



Portage County Reentry Coalition
Five Year Strategic Plan
2010-2015

Submitted by
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of
Portage County

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February 2011

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Mission and Responsibilities

The mission of the Portage County Reentry Coalition is to bring together dedicated, experienced individuals from government, criminal justice, social service, faith institutions, and the community to understand and develop efforts to create opportunities for successful offender reentry, reduction in recidivism, and enhancement of public safety. Emphasizing employment, housing, alcohol and other drug treatment, education, transportation needs, supportive family and personal relationships, mental and physical health services, and mentorship, the Coalition will encourage and support the collaborative delivery of evidence-based best practice model interventions to offenders at all stages of their involvement with the criminal justice system.

The Reentry Coalition will assume a supportive role to agencies, institutions, organizations, and individuals who work with incarcerated offenders, ex-offenders and their families, communities, organizations, and individuals that are interested in or already committed to improving reentry outcomes in the County. The efforts of the PCRC will be informed by adherence to clear, concise goals and outcomes, utilizing effective and appropriate screening, assessment, and measurement instruments. This should enhance the credibility of the reentry effort to stakeholders and the community. It will be important, over the five year life of the strategic plan, to assess the effectiveness of interventions and the quality and utility of the performance measures being used. An important responsibility of the Coalition will be to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the strategic plan. This responsibility will involve evaluating organizational relationships and policy performance, keeping in mind the needs of the ex-offender, as well as the community.

Formation of the Portage County Reentry Coalition

The timing of the creation of the PCRC and the present implementation of Portage County's 5-year strategic plan benefits greatly from a national interest in reentry improvements over the past decade. With the Second Chance Act of 2008, this widespread interest has led to increased budget funding for reentry to an extent not seen before. The Ohio Department of Corrections has been able to access Federal funding for reentry sufficient to support local reentry coalitions throughout the state. In 2009, Family & Community Services, Inc. submitted a grant proposal for an Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant for Reentry Projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The proposal requested funding for the creation of the Portage County Re-entry Coalition, the creation of the position of Coalition Coordinator/Needs Assessor and other support staff, and of a Case Management Assistant/Live-In Support Person. Though some other positions requested in the initial proposal were not approved for funding, the Category II grant was awarded.

The Portage County Reentry Coalition came into being on March 15, 2010, when the Department of Public Safety, through OCJS and in collaboration with state agency partners, selected Portage County and thirteen other sites across the state to receive Justice Assistance Grant Reentry Program Awards totaling nearly \$4.7 million in federal economic stimulus funds focusing on offender reentry initiatives. Funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Portage County received a Development of Local Taskforce Reentry Programs category (Category II) award. The grantors believe that investments in community-based reentry programs should help to achieve a reduction in recidivism, and help ex-offenders to reintegrate into their communities. From the point of sentencing to release and beyond, reentry focuses on linking offenders with services specific to their needs through associations with community partners, families, justice professionals, and victims of crime.

In seeking consideration for the grant funding, Family & Community Services, Inc. had proposed the creation of a multi-agency coalition comprised of representatives from juvenile and

adult mental health treatment, substance use treatment, faith based, and court programs, for the enhancement of existing reentry programming within the county by the expansion of services focused on assisting with transition from jail to the community. No coalition had previously existed in Portage County. On May 1, 2010, the position of Coalition Coordinator/Needs Assessor was filled, and the Coalition soon began to take shape. Since then, the PCRC has focused on organizing stakeholders identified as necessary to the operation of a successful Coalition by the Second Chance Act guidelines. In addition, a thorough needs assessment has been conducted to determine the current barriers to successful reentry for juveniles and adults who are transitioning out of incarceration in Portage County, and has used this as a foundation to develop the 5-year strategic plan. The PCRC expects these initial short-term goals to be completed by January 2011.

A program that has been a key first step towards establishing a reentry model for Portage County has been the Family & Community Services, Inc. On Track to Recovery (OTTR) project. Already in existence at the time of the grant award, the Number 12 Recovery House is currently the only residential facility for adult male ex-offenders in Portage. This facility is a three-quarter way house for adult males needing residential support, and, typically, substance abuse and/or mental health treatment. The Number 12 Recovery House can provide temporary housing for up to six male non-violent drug/alcohol offenders. The Case Manager Assistant/Live-In Support position has been supported by the JAG grant, and is considered to be an important aspect of the residential project, providing on-site support to assist individuals in maintaining their sobriety and refraining from future crimes leading to additional incarcerations. As part of the OTTR program, all individuals are required to participate in community based support groups and self-help groups such as A.A. This includes support groups on-site at The Number 12 Recovery House, in addition to formal treatment to increase their chances of recovery. Using the best practice approach of Supported Housing, Family & Community Services, Inc. has been able to continue this program through the initial funds coming from the grant. Through the Supportive

Housing model, participants are integrated into the local community and encouraged to develop more stable lifestyles. It is hoped that this project will be able to expand and increase the opportunities for transitional housing for ex-offenders. Residents participate in Intensive Outpatient Treatment (IOP) and/or individual counseling sessions held at Family & Community Services, Inc. This part of the program serves other adult male and female ex-offenders with alcohol and drug-related issues who are not affiliated with Number 12 Recovery House.

Key Principles of the Portage County Reentry Coalition

The Coalition's overriding goals are to: (1) reintegrate offenders into society, (2) reduce recidivism, and (3) maintain public safety. The Coalition is committed to a recidivism reduction of 50% over a five year period. A baseline recidivism rate will be established as a benchmark for subsequent follow up under the required periods for reporting on results and accomplishments.

