Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition

2009 Annual Report

Ohio

From the Chairman

Mission

The mission of the Reentry Coalition is to ensure successful offender reentry, reduce recidivism and enhance public safety. The Coalition will achieve these goals through collaborative partnerships with government entities, faith and community-based organizations, and other stakeholders. It will utilize a holistic evidence-based approach that starts at the point of contact with the criminal justice system and includes an emphasis on education, families, health services, alcohol and other drug treatment, employment, mentorship and housing.

In December 2008, the Ohio General Assembly passed a historic piece of reentry legislation, House Bill 130, which called for the formation of an Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition (hereafter the "Reentry Coalition") that will serve as a guiding hub for expanding and improving reentry efforts across the state, local agencies and communities.

Under reentry, the notion of preparing offenders for their return to the community is now being addressed from within a fundamentally different paradigm: one that recognizes correctional systems alone are not sufficient to change offender behavior. The evolving framework emphasizes preparation for reentry, and targets the barriers offenders face in reestablishing themselves in the community.

In Ohio alone, it is estimated over 28,000 adult and 1,700 juvenile offenders will be released from institutions during the next year. The state's annual cost to incarcerate an adult offender is over $25,000; for a juvenile offender the comparable amount is $109,620. These figures do not account for other criminal justice-related costs or the costs to the victims of crime. These costs cannot be sustained. Investing in the success of the offender after release offers the promise of generating real savings. Whether returning offenders become taxpayers or tax burdens is largely dependent on their ability to find productive employment, stable housing, and links to vital community services.

When the reentry process is successful there are benefits for the community in terms of improved public safety. Correctional and criminal justice costs are reduced in the long-run as offenders are directed away from reoffending to more productive work and civic contributions. Successful reentry is important not only to the futures of offenders and their families, but also to the well-being and quality of life of families and neighborhoods throughout Ohio.

The Reentry Coalition is committed to assisting offenders as they reenter our communities in an effort to become law-abiding and productive citizens. The Reentry Coalition's overriding goals are to: (1) reintegrate offenders into society, (2) reduce recidivism, and (3) maintain public safety. The Reentry Coalition will accomplish these goals by facilitating the successful transition of offenders into neighborhoods across the state. The accomplishments and achievements will be shared ones. Working together in a collective fashion, the Reentry Coalition and its partners are uniquely positioned to draw on human and social capital from many sources, as well as target the impact of incarceration now and on future generations of Ohio citizens.

Sincerely,

Ernie L. Moore
Chairman, Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition

Accomplishments

Five-Year Strategic Plan

Representatives from the statutory membership completed a comprehensive five-year strategic plan outlining the Reentry Coalition's blueprint for addressing the barriers faced by adult and juvenile offenders as they seek to reintegrate into Ohio's communities. The plan details the goals and objectives in a systemic and holistic approach over the course of the next five years. It will be reviewed on an annual basis by Reentry Coalition members to update and modify the goals and objectives according to the evolving needs of the offender population.

Technical Assistance to Member Agencies

Individuals representing the various statutory member agencies have been providing technical assistance to a multitude of counties and regions throughout the state to form local reentry coalitions by conducting presentations, offering best practice models and research, leading grant training seminars and strategic planning development, and acting as a catalyst for networking opportunities. Several Reentry Coalition representatives have been invited and now participate as active members in well-established local reentry task forces, acting as liaisons between the state and local entities.

Offender Reentry Website Launched

The Reentry Coalition launched Ohio's first comprehensive offender reentry website on September 16, 2009. The website serves as a clearinghouse for resources, community service events, research findings on best practices, funding opportunities, and highlights of local reentry efforts. Its purpose is to enhance communication by providing open access to timely, accurate and useful information about offender reentry in Ohio and throughout the country. The website provides electronic access to public forums and documents, including the Reentry Coalition's by-laws, agendas, minutes, reports, meeting schedules, and news items. Information about community events is also included. The website address is www.ReentryCoalition.ohio.gov.

