



# The Reentry Coalition

of Northwest Ohio

Working for Safer Communities!

## ADULT REENTRY PLAN – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the United States today, there are more than 2.3 million men and women incarcerated behind bars compared to 200,000 in 1970. This represents a 1,050% increase in the number of persons incarcerated. When including all persons currently involved in corrections across the country – those incarcerated and those involved in community monitoring and parole, there are a total of nearly 6.9 million persons involved in corrections. In Ohio, as of December 2008 there were 51,197 persons incarcerated. At an average annual cost of \$24,000 per inmate, this translates to a little over \$1.2 billion that Ohio is spending on incarceration – this does not include additional costs of community monitoring, parole, and recidivism (on law enforcement and judicial).

The costs to communities across the United States are staggering both in terms of actual and opportunity costs that are incurred. With recidivism rates generally reported at higher than 60%, it is critical that in order to have an impact on reducing the number of persons involved in corrections, communities must develop effective reentry strategies that build community wide collaboration and improved coordination. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections releases an average of 1,065 persons a year who return to Lucas County.

The **Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio (RCNWO)** is a collaboration of public agencies, not-for-profit organizations, citizens, businesses, faith-based partners and community stakeholders who are united in and committed to reducing recidivism among ex-offenders returning to Northwest Ohio. The Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio operates under rules and procedures established by the membership, as embodied in the Coalition's Bylaws, in accordance with all applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations. Membership is open to all sectors of the community who are committed to successful reentry for ex-offenders and their families and/or significant others.

### **Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio's Goal**

The Coalitions' overarching goal is to reduce recidivism in Lucas County by 50 percent within a five-year period.

### **Our Mission**

It is the mission of the **Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio** to provide leadership, oversight and implementation guidance in the following:

- *Assisting individuals released from prison and returning home to NW Ohio to succeed in our community.*

- *Building a safer community and reducing the cost of crime –Reducing recidivism by 50 percent within a five-year time period.*
- *Providing coordinated opportunities through a network of services that those individuals can access to succeed.*
- *Promoting and utilizing evidence-based practices of frontloading services, engaging family members; adhering to risk and needs principals, and using positive incentives.*

**Primary roles of the Coalition:**

- Working to enhance resources available to local reentry partners to support local reentry efforts.
- Promoting public understanding of Reentry by presenting opportunities to reduce recidivism.
- Providing workshops, forums, symposiums, meetings, trainings to ex-offenders and their families or significant others, Members of the Coalition, Faith Partners, Agencies, Services, Employers and other Community stakeholders.
- Promoting Service Coordination as a core strategy to effectively connect those persons transitioning from incarceration to needed services and supports. This may also include connecting other family members or significant others to needed services or supports.
- Coordinating efforts with Coalition Membership to address employment, education, marital/family stability, personal/emotional, community functioning, legal issues, child support, housing issues, financial barriers, health, and substance abuse.
- Coordination and support of a mentoring program to aid offenders to successfully return home. The model utilized is based on the work of Dr. Byron Johnson at Baylor University.
- Provide Family Support and Reentry Resource Workshops, which focus on empowering individuals and strengthening families and/or significant others. Offering real solutions and resources to address many of the challenges our ex-offenders and their families face.
- Advocate for services and develop recommendations for legislative and administrative remedies to eliminate or reduce unnecessary barriers confronting offenders once they leave incarceration.
- Consult and collaborate with individuals and/or representatives from service providers, housing associations, community advocacy groups, faith communities, and other relevant stakeholders engaged in offender transition issues.
- Continually seeking to expand partnerships to build capacity with organizations whose efforts advance the Coalition’s mission.
- Addressing outstanding warrants: A significant success of the Coalition has been the development of interagency protocols coordinated through courts and prosecutors’ offices to identify outstanding warrants and resolve them, where possible, prior to an inmate’s release. This prevents costly and disruptive re-arrests that frequently befall reentering inmates just as they are establishing a foothold for housing and

employment. Agencies involved in the Warrants Sub Committee include - Toledo Correctional Institution (all ODRC institutions), and trial courts in Lucas County (Common Pleas, Toledo, Maumee, Oregon and Sylvania Municipal Courts). Additionally, the Defiance, Fulton, Henry and Williams Common Pleas and Municipal Courts; Napoleon and Bryan and the Fulton County Eastern and Western District Courts), Corrections Center Of Northwest Ohio, Prosecutors (county and municipal), Clerks of Court (county and municipal), Public Defenders Office/Defense Bar, Law Enforcement Agencies (courts must notify law enforcement that warrant is withdrawn), NORIS and Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

**Local Goals and Strategies to Promote Successful Reentry**

In order to effectively promote reentry in Lucas County, we recognize that there are goals that we need to work toward to ensure a strong and effective coalition and strategic focus areas, which are directly related to effective reentry for persons returning from incarceration. Key goals related to the coalition include the following:

1. Effective community communication, coordination and collaboration.
2. Increased utilization of evidence-based practices of frontloading services, engaging family members; adhere to risk and needs principals, and use of positive incentives.
3. Increased resources to direct toward reentry in the community.
4. Improved community support for reentry efforts.

The Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio has identified the following as our core strategic focus for reentry over the next five-year period:

<b><i>Strategic Focus</i></b>							
<b><i>Health</i></b>	<b><i>Family Support</i></b>	<b><i>Mental Health</i></b>	<b><i>Education and Employment</i></b>	<b><i>Housing</i></b>	<b><i>Legal Issues</i></b>	<b><i>Substance Abuse</i></b>	<b><i>Mentoring</i></b>

The table on the following page outlines goals/strategies and objectives for each of these identified strategic focus areas. There is a lot of positive energy and direction among the Coalition membership to have a positive impact upon reentry, which will greatly benefit our local community in terms of safety and resources over the coming years.