1. Collaboration – Realize that the most effective collaborations are interest-based, allowing each partner agency to getting what they need to effectively contribute to the reentry effort.
2. Better information – Ensure effective decision-making at the individual, agency, and community level. On behalf of the ex-offender, this means emphasizing assessment of risk and criminogenic needs, using tested and reliable screening tools. For agencies, it means sharing data both on processes and outcomes, so that effective and dynamic goals and practices can be determined. For the community, it means greater transparency about the reentry process, to inform local residents, professionals, employers and organizations.
3. Accountability – Community safety is enhanced by reentry approaches that foster both greater agency accountability for results and individual accountability through more effective community supervision.

4. Use resources effectively – Provide better treatment services, access to employment and housing, education and attention to other needs of the ex-offender. Optimize existing resources when possible, while exploring the need and feasibility of greater investments, keeping in mind the best safety interests of communities within the county.

5. Community engagement – Inform the community of the benefits of support for effective reentry efforts. Outreach to business, religious, and political leaders creates a climate of trust and can bring fresh ideas to reentry planning work.

6. Focus on outcomes – Reliable data and meaningful measures are essential to ensuring good outcomes. Implement evidence-based practices, utilizing proven intervention models that include mechanisms for acquiring data that can be linked to outcome analysis.

Crime in Portage County

During the past decade, crime data compiled by the FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) data collection systems for Portage County, Ohio indicates that reported crime in Portage County has climbed by 51 percent. In the course of that same period (2000-2008) violent crime rose by 22 percent. Taken as a whole, the crime rates are a sign of a rapid worsening in crime in Portage County. Between 1999 and 2008 there were 26,560 total crimes reported in Portage County, Ohio (1,236 of them violent). This includes 12 murders, 233 rapes, and close to twenty thousand thefts (including 1,289 automobile thefts). During this period, on average, someone was a victim of a crime every 3 hours in Portage. A 2007 analysis of the UCR data by the Cleveland Plain Dealer included Portage County in a depiction of aggregate crime rates. Not all areas of the county report to the UCR, but of those that did report, the following rates were indicated:

<u>Violent crimes per 1,000 residents</u>	<u>Property crimes per 1,00 residents</u>
Kent, Windham – 2.01 to 4 Ravenna, Aurora, Reminderville – 0 to 1	Windham – 40.01 to 62 Kent, Ravenna, Brimfield – 20.01 to 40 Reminderville, Aurora - 10.01 to 20

The Portage County Prosecutor's Office reported that for 2008, their criminal division handled over 6,000 criminal misdemeanor cases, including 1,508 DUI cases and 434 domestic violence cases. They received 1,267 felony reports from the 17 police agencies operating in Portage County, including 26 felony DUI cases, 96 felonious assault cases, 75 felony domestic violence cases, 171 felony child abuse cases, 280 felony drug cases, 75 felony burglary cases, and 145 felony theft cases, 38 robbery cases, 78 receiving stolen property cases, and 60 felony child support cases. In 2008, 769 new felony cases were filed in the Portage County Common Pleas Court in 2008, each representing an individual who was charged with one or more felony level crimes, an 11% increase over CY 2007. Fifty-eight new cases were brought to the Appellate Division in the 11th District Court of Appeals; and 13 cases were pending in the Ohio Supreme Court and one case in the United States Supreme Court. Of these Appellate cases, 95 percent arose from criminal matters. The Victim/Witness Assistance Division assisted 2,042 victims of crime in 2008 – 868 in the Municipal Courts, 905 in the Common Pleas Courts, and 269 in the Juvenile Court.

In calendar year 2009, the Portage County Jail served approximately 5300 inmates according to the Portage County Sheriff's Department, which operates the facility. Data on recidivism has not been accessible at a local level; but jail administrators believe that as many as 40% of the individuals incarcerated in 2009 were individuals with prior incarcerations. In calendar year 2008, a total of 185 Portage County adults were discharged from the state prison system. The average length of stay for these individuals was 1.87 years, and 22.7% were incarcerated due to drug offenses. Of these, 90.8 % were males, and the average age at release was 36. Of these, 73.5% were White, 25.4% were Black, and 1.1% were Hispanic. The number of Black prisoners is notably disproportionate to County demographics; i.e., only 4.5 % of

County residents are Black, but this group makes up one-fourth of the prison population. This disproportion is consistent in both Portage County Jail and the Juvenile Detention Center.

Juvenile Focus

In fiscal year 2009 there were 56 juvenile adjudications in Portage, with 14 of the youths (25%) admitted to the state Department of Youth Services. All of these were males, between the ages of 15 and 17. Over one-third (35.7%) of the youths committed were Black, although the county population is only about 4.5% Black. Of these 11 juveniles, seven (7) or 64% have re-offended and been incarcerated once again. In calendar year 2008, a total of 234 Portage County juveniles were served at the local juvenile detention facility. Of that group, 60% have re-offended and have been re-admitted to the juvenile detention facility.

Portage County Jail

More than 5000 offenders a year go through Portage County Jail and the Portage County Detention Center. Many of these individuals end up on probation. During the period of community supervision while on probation, ex-offenders have a chance to reintegrate, availing themselves of a variety of supportive programs. Yet, whether coming from prison, jail, or detention, ex-offenders face barriers that may have merely been postponed during their incarceration. In most cases, these barriers have been made more problematic due to the very fact of the ex-offender's conviction and confinement. Even individuals who spend little time behind bars for their offenses may still be burdened with the restrictions and obligations of probation or parole, and the stigmatization that accompanies a criminal record.

