

HIGHLAND COUNTY OFFICE OF REENTRY SERVICES

.....Supporting Successful Transitions



FY11

Reentry Initiative Report

This Highland County Comprehensive Reentry Initiative was funded by ARRA, the American Recovery Reinvestment Act with key partners:

- **Highland County Criminal Justice Advisory Committee/Reentry Coalition,**
 - **Highland County Commissioners as Fiscal Agency,**
 - **Highland County Probation Department as Administrative Agency, and**
 - **Turning Point Applied Learning Center as Implementing Agency.**
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Highland County Office of Reentry Services SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS



MISSION: To ensure successful offender reentry to Highland County, to reduce recidivism and enhance public safety through collaboration and efficient use of resources.

GOAL: To demonstrate benefits of alternatives to incarceration and successful transition of offenders to contributing members of our community. The Office of Reentry Services will use a holistic approach that begins with law enforcement, corrections and the court system in collaboration with families, education, health services, substance abuse, employment, housing and faith based entities to reduce recidivism in Highland County by providing resources, opportunities and support for successful transitions to those with or at-risk of having a criminal justice background.

RECIDIVISM DEFINED: **LOCAL-** Recombitment or new conviction within 18 months of release and sent back to state prison or spending 30 or more days in jail; **STATE-** Recombitment or new conviction within 3 years.

HISTORY: The Highland County Office of Reentry Services opened in July of 2010. As a result of collaboration by a broad based group of professionals who comprise the Highland County Criminal Justice Advisory Committee, the office partners to support successful offender reentry initiatives.

Highland County, with a population of 43,589, is located in the beautiful southern Ohio region. Highland County is one of thirty-two rural Appalachian Ohio counties designated by the Governor's Office of Appalachia as 'transitional,' based on poverty, unemployment and net market household income. A literature review shows that there is limited research on the issue of offender reentry from a rural perspective; however, a University of Nebraska study noted that offenders returning to rural communities face poverty and high unemployment and are less likely to have access to services and community resources. They typically return to the same location with the same people, which often prohibits successful community reintegration. This study also noted that promising practices implemented in urban areas may not be applicable or practical in rural areas. Rural communities lack successful reentry models and have limited resources to develop and implement reentry programs.

Highland County, however, has such a model and a willingness to assist its returning offenders and fellow Appalachian Ohio neighboring counties. Highland County has taken a pro-active, innovative approach to offender reentry through unique public/private collaboration as it is the only county in Appalachian Ohio with an active Reentry Coalition (established in 2005) and a Certified Reentry Program (established in 2009). In 2010, Highland County adopted and implemented a Five-Year Reentry Strategic Plan, now overseen by the newly created Office of Reentry Services.

Although the Highland County Office of Reentry Services has only been in existence for a little over a year, its mission is well outlined in Highland County's Strategic Plan as 'ensuring successful offender reentry, reducing recidivism and enhancing public safety through collaboration and efficient use of resources.' The Office has already partnered with the Probation Department, the Municipal Court, Turning Point Applied Learning Center, FRS Counseling, Community Action and Criminal

Justice Advisory Committee members for Highland County reentry initiatives. Goals of the Office of Reentry Services are as follows:

- Assist ex-offenders and other at-risk community members by providing resources, opportunities, and support for successful transitions
- Demonstrate benefits of alternatives to incarceration
- Assist Highland County Criminal Justice Advisory Committee members in using a holistic approach that begins with law enforcement, corrections and the court system in collaborative efforts with education, families, health services, substance abuse, employment, housing and faith based entities to reduce recidivism in Highland County.

Supporting successful transitions for those with a criminal justice background who are returning to live and work in Highland County is essential. Various community resources will be needed, as well as encouragement to persevere, make wise choices and remain with families.

Over the past couple of years with a decrease in manufacturing, this county has found itself faced with record high unemployment, serious fiscal issues, rising recidivism and limited resources to address criminal justice issues. Lack of alternative intermediate sanctions, jail overcrowding, high recidivism rates, and gaps in supportive services to offenders were identified in the county's comprehensive reentry strategy as priority issues. To address those priority issues, in 2010, the Highland County Reentry Coalition opened the Highland County Office of Reentry Services (HCORS), administered at Turning Point Applied Learning Center's (TP) State-Certified Reentry Program. Partnerships with the Highland County Courts, Probation and Parole Departments have piloted the county's Day Reporting Program. Concurrently, the HCORS assumed responsibility for county-wide coordination of all supportive services for returning and diverted offenders.

