

**Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition
Inaugural Meeting
Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
Union Conference Room
January 23, 2009 (10:00 am-12:00 pm)**

Minutes

Attendees: Director Terry Collins (ODRC)	Director Angela Cornelius Dawson (ODADAS)
Brad DeCamp (ODADAS)	Melissa Kuhn Wheeler (ODADAS)
Scott Layson (ODOA)	Fletch Zimpher (ODC)
Brian Misencik (ODC)	William Graves (ODD)
Lauren Spero (ODD)	Dwight Anstaett (ODOE)
Debbie Nixon-Hughes (ODMH)	Kevin Aldridge (ODMRDD)
Vicki Jenkins (ODMRDD)	Jamie Blair (ODH)
Michele Shipp (ODH)	David Schroot (ODYS)
Kevin Shepherd (ODYS)	John Flinn (ODJFS)
Robert Swisher (DPS)	Cheryl Martinez (RSC)
Lauren Massie (Board of Regents)	William Russell (Board of Regents)
Edward Rhine (ODRC)	Angi Lee (ODRC)
Linda Janes (ODRC)	Robert Hammond (ODRC)
Irene Lyons (ODRC)	Rhonda Johnson (ODRC)

Unable to Attend: Greg Landsman, Elise Geig

Director Collins began the meeting with welcoming comments and introductions. He then discussed the importance of the newly formed Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition (hereafter referred to as the Coalition).

The Importance of the Reentry Coalition

There are more people involved in the criminal justice system, and record-setting numbers of offenders being incarcerated in Ohio prisons. The female population continues to grow with a record number of offenders received mainly from rural areas with convictions for such crimes as drug abuse and passing bad checks driving the increase. The Coalition will provide a forum for state agencies to come together to assist returning citizens to get needed services, minimize the duplication of services, and use Ohio taxpayer money more efficiently. It will allow each of the member agencies to become more interactive with each other contributing to better coordination and service delivery to the reentry offender population across agencies

The Second Chance Act (SCA), discussed further below, requires each state to have a state level reentry task force with a comprehensive five-year reentry strategic plan. The Coalition will serve this function and work with local governments who may themselves form county or municipal reentry task forces.

Director Collins turned the next phase of the meeting over to Ed Rhine. Ed began by reviewing the contents distributed at the beginning of the meeting. The materials included a listing of the statutory

membership under HB 130, an analysis of the bill, and a disk containing, among other items, HB 130 as enacted, the Second Chance Act, a summary of SCA produced by the Council of State Governments, and a preliminary draft of what will eventually become the Coalition's five-year comprehensive plan.

Per HB 130, the Coalition's membership should be inclusive of other collaborating partners, including but not limited to returning citizens, family members, organizations and local task force members. Efforts will be made to reach out to other agencies, groups, and individuals interested in or already committed to working with the reentry of ex-offenders in communities across the state. The Coalition will act as a communication hub for all agencies involved in reentry.

A list of identified future members will be compiled and approved by the Coalition. Upon approval, invitations will be distributed to the appropriate parties to expand the body of the Coalition. A number of recommendations were made by those in attendance resulting in a list of suggested agencies/individuals to be included in the expanded, non-statutory membership of the Coalition. Those present were asked to supply the names of the suitable contacts for the agencies or designations listed below to Angi Lee (Angi.Lee@odrc.state.oh.us), and Ed Rhine (Edward.Rhine@odrc.state.oh.us) before the next meeting.

Veterans' Administration Services
Victim Advocate
Ex-Offender
Ex-Offender Family Member
Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections
Representative from the Law Enforcement Community
Adult Basic Literacy Education
Ohio State Legal Services
Ohio College Access Network
Community Action Agency
Urban League
Homeless Shelters
County Board Association
Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities
National Alliance on Mental Illness
Ohio Board of MRDD
Member from a local reentry task force
A representative from Federal Probation
A representative from the Ohio State Supreme Court

Mission and Role of the Coalition

The mission of the Coalition will be to work towards recidivism reduction, increasing public safety, and enhancing the efficiency of services provided to the returning citizen. A clearly defined mission will enable the Coalition and its partners to work together aligning cross departmental policies targeting the successful transition of offenders returning home from confinement. It will lend technical assistance and be supportive of local communities and agencies in forming partnerships with local jurisdictions. The Coalition will also serve as a clearinghouse for resources and information on reentry efforts within the state and elsewhere. Additionally, it will develop recommendations for legislative and administrative remedies to eliminate or reduce unnecessary barriers confronting offenders upon release or while under

community supervision. Finally, it will identify and assist in the preparation of grant applications aimed at securing federal, state, foundation and other sources of funding supportive of effective reentry programs and practices.