Not surprisingly, the weeks just before and just after the release of the individual are a critical period of time. Unemployment, housing issues, avoidance of antisocial associates, family separation, etc., are often extremely difficult to deal with in the first days and months following release. National studies indicate that recidivism rates are highest right after release. It has been reported that thirty percent of ex-prisoners are arrested for a new felony or serious misdemeanor

in the 6 months after release. The risk declines by a third over the following 6 months. Even offenders who are well-prepared cannot predict the state of the environment into which they are released. Local economic changes, unavailability of affordable housing, and changes in family support may have occurred during the time of the prisoner's incarceration. Just having to negotiate bureaucratic requirements such as obtaining state photo identification and social security card, reinstating (insurance-covered) driving privileges, enrolling in Medicaid enrollment, providing for child support obligations, and clearing bench warrants can quickly use up the limited resources of newly-released offenders, especially those who have estranged themselves from positive social support.

Prison Focus

Portage County had 185 individuals returning from prison in the 2008. Recidivism rates for the county average around 33%. By comparison, the adjacent county of Summit had eight times more ex-prisoners returning to the county in 2008, and higher recidivism rates (39.8%). Summit County has 3.5 times the population of Portage. Summit also has a higher percentage of Black residents, a segment of the population with significantly higher incarceration rates. In Portage, Black individuals represent 4.5 % of the overall county population, but 25% of the incarcerated population. Summit has larger urban areas and higher concentrations of people living in poverty. They also have a considerably larger criminal justice, community corrections, substance abuse and mental health infrastructure, and larger budgets. Summit County, for instance, has dedicated drug, mental health, and reentry courts within their county court system. Summit is also home to Oriana House, a multi-service organization which interacts with large numbers of ex-offenders through its Community-Based Correction Facility (CBCF), a large Residential Institutional Probation (RIP) work-release program, and other programs. Some version of these types of facilities and programs may be desirable for Portage County agencies to adopt, though on a smaller scale. Summit and other counties have already implemented some of the programs

identified in the recent reentry needs assessment for Portage County to reduce recidivism. Part of this strategic plan will involve communicating with our neighboring counties regarding their self-evaluation of innovative programs.

The Ohio Department of Corrections provides a wide array of programs for prisoners who wish to improve job skills, enhance their education, deal with substance abuse issues, and participate in groups and counseling opportunities designed to improve positive cognitive-behavior changes. When released to Portage County, ex-prisoners who are on parole are encouraged to find ways to continue these activities when released. Ex-prisoners who serve full sentences may actually be at a disadvantage in that, while there may be community social support, there is not the immediate necessity of following supervision guidelines. Housing and employment may be more difficult to obtain than when they first entered prison. In particular, the felony record that follows ex-offenders can exclude them from supported housing and certain types of employment. Relatively few potential employers openly encourage ex-offenders to apply. Though there are lists maintained at probation, parole, and social service agencies of employers who are willing to consider hiring ex-offenders, the number of employers willing to hire seems to be decreasing. And, many of these offer entry-level positions that provide incomes insufficient to secure and maintain private rental housing. With an average age at release of 36 years (2008), ex-offenders coming from prison back to Portage County may consider entering, or re-entering the work-force to work low-paying, low-prestige jobs traditionally filled by considerably younger individuals to be a demeaning prospect. And younger individuals leaving prison may lack basic academic skills and fundamental job preparedness. Prisoners leaving the state corrections system in Portage often return to areas of Ravenna, Kent, Windham, etc., that are economically-depressed and offer even fewer job opportunities, raising the issue of transportation as another barrier, as ex-offenders would need to travel to find work.

A considerable portion of the current reentry services activity in Portage involves the more than 5000 offenders that go through Portage County Jail every year. While prisoners in Ohio

Department of Corrections facilities have access to a variety of education, employment, social skills, and substance abuse programs over longer periods of time, offenders who are housed for shorter periods in time in the county correction facilities may not be able to receive more than brief interventions related to issues that will affect their reentry efforts. This also places a larger burden on programs in the county, as ex-offenders tend to have a multiplicity of needs that cannot be addressed in the relatively short periods of time during which they are jailed. It also strains the referral capabilities of many agencies. The reentry needs assessment completed at the end of 2010 identified specific gaps in Portage County services but also pointed out successful programs which could be improved and enhanced by strategic collaborations and implementation of new evidence-based practices and innovative programming.

Needs Assessment Synopsis

Toward the end of 2010, a reentry needs assessment was conducted in Portage County. This process identified nine primary potential barriers to successful reentry. Key stakeholders were asked to rank them in terms of their potential negative impact on reentry efforts. Then respondents were asked to rank factors that might have a positive impact on ex-offenders' chances for successful reentry.

Barriers (Negative)	Adult	Juvenile	Impact (Positive)	Adult	Juvenile
Employment	1	4	Prosocial Attitudes	<u>1</u>	2
Housing	3	<u>7</u>	Prosocial Peer Network	4	2
Substance Abuse	2	2	Being Substance –Free	<u>1</u>	1
Education	5	3	Employment-related Skills	2	6
Family Relationships	7	<u>1</u>	Family Support	6	4
Transportation	6	6	Access to Case Management	3	3
Mental Health	4	<u>1</u>	Good Mental Health	5	1
Physical Health	8	<u>7</u>	Good Physical Health	8	7
Immediate Needs	9	5	Educational Advancement	7	5
		(_tie)		(_tie)	(_tie)

Based on these surveys, protocols of questions were created that allowed more in-depth responses to issues involving reentry in Portage County. Individual interviews with a variety of providers were conducted over several months. All members of the Portage County Reentry Coalition were interviewed, along with other local reentry supporters, reentry court judges, as well as some members of coalitions in counties adjacent to Portage County. Also, questionnaires were offered to several different categories of offenders:

- a. Presently-incarcerated adult offenders
- b. Adult ex-offenders currently on supervision (probation or parole)
- c. Adult ex-offenders formerly on supervision
- d. Presently-incarcerated juvenile offenders
- e. Juvenile ex-offenders currently on supervision
- f. Parents of juvenile offenders