# STRATEGIC FOCUS, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES FOR REENTRY IN NW OHIO

Strategic Focus	Goals/Strategies	Objectives
<b>Health</b>	Enhance the accessibility to a medical home and needed healthcare services for all ex-offenders after release by enrolling ex-offenders in Medicaid or Toledo-Lucas County CareNet if they meet eligibility criteria.	Increase the number of Ex-Offenders enrolled in Toledo-Lucas County CareNet by 20% within 5 years.
<b>Family Support</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen family relationships for the offender to help reduce risk of repeat incarceration</li> <li>2. Enhance communication skills through hands-on training sessions in order to foster a creative atmosphere for trust</li> <li>3. Provide tangible tools to equip families to handle everyday life events</li> <li>4. Present Parenting and Childhood Developmental Education</li> </ol>	Over the next five (5) years establish a Case Management Program that is a comprehensive solution-based assessment and support to systematically assess and provide supportive services appropriate to the family
<b>Mental Health</b>	Enhance the accessibility of mental health treatment services and medications for all ex-offenders after release.	Over the next 5 years establish a system whereby all ex-offenders can obtain mental health treatment including medications within 14 days of their release
<b>Education and Employment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the number and percent of ex-offenders successfully participating in and completing job training/preparation programs.</li> <li>2. Increase the number and percent of ex-offenders successfully participating in and completing advanced educational opportunities.</li> <li>3. Increase the number and percent of ex-offenders successfully employed in the community.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Establish 3 employed ex-offender support groups within two years.</li> <li>5. Provide access to entrepreneurial training to 50 ex-offenders annually.</li> <li>6. Aid 50 ex-offenders annually to attend college</li> <li>7. Support 25 ex-offenders annually as they attempt to enter into construction apprenticeship programs</li> <li>8. Promote bonding programs by facilitating two community forums annually regarding its benefits.</li> </ol>
<b>Housing</b>	Establish lists of agencies, and individual providers who are providing housing to ex-offenders upon release.	Provide housing alternatives through transitional and/or permanent housing programs, decreasing the homelessness of ex-offenders by 23% by 2013
<b>Legal Issues</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To reduce recidivism by early identification and intervention to resolve legal issues which will interfere with a re-entering prisoner's ability to maintain stable employment and housing.</li> <li>2. To develop forms, checklists and other resource materials to help re-entering prisoners, their mentors and their families understand how to prevent or mitigate frequently occurring legal problems</li> <li>3. To recruit and support volunteer attorneys and law students who will assist re-entering prisoners, their mentors and their families in resolving legal issues</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recruit, train and support a panel of 30 to 40 lawyers assist re-entering prisoners in dealing with common civil law problems and students who would</li> <li>2. Increase by 50% over 5 years the number of re-entering prisoners who successfully resolve the following types of civil legal problems during their first year of release</li> </ol>
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhance the accessibility of substance abuse treatment services for all ex-offenders after release</li> <li>2. Enhance the accountability and continuity of substance abuse treatment services for all ODRC supervised offenders</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the number of outpatient treatment slots designated for ex-offenders by 20% within 5 years.</li> <li>2. Expand TASC's current capacity to serve Adult Parole Authority supervised offenders to 300 within 5 years</li> </ol>
<b>Mentoring</b>	To connect offenders with positive support prior to their release and maintaining that relationship for up 12-18 months; thus, reducing risk of recidivism	Reduce the number of individual returning to prison with our target group by at least 45% over the next 5 years

# STATEMENT OF NEED – WHY REENTRY IS IMPORTANT

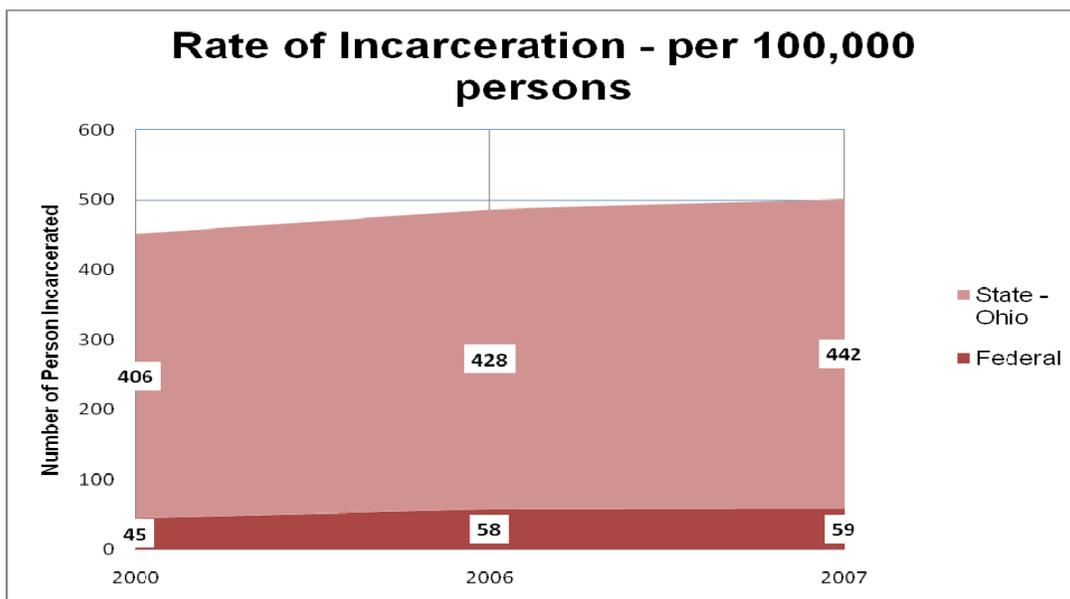
## The United States

Reentry is affecting each and every part of the country. The number of individuals that are incarcerated each year continues to grow: the number of federal admissions in 2000 was 43,732, and increased to 53,618 in 2007, a year when about 1 U.S. resident of 198 was imprisoned with a sentence of more than 1 year in a federal or state prison. And it is expected that 95% of all the prisoners currently incarcerated will be released. The number of men and women released from federal jurisdictions was 35,259 in 2000 and grew to 48,411 in 2007, an increase of more than 5%. In addition, more than 700,000 inmates were released from federal and state prisons in 2007, which is a 20% increase from 2000. To put these numbers into perspective, more than five million people across the U.S. were on probation or parole in 2007.