The Highland County Comprehensive Reentry Initiative project uses evidence-based practices, comprehensive interagency initiatives, transitional jobs, and supported employment to facilitate successful reentry, reduce recidivism, and enhance public safety. The need for these and future initiatives are supported by the following:

Unemployment and Poverty: Highland County is designated by the Appalachian Region Commission as "transitional". With June's poverty rate of 13.4%, Highland County consistently ranked in the top five counties in the state for unemployment. In 2010, Highland County ranked 2nd in Ohio for unemployment.

Many recent plant closings and mass layoffs have negatively impacted persons with offender status who were "grandfathered" into employment situations and who are now seeking employment with a criminal record that they must disclose. Non-offenders have an advantage over ex-offenders for the few jobs that are available and most available job openings require a minimum of a high school diploma or GED and some advanced training or education.

Recidivism, Prison and Jail Overcrowding: In 2010, The Highland County Probation Department and the Adult Parole Authority supervised 1,209 offenders with 7 officers, a caseload ratio of 173:1. According to the American Probation and Parole Association, a ratio of 50:1 is the suggested caseload to change anti-social, criminal behavior. The Highland County Justice Center, capacity 72, despite recent budget and staffing cuts, had an average daily inmate population of 64.5. Over 57% of Highland County commitments in Ohio state correctional facilities are low level offenders, felony 4 or 5; 23% will return to our community *within six months*. The recidivism rate for these offenders is over 45%, almost 30% higher than the state average. **It is our goal to assist in reducing the recidivism rate in Highland County by 50% over a five year time span.**

Limited Access to Supportive Services: Being a small rural community, Highland County lacks many of the basic supportive services that often benefit our urban counterparts. Public transportation, affordable housing, residential and intensive substance abuse and mental health services are not available to most of our residents. Ex-offenders, particularly, lack the supportive services necessary for reentry, resources that would support transitions for successful reentry into the community, evidenced by a decrease in recidivism and increase in public safety.

FISCAL YEAR 2011 REPORT OF SERVICES PROVIDED: Fiscal Year is defined as July 1st, 2010 through June 30th, 2011. The HCORS Director represented the office at quarterly meetings for the State Reentry Coalition and the Highland County Criminal Justice Advisory Committee; she also attended meetings with the Highland County Community Resource Committee, the Regional Continuum of Care and the Family Recovery Services/Turning Point Collaborative Team. Staff attended Reentry Fairs at local Institutions and all of Ohio's Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Institutions received office information for services provided. Staff made weekly visits to the local Highland County Justice Center (jail) and informational sessions were conducted when the opportunity presented itself. As a Reentry Coalition partner, the Director assisted community partners in completing a total of eight local, state and federal grant applications which were all related to providing reentry services. Determining gaps in county services and funding is an ongoing process as collaborative efforts continue to build; as a result, the Highland County Community Resource Directory was updated and is now posted on the Community Action Website. The office is also very excited to share its research efforts in compiling a comprehensive library of over 500 articles and data references for over 20 major topics. Subjects of interest include best practices for the criminal justice system, mentoring, housing, prison and reentry programming, specialized caseloads and different types of courts, as well as information on Transitional Jobs and Day Reporting, Trauma Informed Care, victims of crime and services for youth. This wealth of information can be found online at our website, listed under "Resources for Criminal Justice Professionals and Partners," as well as in hard copy which is located in our Hillsboro office. Additional items of service include the HCORS Staff being trained as Counselors for the Ohio Benefit Bank. Staff are trained not only to offer assistance for application completion, but free tax filing as well. The Director has participated in facilitator's training for the cognitive behavioral change program entitled, "Thinking for a Change," and trained as a facilitator for the "Victim Awareness" program.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES: 308 individuals received a total of 1,420 supportive services, averaging 4.6 per person. As a result of partnerships between Turning Point Applied Learning Center, the Highland County Probation Department, the Municipal Court, the Common Pleas Court, the Highland County Court and the Adult Parole Authority, many individuals participated in more than one program while receiving services from the Office of Reentry Services.



"I grew up here; my family is here."