These questionnaires were given to Portage County Adult Probation, Portage County Jail, and Portage County Juvenile Detention & Probation, and the regional Adult Parole Authority, to be distributed to individuals who represent the individual categories. All efforts were made to design questions so that it would not be possible for respondents to incriminate themselves concerning past criminal activity, including illegal drug use. After discussions with the primary administrators of the correction facilities, it was generally decided that despite assurances of confidentiality, formal consent documents which contain the individual's name or other traceable identifiers might discourage some from completing the surveys. However, copies of the consent document created for this project were provided to the administrators of the jail and detention facilities, so that prospective respondents could read and be advised of their rights as participants in this study. Adult Probation officers and Adult Parole Authority officers were asked to include a consent document with each survey provided to ex-offenders. Some respondents completed the consent forms, and others gave passive consent after being instructed as to their confidentiality rights. Juvenile ex-offenders who wished to complete the surveys did so with the knowledge that

there was complete confidentiality, that no demographic data would be collected - to avoid any unintentional identification, and that despite the lack of any foreseeable risk to them, they could choose not to complete the survey. Questions were limited to the identified reentry-related domains.

The primary measure of the success of the 5-year strategic plan is whether or not the individual re-offends. For the purposes of this strategic plan, recidivism is defined as “...a return to prison and/or jail with either a new conviction or as the result of a violation of the terms of supervision within 12 months of initial release.” This applies to the target population identified for the project. Even though those involved in reentry support (whether as professionals or as volunteers), are certainly concerned about a whole menu of possible life improvements for the ex-offender and his or her family, non-recidivism is a strong indicator of the efficacy of reentry programs and interventions.

A Five Year Strategic Reentry Plan for Portage County

Based upon the Portage County Reentry Needs Assessment, interaction with State reentry experts, interviews, discussions, and several quarterly meetings with local reentry stakeholders, as well as considerable research on the topic of reentry, we have created a five year strategic plan for accomplishing the goal of reducing recidivism by 50%, while maintaining public safety, and offering ex-offenders the best opportunities at reintegrating with their families and communities following incarceration.

Reentry Performance Goals and Outcomes

Following the guidelines offered by the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition, effective reentry practices must:

- Use a holistic, systemic, and inclusive approach that involves state, county, city, and township stakeholders, as well as community organizations;
- Adopt strategies that draw on evidenced-based approaches and practices;
- Target high- to moderate-risk offenders through the use of validated assessment tools;
- Emphasize geographic areas in which a disproportionate number of offenders are drawn from and return to;
- Incorporate assessment and case management tools targeting continuous reentry planning, beginning at the point of admission to the criminal justice system, and working through pre- and post-release;
- Embrace a commitment to the continuous and appropriate delivery of drug treatment, medical care, job training and placement, educational services, and/or other services essential to reentry; and,
- Provide evaluations of reentry programs using, when feasible, random assignment and controlled studies to determine effectiveness of programs offered.

Target Population and Selection Overview

Our target population will be all Portage County adult men and women, as well as juvenile boys and girls who are incarcerated, on probation or parole, and those formerly incarcerated or on probation or parole. Since the primary goal is to reduce recidivism by 50% in 5 years, the initial target population will consist of adult and juvenile ex-offenders determined to be at medium to high-risk for recidivism, including those with substance dependence and/or mental health issues. The target population will also include those who experience multiple reentry barriers, but may not have primary substance dependence or mental health issues. Participants will be selected as a result of a risk-level agreement of specific screening and assessment tools, supported by the Court, probation/parole, counseling services, and employment and education specialists. Participants will be kept apprised of test results and professional recommendations throughout the process.

Selection criteria will be based on scientific evidence, as well as agreement by the participant that a particular intervention is appropriate. While the eventual goal is to serve all Portage County ex-offender needs, the exact number individuals who can receive necessary services will depend on available program funding. In addition to funding budgets, the number of adults served will depend on the capacity of county agencies currently working with the returning ex-offender.

We will be working with both adult and juvenile populations. The juvenile justice system in Portage serves a relatively small number of juveniles (compared to some nearby counties) returning from DYS detention facilities. Thus, it should be possible to track successful reentry rates vs. occurrences of recidivism in the juvenile ex-offender population. Portage County juvenile detention and probation departments have been collecting data that should accurately determine target numbers to be served by reentry programs. Once again, medium to high-risk youths will be given greatest priority.

Several recent major criminal justice research studies indicate that appropriate placement of ex-offenders within programs geared to their individual (recidivism) risk level is extremely important. To determine the correct placement of Portage County ex-offenders to existing and proposed programs, a selection process will involve examining Ohio Department of Corrections (ODC) which keeps records on charges for which individuals have been sentenced. Pending the implementation of the ORAS instruments, we will rely upon existing screening tools such as the LSI-R, SASSI, and YLS/CMI (juveniles). In addition, self-reports will be important. Offender surveys and questionnaires designed by the PCRC can be applied on an ongoing basis, with needed modifications, if necessary. The PCRC will work with Portage County Jail on strategies for increasing its ability to collect data to be shared with other stakeholders in the county and with the Ohio Ex-offender Reentry Coalition researchers. Many interventions are initiated at the jail, and it will be important to utilize the most effective referral process to connect ex-offenders with post-release treatment and other social supports. At present, Portage County Adult Probation & Juvenile Services conduct Pre-Sentence Investigations (PSI) when requested by the Courts. These are also very helpful in determining offender needs and appropriate interventions. It will also be essential that agencies and support services that assist reentering ex-offenders keep accurate records of the numbers of that population that they deal with in their services. At present, not all Portage County agencies organize their data in such a way as to separate ex-offenders from their overall service population.