Grant Development Sub-Committee

A Grant Development Sub-Committee was formed to identify and support the preparation of grant applications aimed at securing federal, state, foundation, and other sources of funding to create and sustain evidence-based reentry initiatives. The committee is responsible for developing procedures and protocols when applying for grant opportunities with support from the Reentry Coalition, providing technical assistance to local partners, supplying letters of endorsement, and seeking out additional funding opportunities. The committee also arranges for technical assistance to parties who apply for reentry-related grants. The goal is to offer the Reentry Coalition's affirmative support whenever possible to enhance the competitiveness of grants submitted from jurisdictions within the state. The Reentry Coalition provided 26 letters of endorsement to state and local entities. To date, $1.6 million in federal grant money to support reentry initiatives has been awarded to various organizations in Ohio.

Online Collateral Sanctions Database

The purpose of this initiative is to establish an online collateral sanctions database that will allow users to enter a criminal charge and receive a list of housing, employment, civil rights, and relevant consequences associated with a criminal conviction under Ohio law. The design will be accessible and beneficial to a wide-user base, including defense attorneys, prosecutors, judges, social workers, school admissions offices, and others. Individuals working with people with criminal records will be able to direct their clients to appropriate employment fields, in addition to educating legislators and agency policy makers. The project secured funding through the Ohio State Bar Foundation, the Toledo Bar Foundation, in addition to a grant from the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC). It is anticipated that an electronic database of collateral sanctions will be created during the next twelve months.

Local Reentry Coalitions

One of the more significant accomplishments of the Reentry Coalition has been its sponsorship in establishing single and multi-county reentry coalitions to address local needs. Staff persons representing statutory member agencies have been providing technical assistance to local communities aimed at developing local reentry task forces. Technical assistance ranges from information sharing, identifying community needs and service gaps, uniting non-traditional service providers with government funded agencies, and assistance

Accomplishments (con't)

in developing a five-year strategic plan. Liaisons from the Reentry Coalition commit to serve as the conduit of information between the local coalitions and the state level Reentry Coalition by serving as ad hoc members to the local communities. The growth at the local level has led to coordinated efforts and community investment in addressing service delivery for adults and juveniles in the criminal justice system, ultimately reducing the costs and duplication of services while promoting public safety. The efforts targeting local reentry coalitions are due, in part, to the collaborative work between the DRC, the Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS), and the departments of Mental Health (DMH), Youth Services (DYS), and Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS) through the issuance of a reentry-focused solicitation utilizing American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

Reentry Video

At the request of the Ohio State Bar Foundation, DRC produced a compelling video entitled "The Face of Reentry." This six minute video created by the Prison News Network at Marion Correctional Institution brings to light the myriad of challenges that offenders face as they return home. The fast-paced, high energy video is packed with sobering facts about the nation's incarcerated population, as well as comments from national leaders of the reentry movement. The video is highlighted by testimonials provided by returning citizens driving home the message that successful reentry takes a community effort. For a free copy of the video contact John.Matthews@odrc.state.oh.us or Angi.Lee@odrc.state.oh.us.

Educational Institutions Collateral Sanctions Survey: Ohio Board of Regents

The Board of Regents began tabulating the results of a survey that was distributed to Ohio's higher educational institutions regarding the sanctions and barriers preventing offenders from receiving college degrees. Many institution's admission applications ask whether or not a person has been arrested or convicted of a crime. However, criminal history becomes apparent in a background check that is conducted for students applying in the fields of nursing, childcare, and public safety. The information is used primarily as an advising tool so students can better judge the barriers that may exist to future employment opportunities in their field of study. This information will be compiled and distributed to the Reentry Coalition in months to come for further discussion.

Reentry Program Grant Awards - Ohio

On March 15, 2010, the Department of Public Safety, through OCJS and in collaboration with state agency partners, selected fourteen sites across the state to receive Justice Assistance Grant Reentry Program Awards totaling nearly $4.7 million in federal economic stimulus funds focusing on offender reentry initiatives. Funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), programs were selected for awards under two categories: Innovations in Reentry or Development of Local Taskforce Reentry Programs. The awards represent a significant investment in Ohio's communities, enhancing a key priority that is emerging throughout the state's criminal justice system. Investments in community-based reentry programs such as these should help to achieve a reduction in recidivism, as well as contribute to the reintegration of citizens into Ohio's communities. Beginning at sentencing and extending beyond release, reentry focuses on linking offenders with services specific to their needs through associations with community partners, families, justice professionals and victims of crime. The following counties received grant awards for Innovations in Reentry: Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio (Lucas County), Mid-Ohio Reentry Coalition (Marion/Crawford), Franklin County Reentry Task Force, Highland County Comprehensive Reentry Initiative, Montgomery County Reentry Project, and Sandusky County Offender Reentry Initiative. In addition, Development of Local Reentry Program funds were awarded to: Darke, Miami and Shelby Counties Reentry Taskforce, Portage County Reentry Coalition, Washington County Reentry Taskforce, Morgan/Noble County Reentry Taskforce, Delaware County Reentry Taskforce, The Comprehensive Wayne/Holmes County Reentry Coalition, Fairfield County Reentry Coalition, and Clark County Reentry Taskforce.