Of the 308 individuals who received services, many participated in more than one program. Program participation includes the following*:

Community Service Program	42%
Day Reporting	17%
Prison Inmate Correspondence	7%
Turning Point's Transitional Jobs	25%
Inmate visits at Highland County Justice Center	13%
Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, without supervision	5%
Adult Parole Authority, with supervision	21%
<i>*Totals do not equal 100% as participation may have been in more than one area.</i>	

Office of Reentry Staff conducted **191** Individual Reentry Assessment and Plans (IRAP); dates to complete goals ranged from immediate to five-years. Follow-up has demonstrated that **43%** of participants' goals have been accomplished. The IRAP includes gathering identifying information of the offender, including criminogenic history, employment and educational skills, family related support, financial and legal obligations, transportation and housing issues, health and mental health services, substance abuse issues, counseling and rehabilitation needs, domestic violence concerns and community service needs. Based on participant's current needs, goals are set with the offender. Follow-up meetings are scheduled based on the IRAP, the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) tool which determines risk for recidivism and the HCORS Track of Services, adapted from the Jail Administrator's Toolkit for Reentry, developed by the Urban Institute and the Justice Policy Center.

An element of completing the plan with participants is to provide as many services as possible to ensure successful transition for offenders. When working one on one with a reentering citizen, immediate needs become evident and with current collaborations, these Highland County citizens were able to obtain much needed items such as food, clothing, furniture, appliances, rental deposits and utilities, eye ware, prescriptions, housing, driving courses and transportation assistance; Ohio Benefit Bank application and tax filing assistance; guidance in furthering education with career assessments, financial aid and scholarship assistance; providing information on expungement and employee benefits programming for hiring ex-offenders; tracking fines, court costs and fees, and child support orders; and providing support for custody and family reunification efforts.

As a result of collaboration, the following Organizations have assisted with providing **over \$17,500** worth of supportive services during the current year to those served in some way by the Highland County Office of Reentry Services. Many thanks to the kindness shared by these representatives in demonstrating support for successful offender reentry and providing much needed support services to help better the lives of Highland County residents:

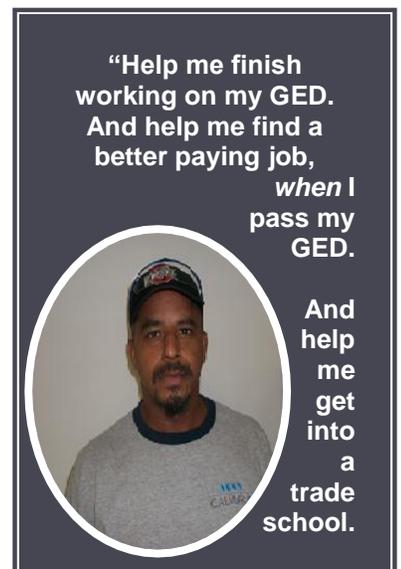
Providing Basic Needs for individuals and families: Alternatives to Violence; Area 937 Ministries; Child Support Enforcement Agencies of Adams, Clinton, Fayette, Highland, Montgomery, Ross and Scioto Counties; Children Services' Departments of Fayette and Highland Counties; Community

Action Programs of Adams, Brown, Clinton, Fayette, Highland and Ross Counties; Hillsboro Bible Baptist Church; Highland County Department of Jobs & Family Services; Hope Emergency; Love Inc.; New Life Ministries; the Ohio Benefit Bank; Rock for Tots; Samaritan Outreach; Society for Adults & Children, and St. Vincent De Paul of Ross County. **Employment Assistance** provided by the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation; the Bureau of Vocational and Rehabilitation; the Highland County One Stop Employment Training Center; the “Ohio Means Jobs” website and Turning Point Applied Learning Center. **Housing Assistance** provided by the Grace House; the Highland County Homeless Shelter; the Regional Continuum of Care; the Ross County Men’s Shelter; “Ohio’s Housing Locator” website and the STAR Residential Treatment Facility. **Counseling and Medical Services** provided by Family Recovery Services, HealthSource, and Scioto Paint Valley Mental Health Centers; ADENA Medical Center; Fayette County Memorial Hospital and the Highland District Hospital. **Educational Services** provided by the Laurel Oaks Career Development Campus; Southern State Community College and Turning Point ALC. **Providing information, legal services and ‘alternatives to incarceration’** by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction; Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio; the Adult Parole Authority- Chillicothe Region; the Highland County Court; Probation Departments, Municipal and Common Pleas Courts of Adams, Brown, Clermont, Clinton, Fayette, Franklin, Greene, Hamilton, Highland, Montgomery, Pike, Ross and Scioto Counties; and Juvenile Courts of Clinton, Fayette, Highland and Montgomery Counties.