We are looking primarily at two levels of geographical concentration – Portage’s larger urban areas- Kent, Ravenna, and Streetsboro, and the rural townships of the county, some of which contain small population centers (e.g. Windham) that contribute to the overall offender population.

As we implement the plan, we will be evaluating various options for structuring our overall reentry program. It is anticipated that a reentry program will begin shortly after the point at which an individual has been incarcerated. Uniform screenings and assessments will be given to

individuals along a continuum. These would be completed shortly after arrest, but, if the new Ohio Risk Assessment Survey (ORAS) instrument is to be used, they may be given at a number of different points during the individual's interaction with the criminal justice system. Along with capturing a variety of offender issues to be addressed, the ORAS will determine the level of risk at the time of the assessment, and the risk level will determine what type program the individual may participate in. As we continue to explore and initiate development of reentry programs we will be evaluating programs already in existence to determine how they may be improved, especially in the area of collaborative efforts.

We have developed a strategic plan timeline that structures our implementation priorities. For instance, employment has been seen as a key priority for reentry success by criminal justice personnel, social service providers, and ex-offenders themselves. At the same time, there are strong indications that changes towards prosocial thinking and behaviors are essential prerequisites to successful reentry, in that, without cognitive and behavioral changes, there is always a strong chance that criminogenic thinking will lead an ex-offender back to antisocial activities. So, it makes sense to determine if a particular offender is at risk to fail at reentry because of a strong focus on criminogenic attitudes. Getting a job may be important for such an individual, but employment alone may not be sufficient to overcome antisocial beliefs and attitudes. There are currently programs in most correction facilities that address prosocial thinking. It is important that ex-offenders involved in such programs are able to continue them after release. Likewise, for offenders with substance abuse and/or mental health issues it is essential that they continue without a break in the continuity of care or social support (AA, NA , etc.) In some cases, treatment will not be initiated until after release. It is crucial that newly-released prisoners, or those about to be released, are not placed on long waiting lists.

Strategic Plan Recommendations

I. Determine Target Population

- A. Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated male and female adults and juveniles, and their families.

Strategic Performance Goal

Identify incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals who qualify for Portage County Reentry Program.

Objectives

1. Establish criteria for inclusion in proposed Portage County Reentry Program
2. Identify incarcerated adults and adjudicated youth who meet inclusion criteria
3. Identify adult and juvenile ex-offenders who meet inclusion criteria
4. Determine possible strategies for identifying and dealing with specific needs of ex-offenders located in rural areas of the county .

Strategic Performance Outcome

- Dec 2011* 1. Identify yearly estimated capacity for Portage County Reentry Program
- Dec 2011* 2. Ex-offenders in rural locations will be identified and evaluated for access to Portage County reentry services.
- May 2015* 3. All qualified Portage County incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals will have had access to Portage County Reentry Program services.

II. Prosocial Attitudes

A. Statement of the Problem

Portage County needs coordination of programs that target criminogenic needs; reversal of antisocial beliefs and attitudes is extremely important in any effort to reduce recidivism.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Improve effectiveness of all reentry programming efforts by replacing antisocial attitudes and beliefs with prosocial thinking.
2. Create opportunities for offenders to replace anti-social networks of people, places, and things with pro-social alternatives.

Objectives

1. Explore how to incorporate evidence-based best practices for developing prosocial belief system in offenders using collaborative reentry programs, avoiding “one-size-fits all” approaches.
2. Examine current or potential use of programs like “Thinking for a Change,” “Getting It Right,” and Moral Reconciliation Therapy for all offenders.
3. Locate successful ex-offenders to join PCRC and/or help develop mentoring and “peer- alliance” programs.
4. Encourage more faith-based (FB) and community-based organizations (CBOs) interaction with reentry efforts of criminal justice and social service agencies.

Strategic Performance Outcome

- Aug 2011* 1. Determine best program curricula to motivate prosocial thinking in Portage County offenders. Develop resource guide.
- Aug 2011* 2. Begin to utilize 5 peer mentors and 2 ally groups for ex-offender support. Contact PC Adult Probation to locate good candidates.
- Jun 2011* 3. Add 3 faith-based members to PCRC to explore ways to connect more ex-offenders with FBPs that emphasize volunteerism and community service.

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator will collaborate with interested PCRC members to develop resource guide focusing on prosocial programs and activities.
- Coalition Coordinator will work with coalition members from Adult and Juvenile Probation, and Adult Parole Authority and other interested members to identify and recruit peer allies and mentors willing to organize and participate in ex-offender support groups.
- PCRC members will recommend and refer faith-based pastors and community leaders for inclusion in the PCRC.

III. Employment

A. Statement of the Problem

Employment readiness, workforce development, and vocational opportunities during incarceration serve too few offenders.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Enhance the variety, range, and accessibility of employment programs for offenders and ex-offenders.
2. Create county ex-offender employment services network.
3. Increase employment rate of ex-offenders in Portage County

Objectives

1. Create an employment subcommittee of the Portage County Reentry Coalition.
2. Develop matrix of services available to offenders (state and local correctional facilities) to increase potential opportunities for employment.
3. Increase number of GED, transitional education program, Literacy, ABLE, and similar certificate programs for ODRC and DYS facilities for Portage County offenders.
4. Expand access to WIA and other youth-related employment programs to increase opportunities for job placement for youth released from DYS and PC Detention.
5. Increase employment preparedness opportunities at Portage County Jail and Detention Center.

Strategic Performance Outcome

<i>Jun 2011</i>	1. Employment Subcommittee created
<i>Feb 2012</i>	2. Employment Service Matrix implemented
<i>May 2015</i>	3. Increase no. of DRC offenders offered employment services by 5% per year
<i>May 2015</i>	4. Increase no. of PC Jail offenders offered employment services by 10% per year
<i>May 2015</i>	5. Employment increase of 20% per year for adult ex-offenders from 2012 baseline.
<i>May 2015</i>	6. Employment increase of 20% per year for juvenile ex-offenders from 2012 baseline.