Accomplishments (con't)

Reinstatement of Medicaid

Medicaid is important for youth and adults involved in the justice system as both a mechanism to access physical and behavioral health services, and as a way to finance health care. It is estimated that between 50-60% of youth committed to DYS and of adults 11% committed to DRC were Medicaid eligible prior to their arrival. After more than six years of planning and collaboration, in December 2009, DYS and DRC entered into an Interagency Agreement with Ohio Department of Job and FAmily Services (ODJFS) to expedite the reinstatement of Medicaid benefits of eligible youth and adults committed to DYS or DRC serving less than one year. Through the use of the Reinstatement of Medicaid for Public Institution Recipients (ROMPIR) system, Medicaid eligibility can be restored quickly (24 to 72 hours), and will allow youth and adults to quickly access services upon the release and return to the community. This marks a historic public policy change and recognizes the critical importance of maintaining access to physical behavioral health services.

Ohio Benefit Bank

In 2007, DRC began a pilot project at the Correctional Reception Center and the Adult Parole Authority Regions to train DRC staff and volunteers as Ohio Benefit Bank (OBB) Counselors. The OBB is a web-based, counselor-assisted application program developed to assist low-income families (income below $56,000) apply for federal benefits. The OBB provides free tax preparation assistance and is a certified Internal Revenue Service e-file provider.

The goal of the project is to provide an opportunity for offenders to complete OBB enrollment prior to their release from prison or upon reentry to the community and to provide OBB information to offender's family members.

Offenders who either enroll in the OBB or who can provide information to their families about the OBB are likely to feel they are contributing to the well-being of their family even though they are incarcerated. Since January 2007, DRC has served 1,778 OBB clients with an approximate dollar value of $4,044,984 in eligibility benefits.

All DYS juvenile Parole Officers have been trained by the OBB to assist families in checking potential eligibility for support benefits such as health care coverage, home energy assistance, child care subsidies, food stamps, and tax credits.

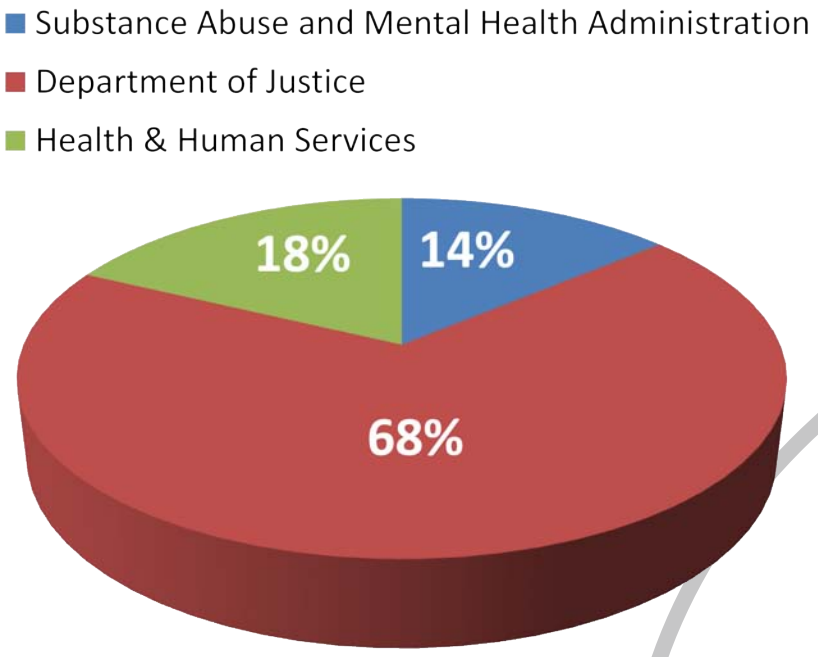
Ex-Offender Employment Sub-Committee

This committee is considering barriers and will prepare recommendations for enhancing the job prospects of ex-offenders. This committee is focused on the benefits and drawbacks of issuing Certificates of Rehabilitation, and issues centering on the expungement and sealing of criminal records. Future discussions will consider workforce intermediaries, transitional job programs, and criminal record reform.

