



# Offender Reentry Initiative

## Preparing Offenders for Community Living



### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Corrections is to improve public safety.

### **What We Do**

The Department of Corrections is responsible for administering adult corrections programs operated by the State of Washington. This includes state correctional institutions and programs for offenders supervised in the community.

### **What is the Washington State Offender Reentry Initiative?**

The Washington State Offender Reentry Initiative is a set of strategies that prepare offenders for release from Washington State prisons and/or jails. Successfully implemented, these strategies improve public safety, hold offenders accountable, and help to prepare the families and communities for offender transition and reentry.



## The Washington State Offender Reentry Initiative

The Washington State Reentry Initiative was created in an effort to expand evidence-based interventions that support and promote successful offender reentry into the community. Reentry's primary goal is to change criminal behavior by providing the highest level of safety, security, and offender accountability while also creating interventions that strengthen the offender readiness to return to their community and to change criminal behavior.

Reentry is the process an offender goes through during incarceration, whether it is a jail or prison, and continues through the end of the offender's community supervision period. Reentry programming utilizes opportunities while the offender is incarcerated to strengthen offender readiness to successfully return and contribute to their community. Reentry activities and programming continue during the offender's community supervision. Community programs such as work release, community monitoring, chemical dependency treatment, access to parenting, vocational, social services, religious, educational and health services, and family-centered programs all help to create a public safety net that surrounds the newly released offender.

### How do we know what works?

Through national research an evidence-based formula, "What Works" was developed. This important research confirmed that when correctly

applied in multiple highly controlled studies, the rate of recidivism was reduced. Key components of that formula include:

- Assessment of risks and needs;
- Development of a plan based on the individual assessments;
- Use of evidence-based programming targeting interventions identified in the plan;
- Monitoring offender program participation while tracking impact on recidivism; and
- Engagement of families and communities.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) conducted further research on the effectiveness of the programs and strategies Department of Corrections (DOC) uses. The Offender Reentry Initiative contains elements of the evidence-based formula, WSIPP and other state and national programs.

## Washington Reentry Strategies

The Reentry Initiative outlines strategies for preparing offenders in prisons and communities for successful reentry. Some are implemented in the prison, some in the community, and some in both, but all support the safe and successful reentry of the offender. Strategies include the following.

1. **Assessment:** Conducting an individualized assessment on every offender and developing a reentry plan that address the deficits identified in the assessment.
2. **Education and Employment:** Increasing the number of offenders receiving basic education to achieve their General Education Diploma, vocational skills training to prepare them for finding a job and other critical life skills training to provide for the successful transition from prison to the community
3. **Treatment:** Increasing the capacity of prisons and communities to provide chemical dependency treatment. This treatment provides inpatient and outpatient services to offenders experiencing a substance abuse disorder.

4. **Mental Health Treatment:** Increasing the number of offenders receiving mental health treatment in prison. This provides appropriate services to offenders experiencing a significant mental health disorder.
5. **Behavioral Therapy:** Increase the number of offenders who participate in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT is a treatment model that is used to create change in the offender’s criminal thinking patterns.
6. **Step-Down Process:** Providing concentrated violence reduction programming for offenders in maximum security and close custody levels of incarceration. This programming provides an opportunity for the offender in maximum or close custody to transition back into the general population, allowing for access to important transition programming.
7. **Family Centered Programming:** Prison and community-based programming that includes a transitional parenting program that reduces recidivism, strengthens family relationships and assists offenders and their families in breaking the cycle of intergenerational incarceration.
8. **Community Justice Centers (CJs):** Increasing the capacity of the six current CJs to expand programming for offenders and increasing the number of CJs.

The strategies outlined in the Offender Reentry Initiative will likely change as additional research is conducted and other effective ways are identified to prepare offenders and communities for release. The success of the Offender Reentry Initiative depends not only on the Department of Corrections and other state and federal agencies, but on the active support and engagement of community leaders and volunteers.

### Where We are Today

The Department has created important partnerships over the last year which play a key role in making reentry a successful public safety initiative. Through the National Governor’s Association Reentry Policy Academy the Department is involved with

state partners. These partnerships include the Departments of Community Trade and Economic Development, Social and Health Services, Veterans Affairs, and Employment Security as well as the Children of Incarcerated Parents Committee and the Faith-Based Coalition.

2008 marks the first year of the Reentry Initiative. In most areas of the initiative, the Department has met or exceeded its targets for offenders who are participating in programs. The Department plans to make adjustments to ensure all targets are met in the current fiscal year.