When planning an offender's release, the reentry programs need to take into account the ways in which society changes and the effects of being incarcerated. Having a reentry program available for offenders can offer them not only a helping hand, but also hope in a time when they might not have any for their situation. Communities that have agencies and service providers who coordinate and collaborate with one another to provide the services and resources that ex-offenders need to prevent further incarceration will provide safer and more stable communities by helping ex-offenders become valuable members of society.

## Ohio

Compared to the federal imprisonment rates of sentenced prisoners, Ohio is incarcerating offenders at a much higher rate per 100,000 in the population. The graph below illustrates this fact:



Ohio admitted 28,178 offenders in 2007 resulting in a total of 51,197 inmates that year. The same year, 29,014 prisoners were released back into Ohio's communities in 2007, many of whom were in need of housing, employment, education, mental health and substance abuse treatment, mentoring, and help with legal issues.

In Ohio in 2007, the average annual cost for a prisoner was \$24,000 and Ohio housed 51,197 prisoners. That turns into an annual cost of more than \$1.2 Billion annually to house those persons incarcerated in prison. This is a great deal of money that is not helping to reduce the number of individuals who are incarcerated or who recidivate each year, as each year the number of ex-offenders who recidivate increases. According to recent testimony, *“Ohio’s adult prison population has increased dramatically over the last few decades with no relief in sight. According to recent testimony by Director Collins before the House Finance and appropriations Committee, the Ohio prison population is currently at 50,719 inmates. This represents an increase of 175% from 1984, with projected growth to 60,000 inmates by 2018.”*<sup>1</sup> The current rate of incarceration is greater than the capacity to house and effectively ‘rehabilitate and correct’ the offenders. Approximately 1,065 offenders are released back into Lucas County after being incarcerated in an ODRC institution, 65% will likely be released on some level of community supervision. These figures do not even account for those persons returning annually into the community in Lucas County from federal and county jail incarceration.

## **Northwest Ohio**

The following table shows a profile of Lucas County’s inmates from 2007, at the point of intake. This profile is based on a sample of 138 from the ODRC 2007 Intake Report.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	87%
Female	13%
African American	58.7%
Caucasian	41.3%
Married	11.6%
Single	75.4%
Divorced/Separated	13.0%
Less than High School Diploma	46.6%
High School Diploma/GED	51.9%
College Graduate	1.5%
Employed	26.3%

<sup>1</sup> Source: Testimony on Community Corrections Funding within the Budgets of the Departments of Rehabilitation & Correction and Youth Services given by Gayle Dittmer, President of the Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections, March 12, 2009

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Unemployed	51.9%
Mental Illness – none indicated	66.7%
Treated	29.7%
Diagnosed/Evidence of	3.6%
Alcohol Abuse – recent (within the last 6-months)	45.7%
Past – more than 6-months	70.3%
Drug Abuse – recent (within the last 6-months)	66.7%
Past – more than 6-months	89.1%

Many of those committed also had a prior nonviolent misdemeanor, had been incarcerated at least once before and had a history of alcohol and/or other drug abuse. The latter issue is a major factor in recidivism rates. Fifty-seven percent of Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections’ (ODRC) inmates from Lucas County indicate they have never participated in treatment while in the community, and 90% of inmates will not receive substance abuse treatment while incarcerated. However, treatment is proven to reduce crime by as much as 80% and arrests by as much as 64%.

After serving their sentences, these ex-offenders are often released into the same situations that they were in prior to their arrest. Reentry programs need to be involved in moving ex-offenders into areas that promote and reward positive and law-abiding behavior. Securing housing is a vital component in the stability of the reentry process and reducing the recidivism rates of ex-offenders. Approximately twenty-three percent of ODRC inmates returning to Lucas County are faced with homelessness. Given that housing stability has proven to reduce recidivism by 27%, the fact that ex-offenders face homelessness upon returning to the community is a significant contributor to recidivism.

In addition, many ex-offenders have unresolved legal issues that may cause added complications for them if not handled prior to, or immediately after, release. Civil law issues that are typically encountered by ex-offenders include debt collection or child support cases which lead to wage garnishments; driver’s license suspensions due to unpaid court fines or unpaid child support; identity theft issues which lead to inaccurate credit reports or government records; access to public benefits, including medical assistance, food stamps, disability benefits and job training programs; access to public housing or subsidized apartments; family law disputes which cause difficulty in maintaining housing or employment.

Family support during an inmate’s incarceration is crucial to a lower rate of recidivism once released. Since most of those who are incarcerated are men, many children are without a father at home. In the State of Ohio, 23% of children live in single-parent homes with the mother as the head of the household. Furthermore, a child with a nonresident father is significantly more likely to be in poverty than children with a father present in the home. Additionally, research indicates that children in fatherless homes

are also at a higher risk to be incarcerated. In support of family and community connections with ex-offenders, a 2007 study done by Professor Byron Johnson of Baylor University (The Role of Religion) shows that if the religious community, in partnering with a number of other social programs, would engage the offenders prior to their release, there would be a great potential to reduce recidivism by as much as 17%.

Another challenge that ex-offenders face is the lack of healthcare for them during and after their release. Since most are unemployed when they return home, ex-offenders are also less likely to have any health coverage, which means that any minor health issues that are neglected can become more serious and thus, more costly. Currently, 19.5% of adults in Lucas County do not have healthcare coverage, which is higher than state and national averages. Reentry programs are needed to address the gap between healthcare coverage during and after release, and the lack of affordable healthcare for ex-offenders. Similarly, mental health issues are also in need of attention. In 2007, 1,090 inmates were released back to Lucas County after being incarcerated in an ODRC Institution, 45% without any further supervision requirements. Thirty-three percent of all inmates sentenced to ODRC from Lucas County have been identified as having mental health related needs.