Ohio

Federal Funding Requests
CY 2009

Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition and Partners	Requested Funds
Dept. of Justice Second Chance Demonstration Grant	$ 4,150,000
Dept. of Justice Byrne Memorial Competitive Grant	286,000
SAMSHA Offender Reentry Program	1,200,000
Health & Human Services Prisoner Reentry Initiative	150,000
Dept. of Justice NIJ Crime and Justice Research	674,980
SAMSHA Local Oriented Systems of Care	389,778
Dept. of Justice Office of Violence Against Women	525,735
Dept. of Justice Office of Victims of Crime	74,407
Dept. of Justice OJJDP	449,000
SAMSHA Offender Reentry Program	386,518
Dept. of Justice Second Chance Act-Mentoring Grant	3,600,000
Health & Human Services Mentoring Children of Prisoners	1,400,000
Health & Human Services Strengthening Communities	1,000,000
SAMSHA Jail Diversion/Trauma Recovery Grant	394,000
Grand Total	**$14,680,418**



Strategic Plan Objectives

Click here to view the strategic plan

The following information reviews the actions and progress of the inter-agency partners between July 2009 and December 2009, drawing from the Reentry Coalition's five-year strategic plan. What follows is not an exhaustive description of the plan's current goals and objectives, but rather highlights activities relative to specific areas of focus.

Education/Employment

(1) Statement of the Problem

The lack of educational, career development and vocational programs contribute to the high recidivism rate. Education, employment readiness, workforce development, and vocational opportunities during incarceration serve too few offenders.

As a result of the passage of HB1 the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) had to enact new changes to General Educational Development (GED) transcript fees and practice test fees. According to HB119 Section 269.20.50, the foregoing appropriation item 200-447 removed the following language, "GED testing shall be used to provide GED testing at no cost to applicants under the rule adopted by the State Board of Education." Under HB1, the "at no cost to applicants" was eliminated. Therefore, HB1 allows ODE to charge a fee to take the GED test. With this change in the law, ODE cannot offer fee waivers to any individual, thus creating a barrier for offenders who cannot afford the various fees and must go without this much needed resource.

* DYS and ODE awarded 52 High School Diplomas and 117 GED's to incarcerated juvenile offenders.
* The number of DYS youth offered educational and vocational services was 1,499. The average number of juveniles incarcerated at DYS over the course of a year is 1,430, with an average length of stay of 10.3 months.
* DRC provided $52,000 in Alien Grant funds to cover the costs of GED tests offered at the adult correctional facilities.
* There were 8,922 GED certificates awarded to adults incarcerated at DRC.
* There were 19,508 adult offenders offered services by DRC and ODE.
* There were 87 certificates awarded for Apprenticeship programs and 331 certificates awarded for Career Technical Education programs to DRC inmates. It should be noted that the bulk of Career Technical Education programs begin in July and end in May, therefore the numbers represent only those who have completed the programs.

(2) Statement of the Problem

Approximately 51% of youth released from DYS remain unemployed throughout the duration of supervision.

* 135 DYS youth secured full-time employment and 269 secured part-time employment. The total number of DYS youth securing employment was 404, which represents 23% of all youth supervised during the first 6 months of FY 2010.
* DYS, ODJFS and the Workforce Investment Act Programs (WIA) collaborated to develop the Jobs Reentry Initiative. This initiative was created to provide transitioning DYS youth who have historically lacked services with intensive job placement. The Jobs Reentry Initiative was designed to serve older youths (a minimum of 17 years old) who have a high school diploma, GED, or are at least two grade levels behind and are not interested in pursuing traditional high school opportunities. In FY 2009, this project provided $1.5 million through ODJFS to fund pilot projects in Franklin, Cuyahoga, Hamilton, Summit, and Stark counties. In FY 2010, ODJFS was unable to maintain pilot-project funding, yet all but one of the projects were continued through the use of alternative funds. DYS still provides the screening and referral functions for the continuing projects.

Mental Health

(1) Statement of the Problem

There is a prevalence of offenders with mental illness who lack hope of recovery from their mental illness. Mental illness, if coupled with the high co-occurrence of criminogenic needs, can impede the offender's ability to function in society.