DAY REPORTING ‘ALTERNATIVE SANCTION’ PROGRAM: For Fiscal Year 2011, a total of **53** offenders participated in the Day Reporting Program. A collaborative effort began in the summer of 2010 between Turning Point Applied Learning Center, Highland County’s Probation Department and Municipal Court, the Highland County Court, the Office of Reentry Services and Family Recovery Services to implement a Day Reporting program as an ‘alternative sanction.’ The Day Reporting program is an opportunity for an offender to complete Turning Point’s Certified Reentry Program in lieu of jail or as a ‘last resort’ program. Successful program completion is defined as completion of all assigned hours of employment training and supportive services including but not limited to GED instruction, life skills and soft skills training, drivers’ education, parenting, substance abuse/mental health counseling, nutrition and ongoing case management. The Day Reporting Program began in the fall of 2010. **53** offenders participated and data through the end of June 2011 follows:

- 19% completed the Day Reporting Program
- 60% of those who completed obtained employment
- 10% were continuing the program into the new fiscal year
- 43% recidivated: spent 30 or more days in jail or received new charge
- 45% completed a GAIN (Global Assessment of Individual Need)
- 42% participated in Group Counseling Sessions
- 96% completed an IRAP (Individual Reentry Assessment & Plan)
- 100% of those who needed a GED participated in GED Classes

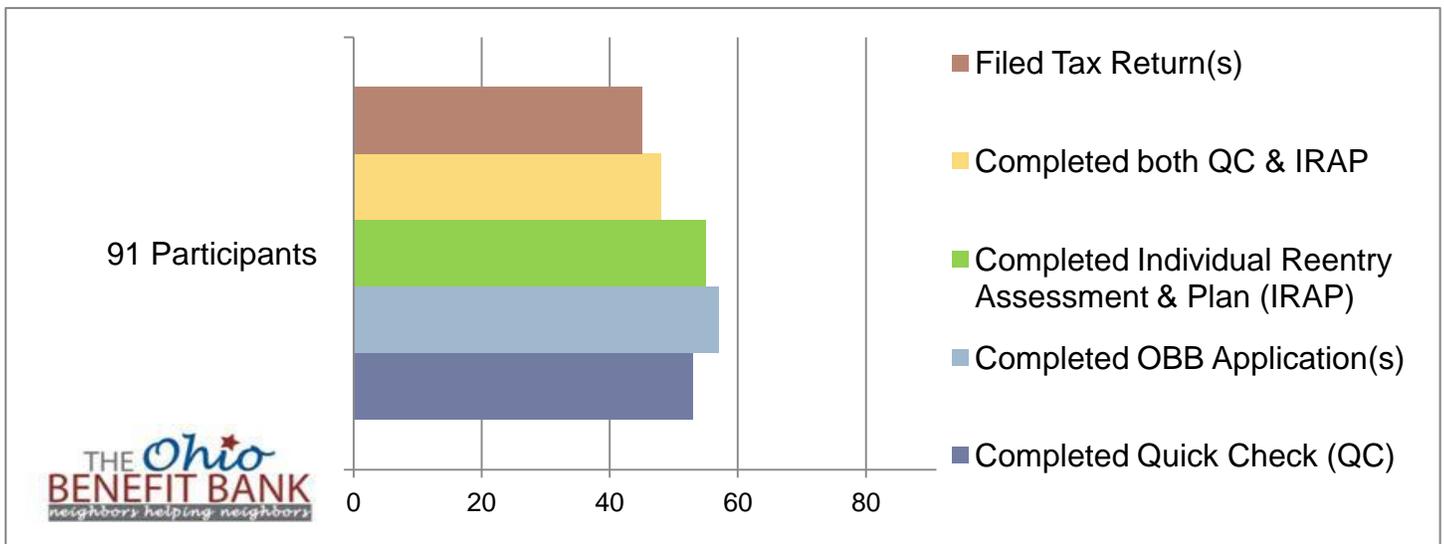
In addition, Day Reporting Participants completed a total of **8,870.75** hours of programming. A total of \$5,630.78 was paid in educational stipends to participants accepted into the “20/20” program. A total of **\$5,081.25** was paid toward court costs, fees, fines, and child support.