Reentry is a critically important piece of the community's success. Collaborative efforts such as the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio are working to reduce costly recidivism rates and address the significant needs of those returning from jails and prisons as well as their families. Successful reintegration benefits the entire community as formerly incarcerated individuals become better able to successfully support themselves and their families/significant others; becoming law-abiding and productive members of society.

## **REENTRY COALITION OF NORTHWEST OHIO**

### **Background and History**

In 1999, the Ohio State Bar Foundation developed the Key Initiative Focus, presently called the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio, to improve access and experience of the public with courts, and to change the role of the courts to institutions of last resort. One rural county and one urban county were selected for this initiative; In Northwest Ohio, Lucas County was selected as the urban county for the project.

The Ohio State Bar Foundation (the Foundation) committed staff time and financial investment for monthly meetings in Toledo with court personnel, private attorneys, and court users, in addition to other institutions like schools and healthcare systems. Dialogues from these meetings identified barriers to legal services. Through this process, the focus for Lucas County shifted and evolved into exploring how the ex-offender population burdens local courts through recidivism and increased administrative needs.

With this focus on the ex-offender population, Foundation staff continued to work with community partners in a newly formed Lucas County Working Group. The Working

Group agreed to explore ways to provide more effective service delivery to the ex-offender population beginning with streamlined data gathering.

Through 2002-2003, the Lucas County Working Group collaborated with the University of Toledo's Urban Affairs Center to research court user satisfaction and identify where improvements could be made. In 2004, two RIEL (**R**e-entry of **I**ndividuals and **E**nriching their **L**ives) Forums were held at United Way of Greater Toledo offices and at the University of Toledo. Approximately 500 individuals from social service agencies, court employees, and related agencies and institutions participated. Additionally, many ex-offenders and their family members/significant others attended these events.

As a result of these activities, the "Re-entry Matrix" project was developed in 2005 to allow community agencies to share coordinated efforts to meet the needs of re-entering ex-offenders. The first prisoners served by the project were released from Toledo Correctional Institution in early 2006. More than 140 inmates participated in the project in its first year, with an additional 10 to 15 inmates per month continuing to be screened.

In 2007, the project partners re-assessed the Re-entry Matrix's mission and strategies. A special community meeting was held in May highlighting personal success stories from a panel of a dozen men who had been released from prison. They gave first-hand accounts of what was working and what was not working in helping them reintegrate into the community. Staff from participating agencies, other community leaders and state corrections department leaders including ODRC Assistant Director, Michael Randle attended the meeting.

In June 2007, KIF Members approved a revised statement of mission, goals and strategies based on the experiences and progress of the project to date. The revised mission statement reads:

It is the mission of the **Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio** to provide leadership, oversight and implementation guidance:

- *To assist individuals released from prison and returning home to NW Ohio to succeed in our community*
- *To build a safer community and reduce the cost of crime –Reducing recidivism by 50 percent within a five year time period.*
- *To provide coordinated opportunities through a network of services those individuals can access to succeed*
- *Utilize evidence-based practices of frontloading services, engaging family members; adhere to risk and needs principals, and use positive incentives.*

Additionally, the group reviewed the strategy rankings and came to consensus on the following rankings (the highest ranked priorities are at the top of the list):

1. Facilitate Communications
2. Facilitate Interagency Coordination
3. Manage Outcomes/Evaluate

4. Educate our Community
5. Monitor System
6. Secure Financial Stability
7. Build Family Engagement
8. Empower the Community
9. Build Political Will
10. Share Information
11. Build the Network
12. Develop Mentoring
13. Evaluate the experience of participants

Based on these rankings and on the input received from the ex-offender panel at the May meeting, the project focused on communicating with employers and the faith community regarding the important roles that they can play in helping ex-offenders successfully transition back into the community. The project held two forums – an Employers Forum and a Faith-Based Forum. The most recent forum was the Employers Forum, which was held at the Toledo Club and had more than 105 persons in attendance. It is our goal to build both communication that is more effective and partnerships with these sectors of our community to better ensure that those returning to the community will have improved opportunities both for employment and to meaningfully connect to the community.

*The overarching goal for the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio is to reduce recidivism by 50 percent within a five-year period thereby making safer communities.*

For purposes of this grant, the primary targeted area will be Lucas County.

## **Structure**

The Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio has an executive committee, which consists of the Officers of the organization: the Chairperson, Chair-Elect, Secretary, and each of the standing committee chairs. Also included are three at-large members of the coalition, one of whom must have been formerly incarcerated. Standing Committees are those committees that require long-term efforts (more than one year) to accomplish the work of the coalition. Ad Hoc Committees and Tasks Forces may be formed to accomplish more time-limited goals or projects (less than one year). Each Committee's Chairperson will convene and preside over their committee meetings and report back to the Coalition on the status of the work to be accomplished by the committee. Each member of the Coalition has an opportunity to be represented in the executive committee by participating in one or more of the standing committees and taking part in the issues being faced by those committees. Furthermore, committees shall be formed as needed to accomplish the work of the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio. The

membership of each standing committee shall choose its chair to represent them in the executive committee.

## **Membership**

Membership is open to all sectors of the community who are committed to successful reentry for ex-offenders and their families and/or significant others. We invite agencies providing direct governmental oversight of this population, non-profit service providers, community advocates, members of the faith-based community and key community leaders to our meetings for participation. See ATTACHMENT A for list of Coalition Member Agencies.

The Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio has members from a wide array of service providers. They are equipped, able, and ready to face the many challenges that ex-offenders meet after their release. These partners are involved in the areas of housing, family support, substance abuse and mental health, as well as education, employment, community functioning, and legal aid. The Coalition has also partnered with a correctional institution, the court system, and the Parole Authority.

The service providers that make up the membership of the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio include agencies that are working in the fields of education and employment, physical health and safety, legal issues, housing, family relations and community development, substance abuse, and mental health. By working together to create an alliance that is both effective and efficient, the agencies are better able to work towards achieving the goals of the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio as a collaborative initiative to address the many issues that ex-offenders face.

## **Key Accomplishments**

Since the initial formation of the Key Initial Focus and subsequent transformation into the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio, members of the coalition have worked very hard and have made a number of accomplishments.