* DMH is in the process of assessing the locations currently operating the Wellness Management and Recovery (WMRP) programs. Strategically, DMH will begin to meet with these agencies in calendar year 2010 to explore ways to market the program to the offender population. Grants have been sought to fulfill this goal but at this time there is not any funding to begin the program.
* DMH has applied for an OCJS grant to pilot the WMRP for released offenders in three locations. If the grant is not awarded, DMH will still begin to meet with WMR programs to discuss the marketing techniques to attract this population to the program.
* DYS does not use the WMRP. This strategic goal will be revised to reflect the appropriate program for youth with mental illness. DYS places youth with mental health issues on a mental health caseload within the facility. Youth who are mentally ill and are unable to be maintained in the general population of the institution are housed in mental health units. DYS recommends modification of this objective to reflect DYS's mental health and cognitive behavioral treatment services.

(2) Statement of the Problem

For numerous reasons, approximately 48% of offenders who participate in the Community Linkage Program do not partake in community mental health services after being released from an Ohio correctional facility.

* Quarterly Community Linkage program meetings are occurring between DMH and DRC. Additionally, it was decided that board and providers associations will be invited to the quarterly meetings since their members are participants in the delivery of mental health services. DMH has begun developing a localized collaborative monitoring strategy that enhances the effectiveness of the Community Linkage Program. Quality assurance/improvement program meetings were implemented within DMH for the Community Linkage program effective November 2009
* DMH is exploring policy and evidence-based best practice options that could enhance the client compliance rate. These tactics will be discussed during the monthly Community Linkage program staff meetings.
* DMH has been awarded Transitional State Incentive Grant funds that are being utilized to further develop its current Community Linkage database. The reports and data will be shared with customers on a quarterly basis beginning in CY 2010.

(3) Statement of the Problem

Activities to identify and divert youth with behavioral health issues from state operated facilities to community treatment providers have proven effective in decreasing subsequent criminal activity. Currently, 38% of DYS youth are on a mental health caseload and 76% of all DYS youth currently committed were on a mental health caseload prior to commitment.

* DYS, in collaboration with ODADAS and DMH, was collectively awarded $2,084,999 in FY 2010 to Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, Montgomery, and Summit counties under the Behavioral Health Juvenile Justice Initiative. These funds are being used to identify justice-involved youth with behavioral health issues and provide evidence-based services in the community in lieu of commitment to DYS. Services provided include: Integrated Co-Occurring Treatment, Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, Assertive Community Treatment, Multi-Systemic Therapy, Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care and High Fidelity Wraparound.

Substance Abuse

(1) Statement of the Problem

Approximately 70% of offenders are in need of some form of substance abuse service. Substance abuse, coupled with high co-occurrence of criminogenic needs, impede the ability to function in society and can lead to recidivism.

* ODADAS has reported that 143 incarcerated adult offenders with substance abuse issues completed a TC program or similar evidence-based practice while in the institutional setting.
* 119 DYS youth completed the Therapeutic Community (TC) substance abuse program operating at the Mohican Juvenile Correctional Facility. It should be noted that this facility will close at the end of April 2010 and DYS will not operate a TC program.
* The Regional Information Tracking System, the DYS parole database, provides aggregate data for youth enrolled in the ODADAS funded Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC) programs. These community-based substance abuse treatment programs served the following number of DYS youth during the indicated month's in 2009: July-100; August-96; September-98; October-104; November-82; December-99.
* DYS collaborated with Kent State University (KSU) and Catholic Charities of Cleveland which operates the Cleveland Juvenile TASC program, in the development of an Offender Reentry Program proposal submitted May 2009. The proposal was not funded. The proposal was modified and re-submitted during the second solicitation of the Offender Reentry Program call for proposals. The participating DYS sites are the Cleveland Regional Parole Office, Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility and Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility.

(2) Statement of the Problem

Many of the Alcohol and other Drugs (AOD) services that are necessary for successful reentry are not available for the offender population upon release.

* ODADAS has reported that 222 adult offenders with substance abuse issues were linked to an ODADAS certified treatment program upon release to the counties participating in the Access to Recovery (ATR) grant initiative. ODADAS, in conjunction with collaborative partners, has applied for a second round of ATR funding totaling $16 million dollars. When funded, ATR service will be expanded to additional counties.