“Help me finish working on my GED. And help me find a better paying job, when I pass my GED. And help me get into a trade school.”

In terms of saving jail days for the county, at a savings of \$2,265 per person who completes the program and with a total of 10 offenders completing to date, the total savings equates to **\$22,650**. Although it is realistic to note that 'jail beds will be occupied regardless of programming,' it is also realistic to note that there are 10 individuals who have bettered their life and the lives of those around them by not spending time in the local Justice Center and earning valuable skills which will assist in providing successful transitions into the community, reducing recidivism and enhancing public safety.

OHIO BENEFIT BANK: The Office became an Ohio Benefit Bank site, in partnership with the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks, in order to provide a holistic approach to providing services for Highland County Residents. All staff are now trained Counselors in not only providing assistance with Benefit Bank applications, but in offering free tax filing assistance as well. A total of 15 Tax Clinics were conducted: 3 at the Greenfield Library and 12 hosted at the Highland County One-Stop Learning Resource Lab. Following is the HCORS Ohio Benefit Bank overview:



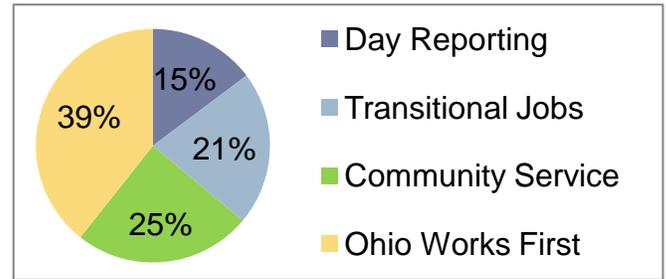
Self reported tax refunds totaled **\$17,436** with a total of 26 evaluations being completed; 100% responding that the tax sessions were very helpful, that they would consider participating in the tax clinic again next year and that they would refer others to participate in this tax clinic as well.

COMMUNITY READINESS SURVEY: In March, 2011, as a component of the Turning Point Orientation, the Office began conducting Community Readiness Surveys. Developed by the Center for Behavioral Health Services and the Criminal Justice Research and Rutgers University, the Community Readiness Survey measures participants' ability to live independently, their availability of support and individual need for health attention. This ten question survey is also built into the Office's Individual Reentry Assessment. Results collected for the last quarter of the year with **54** individuals taking the survey demonstrate that 73% believe they are ready to successfully live in the community, while 27% feel that they have barriers to successfully live within the community. The three areas covered by the survey revealed the following:

- **Ability to live independently:** 76% believed they did not earn a livable wage; 69% stated they did not have \$500 to support themselves; and only 26% reported having reliable transportation
- **Availability of support:** Results were 1% or lower for need of support; 13% reported not having someone they trusted to talk with when feeling sad, hurt, disappointed, frustrated, or angry

➤ **Strong need for health attention:** Of those who reported the need for medication, 26% reported not having a one month supply; and 39% of those who self identified as having chronic medical, mental health, or addiction conditions disclosed that they did not have a scheduled appointment.

➔ Of those who took the survey, 69% had a criminal justice background and the chart shows source of program referral at time survey was taken.



