

Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition  
State Library of Ohio  
Boardroom  
Columbus, Ohio  
December 14, 2009  
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Minutes

*Statutory Members:*

Director Terry Collins (ODRC)	Director Angela Cornelius Dawson (ODADAS)
Scott Layson (ODOA)	Vicki Jenkins (ODMRDD)
John Flinn (ODJFS)	Kim Hettel (GOFBCI)
William Russell (OBR)	Michael Norton-Smith (ODOD)
Kevin Shepherd (DYS)	Dwight Anstaett (ODE)
Teresa Moorman-Jamison (ODMH)	Tom Dilling (Licensing Board)
Nicole Scozzi (DPS)	

*Members-At-Large:*

Lenora Barry (NWORC)	Sally Luken (CSH)
Gayle Dittmer (Franklin County)	Lusanne Green (OCCA)
Melissa Knopp (Supreme Court)	Judge Bob Fragale (Marion County)
Jim Slagle (Attny. General)	Judge Michael Russo (Cuyahoga County)
Scott Sylak (NWORC)	Denise Robinson (Alvis House)

**Welcome and Introductions**

Director Collins opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking members of the Coalition followed by introductions from Statutory and At-Large Members. He noted that he is encouraged by the wide net of agencies represented including the local coalitions, Family and Children First Council, and housing.

**Ohio Reentry Grants**

The Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) has released a Request for Proposals for Reentry Grants for Ohio counties utilizing Department of Justice-Justice Assistance Grant-American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars. There is \$4.7M available for two categories of funding with maximum award amounts of \$1M each. The OCJS website ([www.ocjs.ohio.gov](http://www.ocjs.ohio.gov)) has new, announcements and information about the current solicitation for proposals. The solicitation is open until January 15, 2010. A bidder's conference will be held on December 17, 2009. Applicants must submit a statement of intent.

## **Face of Reentry Video**

John Matthews showed the updated Face of Reentry video and the updates on the Reentry Coalition website ([www.ReentryCoalition.Ohio.gov](http://www.ReentryCoalition.Ohio.gov)). Several marketing tools are being developed including business cards and posters. Posters and copies of the video were available to meeting attendees. A sample poster was displayed in the room for coalition members to review.

## **Reentry Coalition By-Laws (Motion for Approval)**

Angi Lee reviewed the By-Laws document and noted that they will move the coalition to a formal rule of order procedure. She noted that the committee made sure that the By-Laws follow statute. Highlights include:

- A decision not to create an Executive Committee
- A determination that Members-At-Large will not be voting members

Article III, Section 1: Membership will be amended with the following changes:

- Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities will become Developmental Disabilities
- Executive Director of a health care licensing board will become Executive Director or designee

There was a motion to accept the By-Laws with the changes noted, second the motion, no discussion, motion carried.

A formalized At-Large Membership Application which was taken from a standardized boards and commissions documents used by other state entities was introduced. The application remains in draft form pending suggested changes that should be sent to Angi Lee ([Angi.Lee@odrc.state.oh.us](mailto:Angi.Lee@odrc.state.oh.us)) no later than January 15, 2010.

## **Easter Seals of Ohio Presentation**

Pat Luchkowsky and Pandora Dupras from Easter Seals of Ohio shared information about the six month plan that is being developed for collaboration between ODRC and their agency. The partnership development will be occurring over the next six months with the goal of developing an MOU for collaboration.

The PowerPoint Presentation can be accessed on the Reentry Coalition website ([www.ReentryCoalition.Ohio.gov](http://www.ReentryCoalition.Ohio.gov)).

The Easter Seals website is [www.Easterseals.com](http://www.Easterseals.com)

Following the Easter Seals discussion Director Collin announced the suspension instead of termination of Medicaid benefits and reinstatement within 60 days following release. This is a major milestone for offender reentry since it allows offenders being released from prison to have medical coverage for the first 60 days rather than reapplying for terminated benefits.

## **Committee Updates**

### *Annual Report Committee (AR)*

The due date for the annual report has been extended until April 2010. The committee continues to work closely with the Quality Improvement Research group (QI). QI will continue to collect data for the annual report.

### *Quality Improvement Research*

Sharon Schnelle will continue to gather data from the statutory member agencies to assist the AR committee with the report. It is likely that the data could result in changes to the Strategic Plan.

### *Collateral Sanctions Committee*

The theme of this committee has been corralling the complexity of reentry. They have found that different people believe there is “one thing” that will change reentry when in reality, there are multiple issues.

Stephen JohnsonGrove presented three categories of barriers to entering the job market after criminal justice involvement including:

1. Legal barriers (i.e. collateral sanctions)
2. Employer reluctance
3. Lack of skills and social capital.

The first two barriers apply when a person is released from prison. These barriers present significant obstacles and need to be addressed. The third barrier must be addressed as well immediately following release; services to ex-offenders must be front-loaded to the time of greatest need.