The following list presents some of the key events and accomplishments of the Coalition over the past five years.

### **Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio Events and Accomplishments:**

#### **2004**

- Reentry of Individuals Enriching Lives Lucas County, United Way Toledo, Ohio
- Community Forum, Lima, Ohio
- Resources and Real Tools for Reentry, Defiance College, Serrick Campus, Defiance, Ohio
- Family Forum Empowering Families Through Education and Awareness, University of Toledo, Com Tech

## 2005

- ACTION: Area Communities Together In Offering New Hope, Medical College of Ohio

## 2006

- Northwest Ohio Workforce Development Workshop for Employer's at Owens Community College; Tri County Jail, Mechanicsburg, Ohio Community Forum

## 2007

- Offender Reentry Panel - special community meeting with individuals who have transitioned back into the community; United Way, Toledo, Ohio
- University Of Toledo Community Faith Leadership Forum, Toledo, Ohio
- Gold Star Award from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections in recognition of local reentry efforts in NW Ohio.

## 2008

- Northwest Ohio Workforce Development Forum, Toledo Club; Toledo, Ohio
- "Who To Call?" event, The Source, Toledo, Ohio

## Ongoing Events

"Tuesday's at Two" weekly, EOPA, 525 Hamilton, Toledo, Ohio

*Family Support and Reentry Resource Meetings* on-going throughout Northwest Ohio occurring four times each month. This collaborative meeting is "Excellence in Action", utilizing evidence-based practices of frontloading services, engaging family members, and using positive incentives. Family Support Coordinator, Stephanie Bays, presents on providing real solutions to address many of the challenges our ex-offenders and their families face.

## LOCAL PLAN

There are several key goals that the Coalition seeks to work towards:

1. Developing effective community communication, coordination and collaboration among the membership agencies and organizations of the Coalition and community agencies and service providers.
2. Increasing the utilization of evidence-based practices of frontloading services, engaging family members.
3. Adhering to risk and needs principals, and the use of positive incentives.

4. Increasing the number of resources to direct toward reentry in the community.
5. Improving community support for reentry efforts.

The Coalition's overarching goal is to reduce recidivism in Lucas County by 50 percent within a five-year period. In order to do that, the coalition is utilizing a multi-sector approach and developing committees to work on issues which are challenging ex-offenders and their families. These issues include: housing, mental health, substance abuse, family support, health, education and employment, mentoring, and legal issues.

## **HOUSING**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Secure housing is a vital component in the stability of the reentry process and in reducing the recidivism rate of ex-offenders. Twenty-three percent of Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections inmates returning to Lucas County are faced with homelessness. Housing stability has proven to reduce recidivism by 27%. (Toledo Homeless Management Information System, ORDC 2007 Lucas County inmate profile)

### **Strategic Performance Goal**

Establish lists of agencies, and individual providers who are providing housing to ex-offenders upon release.

### **Objective**

Provide housing alternatives through transitional and/or permanent housing programs, decreasing the homelessness of ex-offenders by 23% by 2013.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

2009 – Create data base of agencies or individuals willing to offer placement (to include sex offenders).

2010 Increase awareness of need for housing placement and recruit individuals to provide rentals to ex-offenders.

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

1. Meet with other agencies to find out what housing options are available and develop informational housing list. (Completion June 1, 2009)
2. Offer information sessions on the need for providers and individuals to offer housing to ex-offenders, to reduce recidivism and keep our community safe (including but not limited to identifying funding sources for housing)

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sixty-seven percent of the men returning to the community live at more than one address within the first year of release. The Housing instability within Lucas County is high and nearly one-third of ex-offenders move several times within the first year. Working with agencies, individuals and creating best practice policies relating to permanent housing for ex-offenders is crucial to the success of this minority population. Lucas County is currently underserved in providing permanent housing for ex-offenders, including sex offenders. However, working with local agencies and individuals, the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio seeks to improve access to stable permanent housing for all ex-offenders. (Source: ORDC 2007 annual report, Urban Institute Post-Release Survey)

### **Strategic Performance Goal**

Develop the accessibility of permanent housing through transitional and supportive housing programs within Lucas County for ex-offenders after incarceration.

### **Objective**

Increase the number of permanent housing opportunities for ex-offenders within Lucas County by 35% within 5 years.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

2009 Establish a baseline of permanent housing opportunity slots for ex-offenders

2010 Increase the baseline by 7% each year through 2013.

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

1. Classify the number of permanent housing units currently designated for ex-offenders. To be completed by June 1, 2009 by Housing Committee.
2. Increase strategies for increasing designated housing units by 25% through 2013; including the voucher programs. Identify additional funding opportunities at the local, state and federal levels. Additionally, the committee will meet with the City of Toledo Neighborhood and Development Departments, the Volunteers of America, and The Cherry Street Mission to develop guidelines for ex-offenders. Completion by July 1, 2009

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Mental Health is a cornerstone of health and wellness for individuals, families and communities. Limited and timely access to mental health treatment and medication is not only a public health issue, but also raises serious concerns regarding public safety. In 2007, 1,090 inmates were released back to Lucas County after being incarcerated in an ODRC Institution, 45% without any further supervision requirements. Thirty-three percent of all inmates sentenced to ODRC from Lucas County have been identified as having mental health related needs. The current process by which ex-offenders access timely mental health treatment and medication is inadequately designed to minimize

public safety and health concerns. The Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio seeks to improve access to treatment services and medication for all ex-offenders thereby improving public health and safety. (Source; ODMH Budget Testimony 2009, ODRC CY 2007 release by county report, ODRC 2007 Lucas County inmate profile)

### **Strategic Performance Goal**

Enhance the accessibility of mental health treatment services and medications for all ex-offenders after release.

### **Objective**

Over the next 5 years establish a system whereby all ex-offenders can obtain mental health treatment including medications within 14 days of their release.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

2009: Establish current timeline for ex-offenders to receive services and medication.

2010: Reduce identified timeline incrementally through 2013 to meet desired outcome.