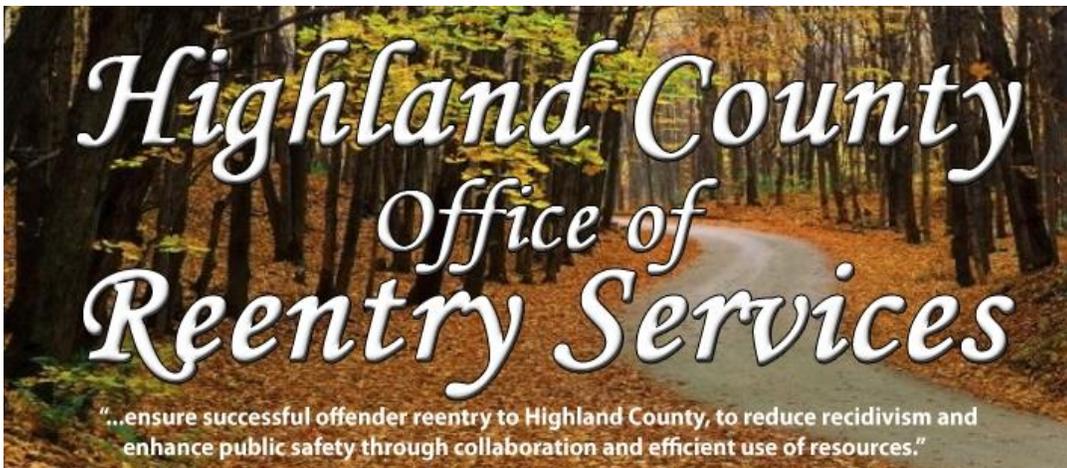
By quickly assessing needs of participants through the use of this survey, staff are more readily available to address necessary items and provide resources needed for promoting positive health and assisting with successful transitions.

HCORS LOGO, BUSINESS CARDS, ANNUAL REPORT AND WEBSITE DESIGN

➔ The HCORS office sign as posted below Turning Point’s sign, designed and crafted by Abbot Sign Company.



⬇ The Prison News Network (PNN) located at the Marion Correctional Institution provided the design, development and printing of our Office’s marketing items, including our website, www.hcors.org.



GOALS FOR FY12: The Highland County Office of Reentry Services will continue to facilitate comprehensive interagency initiatives by providing research and presenting best practices such as community based mentoring for offenders and transitional housing. Focused efforts will include increasing institutional in-reach, providing public awareness for the need of ‘alternatives to incarceration,’ assisting with current initiatives in reducing recidivism, increasing public safety, family reunification and increasing collaboration with employers and employment services to provide successful transitions for offenders to gain sustainable employment.

INSTITUTION INREACH: Increase pre-and post-release efforts with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Institutions, half-way houses and other offender-related facilities to assist with providing successful transitions for offenders returning to Highland County.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING: Assist community members and various committee representatives with developing additional transitional housing opportunities for offenders.

COMMUNITY BASED PEER MENTORING: Assist current community mentoring efforts and develop peer mentoring programming for offenders which crosses all racial, religious, social and economic boundaries. Services would include interviewing, training mentors in the 'Thinking for a Change' behavioral modification program and providing continued assistance and guidance for ensuring the implementation of a valuable mentoring program.

PUBLIC AWARENESS: Community awareness will be provided in terms of demonstrating the need for 'alternatives to incarceration.' Based on benefits for offenders, families, friends, neighbors and citizens, it is our desire to increase public support by signifying the economic benefits of reducing the number of crimes and victims, and stressing cost effectiveness of offering programming that institutes change, verses the cost of keeping offenders in jail or prison. These efforts will target offenders who would benefit from life changing programming and include community wide efforts to provide successful transitions for offenders to become viable community members.

With all these factors in mind, consider the following:

- Currently, 2.3 million Americans are behind bars.
- 95% of all prisoners go home!
- Across the US, almost 735,000 offenders are released annually.
- 2/3 of all inmates have substance or alcohol abuse related issues.
- 1/2 of all inmates have mental health issues.
- In the United States, 1 in 28 children have a parent in jail or prison.
- The fastest growing group of people going to prison are women!
- 44% of inmates released in Ohio are under some type of supervision.
- 56% of inmates released in Ohio are not under any type of supervision.
- In Ohio, 28,000 adults and 1,700 juveniles are released annually.
- As of June 2011, there were 50,561 inmates in Ohio Prison Institutions.
- 24,441 inmates were released from Ohio Prisons in 2010.
- The daily cost to keep an adult in prison in Ohio is \$68.76.
- The annual cost to keep an adult in prison in Ohio is \$25,097.40.
- The annual cost to keep a juvenile in prison in Ohio is \$109,620.
- The annual cost to keep someone in the Highland County Justice Center is \$15,033.

Our services are needed desperately to facilitate successful community reentry. We look forward to continuing to provide reentry services in Highland County, collaborating with surrounding Appalachian counties and appreciate any collaboration that individuals at the local, state, or federal levels are willing to assist with in providing smooth transitions and reducing barriers for our reentering citizens. For more information, please contact us by calling 937.393.9266 or visit our website at www.hcors.org. Thank you.





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