is awarding grants for four reentry-related projects funded by the 2007 legislature, over-and-above the dollars appropriated to MCORP.
 - Minnesota, along with four other states, participated in the 2007 NGA Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy held in Washington, D.C. The DOC will receive ongoing technical assistance from the NGA Center for Best Practices.
 - MCORP has been awarded a \$450,000 grant from the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, through the Prisoner Reentry Initiative, to demonstrate offender reentry programming in two of MCORP's pilot counties.
 - The DOC is partnering with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to focus on expanding community involvement in offender reentry. Efforts will concentrate on the three pilot counties of Hennepin, Ramsey and Olmsted where large numbers of offenders return.
- Secure additional foundation and grant funding to develop community resources.
 - Employ Leadership Black Belt skills acquired by management staff trained at the Carlson School of Management, Joseph M. Juran Center for Leadership in Quality, to develop reentry-related organizational change processes.
 - Continue to interface with legislative leaders and policy makers to promote offender reentry programming.
 - Continue to educate the public about offender reentry as a public safety issue.

MCORP Next Steps

- Develop work plans and outcomes for the initiative.
- Train key DOC staff on their role/s in successful offender reentry.
- Put a system in place that ensures thorough assessment and case planning for each offender in the target population.

September 2007

Minnesota Department of Corrections
1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 200
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108-5219
651/361-7200
TTY 800/627-3529
www.doc.state.mn.us