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

1. Identify the number of days it currently takes for an ex-offender to engage in treatment services and obtain medications.
  - a. Timeline - Completed by September 1, 2009
  - b. Owner – Substance Abuse/Mental Health Committee
2. Identify strategies for decreasing length of time to obtain services and medications, including but not limited to: identifying alternative payer sources, implementing best practices for serving mental health offenders, engaging the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Lucas County in systematic improvements designed to raise the priority level of ex-offenders seeking services,
  - a. Timeline – Identify desired strategies by March 1, 2010
  - b. Identification of funding sources will be ongoing
  - c. Meet with Mental Health and Recovery Services Board by January 1, 2010 and then annually
  - d. Owners – Substance abuse/Mental Health Committee

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Substance abuse treatment is an essential component of establishing positive, long term behavioral change. Failing to provide this essential service drives up the costs of

many systems and squanders unknown human potential. Fifty-seven percent of ODRC inmates from Lucas County indicate they have never participated in treatment while in the community, and 90% of inmates will not receive treatment while incarcerated. Treatment is proven to reduce crime by as much as 80% and arrests by as much as 64%. The Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio seeks to improve access to treatment services for all ex-offenders. (Source; ODADAS Budget Testimony 2009, ODRC 2007 Lucas County inmate profile)

### **Strategic Performance Goal**

Enhance the accessibility of substance abuse treatment services for all ex-offenders after release.

### **Objective**

Increase the number of outpatient treatment slots designated for ex-offenders by 20% within 5 years.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

2009: Establish base line of designated outpatient treatment slots

2010: Increase baseline by 5% each year through 2013.

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

- 1) Identify the number of outpatient treatment slots currently designated for ex-offenders.
  - i. Timeline – Completed by September 1, 2009
  - ii. Owner – Substance Abuse/Mental Health Committee
  
- 2) Identify strategies for increasing designated treatment slots by 20% through 2013, including but no limited too: entering into MOU's with current providers to carve out slots, identify additional funding opportunities at the local, state, federal level; meet with the appropriate funding systems to institutionalize funding priority for ex-offenders.
  - i. Timeline – MOU's created by March 1, 2010, identification of funding sources will be ongoing, meet with Mental Health and Recovery Services Board annually.
  - ii. Owners – Substance abuse/Mental Health Committee.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Seventy percent of the ODRC inmates from Lucas County admit to prior alcohol abuse, while 89% admit to prior drug abuse. Twenty-nine percent of ODRC inmates from Lucas County admit to being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time they committed their offense. TASC, a high accountability recovery support model operating within Lucas County, has shown success in improving treatment outcomes while reducing the likelihood of recidivism. However, despite its effectiveness, TASC does not have the current capacity to serve ODRC supervised offenders at this time. It is

desirable to build capacity within TASC to provide high accountability recovery support services to improve the use of existing scarce resources while improving public safety. (Source; ODRC 2007 Lucas County inmate profile, www.lucastasc.org, SOSP Research)

### **Strategic Performance Goal**

Enhance the accountability and continuity of substance abuse treatment services for all ODRC supervised offenders.

### **Objective**

Expand TASC's capacity to be able to serve 300 Adult Parole Authority supervised offenders within 5 years.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

2009: Establish funding strategies that will expand TASC's capacity to provide the desired service.

2010 - 2013: Increase TASC's capacity annually by 75 APA supervised offenders.

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

- 1) Identify funding opportunities to expand high accountability recovery support services.
  - i. Timeline – ongoing
  - ii. Owner – Substance Abuse/Mental Health Committee and TASC Executive Director
- 2) Submit at least two funding applications per year to expand TASC services to APA supervised offenders annually.
  - i. Timeline – as dictated by funding sources
  - ii. Owners – Substance abuse/Mental Health Committee and TASC Executive Director

## **FAMILY SUPPORT**

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report, more than 25 million children live apart from their biological fathers, which is 1 out of every 3 (34.5%) children in America. Nearly 2 in 3 (65%) African American children live in father-absent homes. In 2007, the ODRC population was 92.41% male and nearly half of them were African American. In the State of Ohio, 23% of children live in homes with their mother as the only head of the household. Children in father-absent homes are five times more likely to be poor and have a significantly higher probability of being incarcerated than those in mother-father families; youths who never had a father in the household experienced the highest probability of incarceration. In addition, youths are more at risk of first substance use

without a highly involved father in their life. Each unit increase in father involvement is associated with a 1% reduction in substance use.

Prison-based programs for inmates can enhance parenting skills, treat addictions, increase literacy, raise educational level, and prepare inmates for outside of prison. However, for various reasons these programs are not readily available in American Prisons. Inmates' relationships are substantially burdened by incarceration. Separation of a spouse or a partner creates enormous strains on a relationship, frequently ending the relationship. The individual in prison is removed from the family in a psychological sense as well as physically absent.

These facts show the importance of uniting, educating, supporting, and coaching the reentry individual and the family.

### **Strategic Performance Goals**

1. Strengthen family relationships for the offender to help reduce risk of repeat incarceration
2. Enhance communication skills through hands-on training sessions in order to foster a creative atmosphere for trust
3. Provide tangible tools to equip families to handle everyday life events
4. Present Parenting and Childhood Developmental Education

### **Objective**

Over the next five (5) years, establish a Case Management Program that is a comprehensive solution-based assessment to systematically assess and provide supportive services appropriate to each family.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

2009: Implement Case Management Program with current reentry individuals and their families

2010: Assess, support, and educate the families through resources, services, classes and workshops to strengthen the family structure and support systems.

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

- 1) June 2009- Partners meet for collaborative methods, planning, and timeline responsibilities. Complete Memorandum of Understanding with correctional facilities and contracted partner completed. Provide staff training for policies, procedures, curriculum, and staff empowerment.
- 2) July 2009 – on-going -- Implementation of program outreach and public announcement of grant award and program. Classes and workshops' curriculum finalized. Program begins within correctional institutions. Referrals made to program. Family Development Specialist assigned with families, intake and assessment completed, educational and supportive services begin. Classes and workshops implemented.