Annual Report:

House Bill 130 requires the Coalition to submit an annual report to the Governor's Office and the leadership of the General Assembly. The report will highlight the accomplishments and progress made towards achieving the goals described in the Coalition's strategic plan. It must offer an assessment of the effects of barriers on ex-offenders, their children and their families centering on a wide range of areas, including but not limited to, housing, child support, social security and veterans' benefits, substance abuse, mental health, and other treatment programs. The preparation of the annual report will provide an opportunity to take stock in the reentry efforts currently transpiring throughout the state, and serve as the basis for determining future goals.

Website:

The attendees agreed that the Coalition should establish an open and inclusive website for public viewing. This website will catalog various reentry initiatives occurring at all levels of government and community organizations. Additionally, it will provide technical assistance support to partners, resource information, internet links, the mission and role of the Coalition, a protocol for obtaining Coalition support for local strategic planning, and a myriad of other services. Details regarding the website creation will be forthcoming at a later meeting.

Second Chance Act

Angi Lee provided the committee with an overview of the SCA and an update regarding anticipated appropriations. Although the SCA was signed in April 2008, the appropriations for the bill had yet to be approved. It is expected that the funds will be appropriated by President's Day 2009.

The Department of Justice will release a series of grant announcements under the auspices of the Second Chance Act on March 23, 2009. The first solicitation will call for state, local, and other government entities to submit applications for a demonstration grant. The demonstration grants will cover a wide range of reentry-related areas of concern. The total award amount anticipated is approximately \$10M with perhaps as many as 20 grants awarded. Importantly, these grants will have a 50% match, 25% of which must be a cash match. The second solicitation will be for faith-based and community-based organizations to apply for mentoring grants. The award ceiling will be approximately \$15M with a possibility of 20 grant awards. There is not a required match with this grant proposal. The due date for submission is early May 2009.

Comprehensive Five-Year Strategic Plan

The discussion turned next to the development of a comprehensive, five-year reentry strategic plan. The SCA requires that such a plan be in place and endorsed by a reentry task force or its equivalent (which at the state level in Ohio will be the Coalition) to apply for one or both solicitations mentioned above. Several months ago, a small group of individuals representing the Ohio Departments of Job and Family Services, Mental Health, ODADAS, Youth Services and Rehabilitation and Correction met to begin preparing a draft of the plan for review by the Coalition. The framework for the plan which was

included in the materials for the meeting will require further development, specifically, the delineation of goals, objectives, and performance-based outcomes that reflect strategies and interventions aimed at reducing offender recidivism by 50% over a five year period.

Initial Coalition Committees

There is a need to form committees to support the mission and work of the Coalition. It was agreed that two committees will be formed at this juncture: the Strategic Planning Committee and a Grants Development Committee.

- Strategic Planning Committee

This committee will be tasked with reviewing and completing the draft of the current strategic plan draft distributed at the inaugural meeting. Angi suggested the committee review each department's strategic plan and the agency Directors' Flexible Performance Agreements. This will allow each agency the opportunity to address individual agency goals, but on a collective level. The committee should capture work that is currently being done by adding to the language contained in the draft plan, ensuring it is written in shared language. The tone of the plan should be representative of the Coalition's members, not just criminal justice focused. The Strategic Planning Committee will be responsible for connecting the mission of each agency and its constituents into an integrated format. Upon completion of the five-year strategic plan, the committee will become responsible for the preparation and submission of the annual report.

- Grants Development Committee

This committee will be responsible for developing procedures and protocols when applying for grant opportunities through the Coalition, providing technical assistance to local partners, supplying letters of support, and seeking out additional funding opportunities. The Committee will also be supportive of working with and lending or arranging for technical assistance to parties that apply for reentry-related grants.

Sign up sheets were passed around for members to volunteer to participate on the Strategic Planning Committee and/or the Grant Development Committee.

The future meetings for the Coalition will be more frequent in the next few months and then taper off as these committees, and perhaps others that are formed, assume carrying out the work of the Coalition.

The Coalition's next meeting will be held at DRC's central office on February 25th, 2009 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. in the Franklinton Room. Those individuals who have agreed to participate on the newly formed committees will be contacted by Angi Lee regarding meeting dates and times.

The meeting adjourned at 11:53 p.m.