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator will contact key coalition partners to form PCRC Employment Subcommittee.
- Employment Subcommittee will organize an employment services matrix with strategies for collaboration among partners.

- Employment Subcommittee will explore ODRC and DYS employment services and work development programs for current and proposed links to county employment services.
- Employment Subcommittee will explore strategies to enhance employment services for individuals in county correctional facilities and for current and former probationers and parolees.

B. Statement of the Problem

Approximately 51% of youth released from The Ohio Department of Youth Services remain unemployed throughout the duration of parole supervision. This percentage is likely to be consistent among the population in county detention, as well.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Determine number of PC juveniles incarcerated or on parole or probation who are involved in vocational preparation initiatives to secure employment upon release.
2. Identify characteristics of individual juvenile offenders who do not become employed during the period of their parole or probation.
3. Increase employment for juvenile ex-offenders in PC.

Objective

1. Conduct research into vocational preparation activities for incarcerated juveniles and those on probation/parole.
2. Expand the Workforce Investment Jobs Reentry Program designed to teach job skills and to offer job coaching through mentoring.
3. Expand the Transitional Education Program to all DYS facilities through distance learning.
4. Increase vocational preparation activities in PC Detention Center & Juvenile Probation.
5. Decrease the percentage of juvenile ex-offenders who remain unemployed for the period of their community supervision by 25% per year for the period 1/2012-1/2015.

Strategic Performance Outcome

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| <i>Sep 2011</i> | 1. Evaluation of state and local vocational preparation activities completed |
| <i>Feb 2012</i> | 2. 20% more juveniles involved in county vocational preparation activities. |
| <i>May 2015</i> | 3. Increase no. of DYS offenders offered employment services by 10% per year |
| <i>May 2015</i> | 4. Employment increase of 20% per year for juvenile ex-offenders from 2012 baseline. |

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator and Employment Subcommittee will evaluate state and local vocational preparation activities to see which ones are most/least successful.
- All county stakeholders in PC juvenile justice efforts will work with coalition to achieve increases in juvenile enrollment in employment programs and to improve the rate of employment for juvenile ex-offenders in PC.

C. Statement of Problem

Presence of a criminal record discourages Portage County employers from hiring ex-offenders.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Broaden the range and accessibility of employment opportunities for offenders.
2. Educate Portage County employers about the positive aspects and financial incentives related to the hiring of ex-offenders.
3. Explore establishment of Business Advisory Committee(s) in Portage County

Objectives

1. Explore enactment of anti-discriminatory employment practice ordinances in Portage County, such as “Ban-the-Box” per Cincinnati, Ohio model.*
2. Make PC employers aware of Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and fidelity bond programs through media and direct information contacts.
3. Increase hires of county ex-offenders by Portage County employers by 10% per year for years 2012-2015.

Strategic Performance Outcome

- Nov 2011* 1. Meet or talk with State and local legislators about creating and enacting anti-discriminatory ordinances about the employment rights of ex-offenders.
- Sept 2011* 2. Portage County employer awareness initiative distributed throughout the county.
- Dec 2011* 3. Locate and recruit employers willing to serve on the PCRC coalition
- Aug 2011* 4. Determine baseline unemployment rate for ex-offenders.
- Dec 2012* 5. Ex-offender employment increased by 10% over Dec 2011 baseline number

* In August 2010, the Cincinnati City Council passed a motion in support of fair hiring. Cincinnati’s employment applications no longer request information on an applicant’s criminal history and background checks are conducted only after a contingent offer of employment has been made. If a criminal background check is the basis for denying employment, the applicant receives a copy of all documents containing criminal record information and is given at least 10 business days to dispute or correct the included information. Finally, when considering an applicant’s criminal history in making an employment decision, the Cincinnati Human Resources Department must consider certain criteria, including whether the past offense(s) directly relate to the job responsibilities, the age of the person at the time of the offense(s), and any documentation or testimony demonstrating an applicant’s rehabilitation.

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator and Employment subcommittee will work with county agencies (e.g. Jobs and Family Services) to develop a plan for communicating with legislators and key stakeholders about feasibility of changes to laws regarding fair hiring practices.
- Employment subcommittee will create and arrange distribution of employer awareness and ex-offender hiring benefit materials; plan and conduct job fair type events to link employers with ex-offenders.

IV. Substance Abuse

A. Statement of the Problem

Studies indicate that 86 percent of incoming inmates at Ohio prisons had a history of drug abuse, and 68 percent had an indication of a history of alcohol abuse. Numbers of offenders at the county jail and juvenile detention with substance abuse histories of substance abuse are generally consistent with these percentages.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Reduce the amount of recidivism that results from substance abuse-related activities.
2. Provide continued care for ex-offenders who participate in jail or prison-based treatment activities after their release.
3. Increase residential treatment opportunities for ex-offenders in Portage County

Objectives

1. Create PCRC Substance Abuse subcommittee to evaluate the overall state of alcohol and drug treatment for ex-offenders in Portage County.
2. Coordinate ex-offender screening and assessment tools to avoid unnecessary duplication, redundancy, and to emphasize specific reentry needs.
3. Explore the establishment or expansion of residential treatment facilities and sober housing for ex-offenders.
4. Evaluate the need for a Portage County detox unit
5. Encourage expansion of AA, NA, CA, other support groups in PC Jail and Juvenile Detention.
6. Determine if /how ex-offenders are involved in reported increase in heroin use in PC.
7. Explore the necessity for and feasibility of a PC Drug Court Program.