- 3) January 2010 – on going - Case management with families' progresses, support services and referrals as applicable. Exit interviews and post surveys. Evaluation of outcomes reviewed, additions and/or corrections monitored. Collaborations assessed in regards to outcomes.

## **HEALTH**

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Lucas County, 19.5% of adults do not have healthcare coverage, which is higher than state and national averages (Ohio Family Health Survey 2008). Those with low incomes and no employment are more likely to not have coverage. Gaps in healthcare coverage result in less preventive healthcare, meaning minor issues can become major. Access to preventive healthcare services, including prescription medication, is an essential component of establishing positive, long-term behavioral changes. Failing to provide access to primary care and needed healthcare services drives up the costs of many systems and squanders unknown human potential. Many ex-offenders leave with a 2-week supply of a prescription to treat mental illness or other conditions and no knowledge of how to establish a medical home to continue medical care. Thus, many ex-offenders stop their treatment, which often results in behaviors that lead to new offenses. Simply connecting ex-offenders to Toledo-Lucas County CareNet, which provides low-income, uninsured residents of Lucas County with a medical home at one of the clinics run by NHA or the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department and provides access to most needed healthcare services at no cost or on a sliding fee scale, could address this need. The Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio seeks to improve access to healthcare for all ex-offenders.

### **Strategic Performance Goal**

Enhance the accessibility to a medical home and needed healthcare services for all ex-offenders after release by enrolling ex-offenders in Medicaid or Toledo-Lucas County CareNet if they meet eligibility criteria.

### **Objective**

Increase the number of Ex-Offenders enrolled in Toledo-Lucas County CareNet by 20% within 5 years.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

2009: Establish baseline of ex-offenders that are members of CareNet.

2010: Increase baseline by 5% each year through 2013.

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

- 1) Identify the number of ex-offenders currently enrolled in CareNet.
  - i. Timeline – Completed by September 1, 2009

- ii. Owner – Substance Abuse/Mental Health Committee & CareNet.
- 2) Identify strategies for increasing the number of ex-offenders enrolled in CareNet by 20% through 2013, including but not limited to: entering into MOU's with current providers to carve out slots and meet prescription medication needs, identifying additional funding opportunities at the local, state, federal level; meeting with the appropriate funding systems to institutionalize funding priority for ex-offenders.
- i. Timeline – MOU's created by March 1, 2010, identification of funding sources will be ongoing, meet with CareNet medical home sites annually.
  - ii. Owners – Substance abuse/Mental Health Committee & CareNet.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION**

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the United States, today there are over 2.3 million people incarcerated behind bars compared to 200,000 in 1970. While African-Americans are only 13% of the United States population, African-Americans are 51% of the prison population. More than half of the Lucas County offenders are unemployed at the time of intake. (Source: Profile of Lucas County Intake 2007 Sample). In addition, 46.6% of offenders in Lucas County have an education that is less than a high school diploma.

The barriers facing ex-offenders are numerous; better policies, programs, and investments can help these ex-offenders succeed. Connecting the emerging green economy can lead to jobs.

### **Strategic Performance Goals**

1. Increase the number and percent of ex-offenders successfully participating in and completing job training/preparation programs.
2. Increase the number and percent of ex-offenders successfully participating in and completing advanced educational opportunities.
3. Increase the number and percent of ex-offenders successfully employed in the community.

### **Objective**

1. Establish 3 employed ex-offender support groups within two years.
2. Provide access to entrepreneurial training to 50 ex-offenders annually.
3. Aid 50 ex-offenders annually to attend college
4. Support 25 ex-offenders annually as they attempt to enter into construction apprenticeship programs

5. Promote bonding programs by facilitating two community forums annually regarding its benefits.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

2009 – Establish at least one employed ex-offender support group  
25 ex-offenders successfully complete the entrepreneurial training  
35 ex-offenders begin attending college  
15 ex-offender enter into construction apprenticeship programs  
1 community forum on bonding is held

2010-2013

Establish two additional employed ex-offender support groups (three groups running annually)  
50 ex-offenders successfully complete the entrepreneurial training program  
50 ex-offender enroll into college annually  
25 ex-offenders enter into construction apprenticeship programs annually  
2 Forums on bonding are held annually.

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

- 1) Employed ex-offender support groups – Work with agencies that support ex-offenders and structure support groups around those who have succeeded in finding employment. This group could provide job leads, advice and support to those having difficulty finding a job upon re-entry.
- 2) Entrepreneurial Training – Work with ex-offenders and help them start their own businesses. Programs that teach entrepreneurial skill provide an opportunity for individuals to utilize their own skills in starting a new company. Over time, this new company may be able to hire other ex-offenders upon release.
- 3) Attend college – Going to school and developing skills in high-demand areas may put the individual at a competitive advantage resulting in potential employers overlooking the person’s past. Developing skills in areas such as computer technology, energy and other “green jobs” careers, for example, will meet a growing need for businesses.
- 4) Enter into construction apprenticeship programs – Construction trades have apprenticeship programs that will allow an individual to learn a lifelong skill. Many trades do not have prohibitions against ex-offenders and with projected demand for workers in skilled construction trades there are likely to be many opportunities to earn while learning.
- 5) Promote bonding programs – Federal Bonding Programs make it easier for employers to hire workers with a criminal background although many employers do not realize this opportunity exists. Promoting these programs in the business community might open up new doors to employment.

## **MENTORING**

### **Statement of the Problem**

There are approximately some 30,000 individuals currently within the state of Ohio's correctional institution. Of that number, many will only be incarcerated for a year or less. An average of 1,200 (annually) will return to Lucas County. Unfortunately, because of the numerous challenges these ex-offenders encounter (employment, housing, labeling, lack of support, etc.), many will find themselves returning to the old life, and thus, back in prison.