Mr. JohnsonGrove showed a website, [www.collatersanctions.org](http://www.collatersanctions.org) that will allow stakeholders to access categories of crime to find out what sanctions are attached to each. This site will assist defense attorneys, judges, prosecutors, and offenders to make informed decisions when considering various actions such as a plea bargain. The Ohio State Bar Foundation is considering a proposal for funding to support the development of a similar website in Ohio.

### Employment of Ex-Offenders Committee

Stephen JohnsonGrove presented the coalition with a multi- page report of the Ex-Offenders Employment Committee which can be accessed on the reentry coalition website ([www.ReentryCoalition.Ohio.gov](http://www.ReentryCoalition.Ohio.gov))

Wanda Suber informed the coalition that holistic measures are being taken by this committee to address employment barriers facing ex-offenders upon reentry. The group has invited employers to their meetings for their feedback on the Certificate of Good Conduct (the actual name has yet to be determined), and its impact on their decision to hire individuals with criminal backgrounds.

To address the barriers discussed above, after a period of successful living individuals could apply for a Certificate of Good Conduct that would require employers and licensing agencies give individual consideration to applicants who are ex-offenders.

Director Cornelius Dawson suggested that there must be a mechanism to get information from the community to people who can make changes. Dayton has an offender caucus to garner their voices.

There was concern expressed that a certificate could imply special status or approval. In addition, some employers have stated that a certificate won't really mean much to them in terms of hiring ex-offenders.

To address employer reluctance there is a need to build in certificate incentives and remove liability for negligent hiring lawsuits.

Stephen noted that the Certificate of Good Conduct creates hope even if it does not change an employer's willingness to hire. It can change the culture by demonstrating that the state does have concern for those with a criminal record being hired.

Director Collins pointed out that reentry is about educating people about the needs of ex-offenders and changing the people's mindsets.

### Website Committee

John Matthews showed the updates to local coalitions on the website. There are currently 14 local coalitions under some stage of development.

The website is in need of content. Those in attendance were encouraged to forward reentry-relevant information, articles, and announcements to John at ([John.Matthews@odrc.state.oh.us](mailto:John.Matthews@odrc.state.oh.us))

The local coalitions would like to see an interactive blog on the site to assist to connect them to one another.

Director Collins pointed out the development of the National Reentry Resource Center by the Justice Center of the Council of State Governments. The site can be viewed at: [www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org) . The resource center will provide communities across the country with the best thinking on reentry, comprehensive resources and myriad forms of support that may help reduce recidivism and strengthen neighborhoods and families. It also will provide training and technical assistance to Second Chance Act grant recipients. It will provide a single point of contact for the many individuals and organizations that are committed to reentry issues.

### Local Updates

Updates were provided by Franklin, Lucas, and Marion Counties. Contact information for coalition information can be found on the reentry coalition website ([www.ReentryCoalition.Ohio.gov](http://www.ReentryCoalition.Ohio.gov)) under the Local Coalitions link.

### **Open Agenda and Forum**

Director Collins announced Ohio's involvement in the Council of State Governments Justice Reinvestment Project. This project which requires bipartisan support is funded through the PEW Foundation and will look at the criminal justice system as a whole to see if there are policy decisions that can help the state.

Bill Russell from the Ohio Board of Regents discussed information they received from an ex-offender who was applying for college. The person checked "yes" on the application stating they did have a felony conviction; they were subjected to a lengthy interview and subsequently denied admission to the university. A survey of institutions of higher education found that many asked this question. In part, their rationale is they do not want to admit someone in a degree program that might not ultimately allow them employment because of restrictions imposed through collateral sanctions. They also stated they needed to screen for violent offenders who might live in residence halls, and because many college campuses have child care facilities on premises, they must guard against sex offenders working around children. Questions should be directed to Mr. Russell ([wrussell@regents.state.oh.us](mailto:wrussell@regents.state.oh.us)). 614.752.9487. The Board of Regents is interested in addressing these issues with 4 year, 2 year, Adult Basic Literacy, and Adult Workforce Education programs.

DRC is continuing to work with the Secretary of State – Voting Rights Institute to look at giving voter registration forms to offenders as they leave prison.

Tom Dilling provided clarification to a reference in the "Employment of Ex-Offenders" Committee report. He stated that the legislative discussion

concerned licensing boards being required to determine what criminal offenses are "substantially related" to an applicable profession for purposes of defining what offenses should be eligible for sanctioning a licensee. He felt the DUI example was good in some respect to show the complexity of the issue because there were arguments to support both the opinions of the legislator and the Dental Board. He expressed the more important concern that the proposed requirement was being added to a bill focused on various aspects of the administrative operations of a single licensing board when the issue affected so many other boards.

Director Collins shared that DRC is seeking support from legislators for SB 22 sentencing reform. He also shared that he has had conversations with legislators about the fact that people are coming home from prison and we must work toward stigma reduction.

Jim Slagle asked the statutory members to look at barriers within their own jurisdiction and determine restrictions that should be kept, restrictions that should go away because they are overboard, and those that make sense initially after release but should be lifted down the road – possibly by a certificate.

Cuyahoga County has broken ground for a Community Based Correctional Facility in their county.

The next meeting will be held March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The meeting was adjourned.