Strategic Performance Outcome

- Mar 2011* 1. First meeting of Portage County Reentry Coalition substance abuse subcommittee.
- Oct 2011* 2. Evaluation of assessment and screening tools completed
- Oct 2011* 3. Report on residential treatment needs and strategies completed
- Nov 2011* 4. Evaluation of Portage County detox unit feasibility completed
- Mar2011* 5. Study of possible reentry issues involving heroin completed
- Apr 2011* 6. Capacity for enhanced 12-step meetings (esp. NA, CA) in PC Jail determined
- Jul 2011* 7. Feasibility study of PC Drug Court completed.
- May 2015* 8. Sobriety rates (1+ years continuous sobriety) of ex-offenders with alcohol and/or drug dependence will be increased by 20% per year.

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator will solicit participation from PCRC members on Substance Abuse Subcommittee.
- Substance Abuse (SA) subcommittee will work with key partners (.eg, University of Cincinnati research team, Townhall II, etc.) to evaluate assessment and screening tools in current usage.
- SA subcommittee will discuss creation of detox unit with local healthcare providers and alcohol and drug providers; determine how a unit would be funded and operated as well as the location.
- Coalition Coordinator and SA subcommittee will work with PC Jail and local 12-step groups to improve inmate and ex-offender affiliation with support groups.
- Coalition Coordinator will meet with Judge Stormer (Summit County) as well with other nearby counties, and with University of Akron drug court research team to determine feasibility and operation of a PC Drug Court

V. Housing

A. Statement of the Problem

Ex-offenders returning to Portage County urban centers often have difficulty accessing safe, affordable housing, leading to increased likelihood of alternative choices and maladaptive behaviors that increase the risk of recidivism.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Increase urban housing opportunities for Portage County.
2. Develop community education and advocacy efforts to connect private (including Section 8) housing for ex-offenders.

Objectives

1. Create Portage County Reentry Coalition Housing subcommittee to evaluate the overall state of housing for ex-offenders in Portage County.
2. Increase shelter-type housing for ex-offenders immediately after being released- particularly alcohol and/or drug-addicted, mentally and emotionally-challenged, and dual-diagnosis individuals.
3. Increase shelter space for ex-offenders who are not addicted or mentally/emotionally ill.
4. Organize and disseminate factual information concerning ex-offenders and private housing.
5. Recruit landlords who have had successful interactions with returning ex-offenders to join PCRC
6. Encourage private sector or nonprofit housing developers or community-based organizations to develop housing accessible to people leaving prison or jail.
7. Examine methods to educate ex-offenders about strategies for finding and maintaining housing in the community, and teach them about their legal rights as tenants in the private rental market.

Strategic Performance Outcome

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| <i>Apr 2011</i> | 1. Portage County Reentry Coalition Housing Subcommittee established |
| <i>Jan 2012</i> | 2. Plan established for increasing shelter housing for ex-offenders |
| <i>Jan 2012</i> | 3. Information packet developed and distributed to county renter/landlord organizations |
| <i>Mar 2012</i> | 4. Develop strategy for creating transitional and permanent stable housing |
| <i>Sep 2012</i> | 5. Create comprehensive resource guide for housing for Portage County |
| <i>May 2012</i> | 6. Baseline number of ex-offenders requiring housing assistant per year will, be estimated. |
| <i>May 2015</i> | 7. Number of ex-offenders with housing issues who establish stable housing within 6 months of release will increase by 10% per year. |

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator will solicit participation from PCRC members to join Housing Subcommittee.
- Housing Subcommittee will explore and develop a shelter housing plan for ex-offenders
- Housing Subcommittee along with other county stakeholders will develop information packets and resource guides for ex-offenders

- Housing Subcommittee will work with county housing experts to develop plan for increasing transitional and permanent stable housing for ex-offenders.

B. Statement of the Problem

In the rural areas of the county, ex-offenders do not have the same access to social services and support agencies that offer housing opportunities; subsidized housing is very limited in the less-populated areas of the county.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Determine the need for ex-offender housing in the rural areas of the county.
2. If necessary, and feasible, expand housing opportunities for ex-offenders in rural parts of the county.

Objectives

1. Conduct an evaluation (GIS) of the distribution of ex-offenders in the county.
2. Determine the availability of private rental and subsidized housing in rural Portage County
3. Determine the number of homeless ex-offenders in the rural parts of the county.
4. Optimize the availability of affordable supported housing in rural Portage County

Strategic Performance Outcome

- Mar 2012* 1. GIS and narrative representations of ex-offender distribution in the county.
- May 2011* 2. Conduct a thorough analysis of the availability of rural housing for offender
- May 2011* 3. Estimate of the number of rural homeless ex-offenders in the county
- Aug 2011* 4. Established education initiative to inform landlords of the facts related to providing housing to ex-offenders (i.e., occupying vacant rental properties)

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator and Housing subcommittee will create maps, charts, and reports about offender distribution, utilizing available data from FBI UCRs, etc.
- Coalition Coordinator and Housing subcommittee will work with PMHA, county officials and real estate entities to create analysis of rural housing in the county.
- Housing subcommittee will research the number and distribution of rural homeless
- Housing subcommittee will create an educational report about national and State findings concerning housing and ex-offenders.

VI. Education

A. Statement of the Problem

Many ex-offenders lack educational skills that can provide positive alternatives to criminal activities

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Explore the need for a PCRC Education Subcommittee.
2. Incarcerated individuals from Portage County will be able to enhance their education while in prison or jail, particularly that which directly enhances their ability to gain employment.
3. Increase ex-offender involvement in post-incarceration educational and vocational programming. Include in discharge planning.