A 2007 study done by Professor Byron Johnson of Baylor University (The Role of Religion) shows that there would be a great potential to reduce recidivism by as much as 17% if the religious community, in partnering with a number of other social programs, would engage the offenders prior to their release. Consequently, Project FBI (Fathers Being Involved), in partnership with CPR (Community Partners in Reentry), has chosen to address the issue of mentoring.

As the faith-based arm of the Re-entry Coalition of Northwest Ohio, Project FBI is seeking those within the faith-based community to offer support and to engage 120 offenders prior to their release, particularly mentorship to all who are serious about not returning to prison. These mentors would initiate the relationship 3-6 months prior to the offender's release, and maintain that mentor/mentee relationship for as much as 12-18 months.

### **Strategic Performance Goal**

To connect offenders with positive, inspiring support prior to their release and maintaining that relationship for up to 12-18 months; thus, reducing the risk of recidivism.

### **Objective**

Reduce the number of ex-offenders returning back to prison with our target group by at least 45% over the next 5 years.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

Projected Number of Offenders going home to stay over the next 5 years are:

2009: # 9%

2010: # 18%

2011: # 27%

2012: # 36%

2013: # 45%

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

Each objective will be divided into the major tasks that need to be done to complete the objective. An agency owner (or owners) will be noted, along with the "due dates" or timelines for the achievement of the specific tasks, and ultimately, the objective itself.

## **LEGAL ISSUES**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many ex-offenders face substantial civil legal problems after release. Such legal issues often have been left unresolved for months or years while the prisoner was incarcerated. These legal problems often prevent the ex-offender from maintaining stable housing and employment, two of the biggest predictive factors for whether an ex-offender is likely to return to prison or face homelessness or other severe hardships. Without legal assistance from a volunteer private attorney or a local legal aid organization, many of these problems are virtually impossible for an ex-offender to solve on his or her own.

### **Strategic Performance Goal**

To reduce recidivism by early identification and intervention to resolve legal issues that will interfere with an ex-offender's ability to maintain stable employment and housing.

To develop forms, checklists and other resource materials to help ex-offenders, their mentors and their families understand how to prevent or mitigate frequently occurring legal problems.

To recruit and support volunteer attorneys and law students who will assist ex-offenders, their mentors and their families in resolving legal issues.

### **Objective**

Recruit, train and support a panel of 30 to 40 lawyers and students who would assist re-entering ex-offenders in dealing with common civil law problems.

Increase by 50% over 5 years the number of ex-offenders who successfully resolve the following types of civil legal problems during their first year of release: debt collection or child support cases which lead to wage garnishments; driver's license suspensions due to unpaid court fines or unpaid child support; identity theft issues which lead to inaccurate credit reports or government records; access to public benefits, including medical assistance, food stamps, disability benefits and job training programs; access to public housing or subsidized apartments; family law disputes which cause difficulty in maintaining housing or employment.

### **Strategic Performance Outcome**

Increase the number of ex-offenders successfully resolving common legal problems during the first year of release:

FY 2009:	60 cases resolved
FY 2010:	100 cases resolved
FY 2011:	125 cases resolved
FY 2012:	150 cases resolved
FY 2013:	180 cases resolved

### **Key Strategies, Time Frames**

1. Legal Aid of Western Ohio and the Toledo Bar Association Pro Bono Program will work with the Re-Entry Coalition steering committee, mentors and family support agencies to develop effective legal assessment and outreach programs.
2. Legal Aid of Western Ohio will develop training and support resources for volunteer attorneys and law students.
3. Volunteer attorneys and law students will meet at least once every two months with prisoners inside selected correctional facilities to evaluate legal needs prior to release.
4. Develop The Re-Entry Legal Corps:
  - a. Training and support for volunteer attorneys and law students
    - i. Legal Aid of Western Ohio would work with the Toledo Bar Pro Bono Program and the University of Toledo School of Law to train and support a panel of 30 to 40 lawyers and students who would be available to assist re-entering prisoners in dealing with common civil law problems.
    - ii. The volunteer lawyers, assisted by law students, would meet with prisoners inside correctional institutions prior to release and evaluate the most significant legal issues the ex-offenders are likely to face after release. Volunteer attorneys then would directly represent ex-offenders in dealing with these problems in court, or assist them in resolving the problems through negotiation or mediation programs. Where the ex-offender gives permission, attorneys involved in the project also would work closely with ex-offenders' mentors and family members to identify and resolve legal issues.
  - b. Complex advocacy to resolve systemic issues facing re-entering prisoners
    - i. The project also would involve staff from Legal Aid of Western Ohio and volunteer private lawyers to handle more complex cases that could resolve issues affecting large numbers of ex-offenders. Examples might include: seeking changes in public housing policies that overly exclude applicants with criminal records; dealing with employment discrimination issues on behalf of ex-offenders who are denied employment or are fired after initial probation periods; seeking easier access to expungement of minor crimes; bankruptcy and other steps needed to deal with unmanageable debts; resolution of significant child support or parental rights issues; and other recurring legal problems which interfere with meaningful economic opportunity or housing stability.
  - c. Checklists and training materials
    - i. The Re-Entry Legal Corps also will develop a legal needs checklist, and a reference manual and training curriculum for attorneys and

students who participate in the project. The project also will develop self-help forms and instruction packets to assist re-entering ex-offenders in dealing with routine legal matters on their own. Educational materials and forms also would be developed in a web-based format, so the materials can be easily accessible to mentors and family members as well as ex-offenders.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is becoming more and more important that reentry be recognized as a critical part of our society. By taking initiative and developing a solid coordinated effort, the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio is already working towards improving the collaborative endeavors in Lucas County and the surrounding areas through networking and communication between organizations and agencies that would help to correct the challenges that ex-offenders face upon their release. The Coalition's structure allows its membership to have valued input in decisions and to be a part of the process. The Coalition has membership partners, organizations, and agencies that are prepared to work towards lowering rates of recidivism in Northwest Ohio by facing the challenges of ex-offenders in the crucial areas of housing, employment, education, health, family support, legal issues, mental health, substance abuse, and mentoring. By taking on these issues, the Coalition expects to reduce rates of recidivism by 50% within a five-year period.