PROGRAM	TARGET	ACTUAL	PERCENT OF TARGET ACHIEVED
Chemical Dependency Treatment			
Prisons	2,957	2,037	69%
Community Corrections	5,370	5,354	100%
Adult Basic Education			
Prisons	4,814	5,063	105%
Vocational Education			
Prisons	2,772	2,881	104%
Community Education	899	1,175	131%
Correctional Industries			
Prisons	1,138	1,164	102%
Life Skills			
Prisons	7,045	6,817	97%
Sex Offender Treatment			
Prisons	198	212	107%
Community Corrections	2,356	1,243	53%
Family Centered Programming			
Prisons	862	616	72%
Community Corrections	1,904	678	36%
Mental Health Treatment			
Prisons	4,087	6,632	163%
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy			
Community Corrections	637	2,216	348%

### Reentry Achievements and Future Works include:

44% of all offenders at both of DOC Reception Diagnostic Centers (RDC) receive an initial assessment and individualized reentry plan that is based on the deficits identified in the assessment. Future plans include increasing the number of full assessments completed and expanding the capacity to update the

59% of offenders assessed as needing Basic Skills Training receive basic education. Future plans include increasing the percentage of offenders receiving Basic Skills Training to 100% of the need by 2017.

31% of offenders who have been assessed as having significant parenting skill deficits receive programming. Future plans include increasing the percentage of offenders completing the program to 100% of the assessed need by 2017.

61% of offenders who have been assessed as needing job hunting skills receive the needed programming. Future plans include increasing the percentage of offenders receiving “Job Hunter” programming to 100% of assessed need by 2013.

The Department currently offers “Getting it Right” classes. The Reentry Initiative allows funding to increase the number of “Getting It Right” sessions from 70 per year to 334 per year starting in Fiscal Year 2008. DOC has increased classes of “Getting It Right” curriculum. “Getting It Right” is a fast paced guide to assist offenders to learn coping strategies for day to day difficulties upon their release from prison.

40% of offenders assessed as needing Vocational Skills Training receive these skills. Future plans include increasing the percentage of offenders completing Vocational Skills Training to 100% of the assessed need by 2017.

Correctional Industries and Education funding provides offenders the opportunity to incorporate the production side of vocational educational training. The initiative increases the percentage of offenders receiving this program to 100% of the need by Fiscal Year 2017.

DOC has increased needed mental health treatment to offenders who are not considered Seriously Mentally Ill but have significant mental health disorders affecting their ability to function and progress through reentry programming.

DOC estimates that there are currently 5300 offenders who would benefit from some type of mental health treatment. This initiative places a limited number of mental health professionals at stand alone minimum facilities allowing offenders with significant mental health problems to be placed in this type of facility. Funding is also provided to establish mental health professionals at CJs. This funding has allowed DOC to develop a continuum of care from the most restrictive setting of a prison to a less restrictive community setting at the CJC.

DOC has implemented a violence reduction program for offenders housed in maximum security and close custody. Offenders released from prison in Fiscal Year 2006 included approximately 870 offenders released from maximum and close custody. This key public safety initiative reduces violence and motivates offenders to transition back into the general population, and possibly attain a lower custody level.

The Family Centered Programming establishes programming with a goal of reducing recidivism rates and assisting in breaking the cycle of intergenerational incarceration by incorporating principles and practices that support strengthening the family unit. Research has shown us that maintaining and strengthening family ties positively affects post prison outcomes and decreases recidivism. By strengthening those family ties it helps offenders in reentry and helps families reunify and supports children by the inclusion of a positive role model in the household. Events and activities are planned to foster closeness between offenders and their families during critical times.

The Department currently has six CJs that provide reentry services to offenders who are under DOC community supervision. Future plans include enhanced programming at existing CJs by 2013 and increasing the number of CJs to 10 by 2017. Future plans also include establishing violator centers within the CJs that allow for alternative sanctions as well as employment opportunity centers.

## The Future of Reentry

The success of the Reentry Initiative depends not only on state government, but on the active support of community leaders and volunteers as well as available resources. Progress will be measured by the number of offenders engaged in provably effective, research driven programs, and eventually on reductions in the recidivism rate.

There is no greater goal than protecting Washington citizens and strengthening our communities. The Department will continue to forge new partnerships and build on the foundation set by this investment into public safety.

For more information:  
Candy Curl, Program Manager  
Offender Treatment and Reentry Programs  
Telephone: 360-725-8675  
Email: [cgcurl@doc1.wa.gov](mailto:cgcurl@doc1.wa.gov)