Family

(1) Statement of the Problem

There is tremendous support for creating mechanisms to empower and engage families across systems in Ohio. Approximately 60% of incarcerated adult offenders in Ohio have at least one minor child and 90% of youth released by DYS return to their homes.

* DRC, ODJFS, and the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives provided funds through the release of a competitive grant utilizing Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) dollars to provide services to children and their incarcerated parent using a strengths-based family model. Nine community partners were awarded monies in FY 2010 to implement this evidence-based model. The number of awards has decreased from past years as a result of fewer dollars available for awards. This performance goal will need to be modified to adapt to the current allotted budget for the program.
* DYS continues to make considerable progress towards engaging families while a youth is in the custody of DYS. To assist this effort, all DYS Regional Parole Offices, the Release Authority and DYS institutions are equipped with video conferencing capability allowing families to visit with their incarcerated son or daughter. 109 video conferences were conducted to discuss youth progress and treatment plans; 48 of the video conferences involved family members.
* DYS received a grant from OCJS to expand video conferencing technology to juvenile courts and community correction facilities. This allows all parties including family members with a cost effective means to review youth progress, connect and inform service providers and engage families in the treatment and reentry of youthful offenders.

(2) Statement of the Problem

Activities to divert non-compliant child support obligors from conviction, incarceration, and re-offending have proven to be effective mechanisms to increase child support payments, sustainable employment, and child engagement.

* The number of counties with Community Correction Act Non-Support (CCANS) programs has increased by six.
* Funding has been increased for the non-support programs in the original seven pilot counties by $583,000.
* The total amount of new funding for CCANS programs is $1.3 million.

Mentoring/Community Engagement

(1) Statement of the Problem

Approximately 7% of DYS youth "age out" of the system, creating young adults ill-equipped to reenter community.

* Sixty-six DYS youth were matched with mentors.
* Volunteers provided 13,439 hours of service. This number is less than projected due to the closing of two of the department's seven institutions. Closing the two facilities has significantly decreased volunteer opportunities. Given the past closings and the scheduled closing of Mohican Juvenile Correctional Facility in April 2010, DYS recommends amending this outcome measure.

(2) Statement of the Problem

Nearly 51% of adults committed to prison annually serve less than one year. These short sentences inhibit offenders from participating in institutional programming, thus creating a need for community partners and mentors to coordinate and offer extended services and support subsequent to release.

* DRC has committed $217,000 in grant funds to implement of the Community Partners for Reentry (CPR) mentoring model. This model, developed by Byron Johnson of Baylor University, mentors from the community to offenders prior to and after release. The funding was awarded to Lucas and Montgomery County Reentry Task Forces.

Housing

Statement of the Problem

Securing safe, decent, and affordable housing is a major challenge for people exiting prison, particularly for offenders with mental illness, sex offender convictions, and other chronic health conditions.

* There has not been an increase in the number of independent housing beds or permanent supportive housing units because of a dependence on federal grant funds. These federal grant funds have not been awarded as of the release of this document.
* The Chillicothe Reentry Center will open in 2012 and provide beds for offenders. Additionally, the Urban Institute Study on the Returning Home Program will be completed. If the outcomes from this study show promise, the number of supportive housing units will greatly increase.

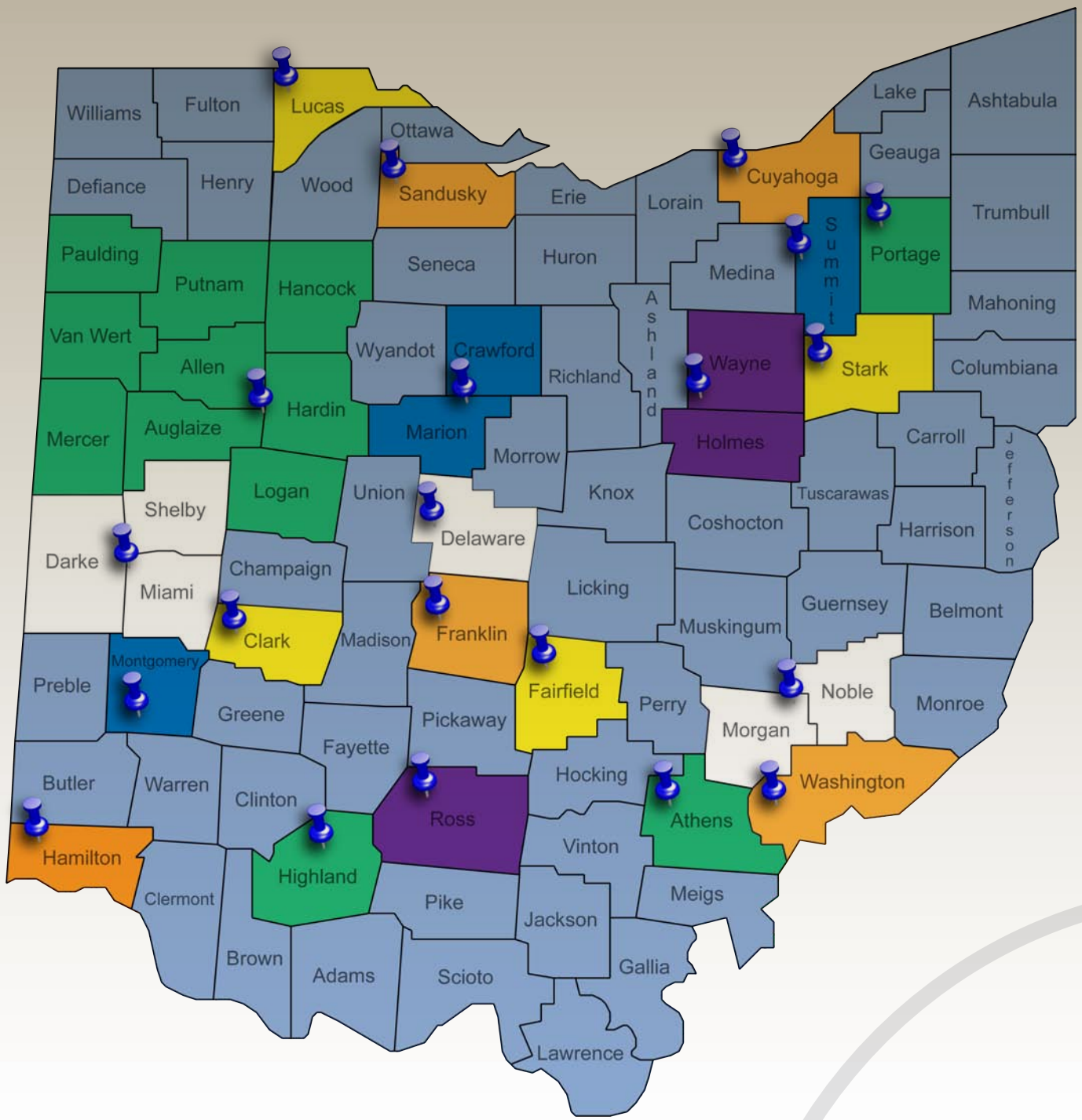
Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition
Member Agencies

Agency Contacts

- Department of Rehabilitation and Correction **1-800-282-0515**
  http://www.drc.ohio.gov
- Department of Aging **1-614-466-4135**
  http://www.aging.ohio.gov
- Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services **1-614-466-3445**
  http://www.odadas.ohio.gov/public
- Department of Commerce **1-614-466-3636**
  http://www.com.ohio.gov
- Department of Development **1-614-466-2480**
  http://www.development.ohio.gov
- Department of Education **1-614-995-1545**
  http://www.ode.state.oh.us
- Department of Health **1-614-466-3543**
  http://www.odh.ohio.gov
- Department of Job and Family Services **1-614-466-6282**
  http://www.jfs.ohio.gov
- Department of Mental Health **1-614-466-2176**
  http://mentalhealth.ohio.gov
- Department of Developmental Disabilities **1-614-644-0263**
  http://www.dodd.ohio.gov
- Department of Public Safety **1-614-466-2550**
  http://www.publicsafety.ohio.gov
- Board of Regents **1-614-466-6000**
  http://www.regents.ohio.gov
- Rehabilitation Services Commission **1-614-438-1200**
  http://www.rsc.ohio.gov
- Department of Youth Services **1-614-466-4314**
  http://www.dys.ohio.gov

Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition

Local Coalitions



www.reentrycoalition.ohio.gov

Technical Assistance is available to local jurisdictions seeking to form a Reentry Task force. For further information contact angi.lee@odrc.state.oh.us