Objectives

1. Decide if it is necessary to establish a PCRC Education Subcommittee
2. Investigate developing correctional education programs that will enable inmates to be functionally literate and capable of receiving high school or postsecondary credentials. Collaborate with existing providers of these services in developing strategies to increase enrollments.
3. Encourage inmates to participate in educational and job training programs by creating opportunities for them to continue with education after release. Provide resources within the facilities for inmates to set up admission interviews while incarcerated; include in discharge planning.
4. Increase the number of inmates and ex-offenders achieving GED, high school and vocational diplomas, as well as post-secondary education.
5. Determine if state and local correctional facilities provide vocational and education classes targeted to the needs of the job market in Portage County.

Strategic Performance Outcome

Mar 2011 1. Decide on creating a PCRC Education Subcommittee

Jul 2011 2. Completed evaluation of correctional education programs and availability to PC ex-offenders.

May 2012 3. Establish collaboration with PC education programs to strategize increasing diplomas and certificates to inmates by 20% per year.

Oct 2011 4. Complete study of education or training needed to fill specific jobs in PC.

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator will canvass PCRC members about interest in setting up Education Committee
- Coalition Coordinator and/or Education Committee will conduct evaluation of State and local inmate and ex-offender education programs.
- Coalition Coordinator and/or Education Committee will investigate and encourage increased collaboration among educational stakeholders, leading to increased graduation rates among inmates and ex-offenders.

VII. Family & Personal Relationships

A. Statement of the Problem

When ex-offenders return to significant relationships following incarceration, issues that may have contributed in some way to the criminal behavior may still be present. Therefore, counseling for the entire family during and following incarceration needs to be enhanced.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Increase positive family and personal interactions through appropriate reentry-specific family support programs.
2. Increase the number of PC community partners providing support to families transitioning an offender from prison or jail to the community.
3. Increase family participation in reentry planning for juveniles returning from DYS, and from PC Detention facilities.

Objectives

1. Evaluate current counseling efforts in PC that involve family and significant others of incarcerated or recently-released offenders. in reentry planning.
2. Determine if there is a need for and capacity to create standardized family reentry programs for adults and juvenile offenders in PC.
3. Expand the number of family support programs, including workshops and support groups for family members.
4. Explore transportation and video conferencing opportunities to ensure that families can have visitation with incarcerated relatives to develop reentry plans.

5. Develop resources and training for school counselors and teachers to identify and understand the experiences of children with incarcerated parents.

Strategic Performance Outcome

- Apr 2012* 1. Surveys, questionnaires, and other forms of data collection will be analyzed to determine the extent of counseling involvement by families and significant others of incarcerated individuals and ex-offenders.
- May 2012* 2. If necessary and feasible, standardized family reentry assessments and programs will be discussed, and possibly developed in collaboration with key PC social service partners.
- Aug 2011* 3. Determine estimate of the number and type of family reentry support systems necessary for coverage of PC.
- Nov 2011* 4. Study of transportation and video conferencing opportunities for families completed.
- Feb 2012* 5. Study of program for school personnel who deal with children of incarcerated parents completed.

Tasks and Owners

- With consultation of PCRC, Coalition Coordinator will create and conduct data gathering related to family counseling and reentry activities.
- PCRC will develop a study of creating standardized family reentry instruments.
- PCRC will work with other county agencies to create estimate of needed family support systems.
- PCRC will work with DYS, ODRC and PARTA to determine ways to optimize visitation related to reentry planning,
- PCRC will work with local school boards to complete study of possible program for school personnel to deal with children of incarcerated youth.

VII. Mental Health

A. Statement of the Problem

The incidence of serious mental illnesses is two to four times higher among prisoners than it is among those in the general population. Mental illness that is not adequately treated increases an ex-offenders risk of recidivism

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Prisoners with mental illness will continue treatment in the community when released, and ex-offenders already in the community will have adequate access to mental health treatment.

Objectives

1. Explore the mechanisms by which prisoners in the ODRC are able to transition from in-prison treatment to community treatment; do the same for offenders in the Portage County Jail and Juvenile Detention facilities.
2. Ex-offenders released from state prison facilities, county jail and juvenile will have access to needed medications following release, until they are able to receive ongoing treatment provided by community mental health facilities.
3. Ex-offenders will be able to access initial community health treatment, with monitoring across collaborative agencies to gauge overall progress.
4. Provide ongoing dual diagnosis treatment for high-risk ex-offenders

Strategic Performance Outcome

- Dec 2011* 1. Evaluate the use of assessment tools used by both the ODRC system and county mental health providers.
- Apr 2011* 2. Learn about jail-based mental health services in Portage County, and whether there is a need for a full-time mental health case manager.
- Arl 2011* 3. Explore the protocols for use of medications, and ensure that prisoners about to be released are provided with a sufficient supply at discharge to maintain stability while awaiting first appointments in community mental health agencies.
- Jun 2011* 4. Explore the current state of forensic services provided by county mental and behavioral health agencies, and determine if there is a need for enhanced and centralized services focused on incarcerated and ex-offenders.

- Jun 2011* 5. Determine the current level of dual-diagnosis treatment availability in the county, and explore the feasibility of creating more programs for the ex-offender.
- Jan 2012* 6. Institute a tracking and monitoring system to ensure that offenders with mental illness are being linked to community services, and evaluate the efficacy of protocols used to treat ex-offenders.

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator will work with mental health care providers on the coalition as well as other Portage County mental health professionals to collect and evaluate mental health assessment tools, and to determine the extent of dual diagnosis treatment used by ODRC and Portage County corrections facilities.
- PCRC will determine the feasibility of using forensic case managers in the PC Jail and juvenile corrections programs.
- Coalition Coordinator will work with mental health care providers on the coalition as well as other Portage County mental health professionals to collect and evaluate information on mental health medication protocols for ODRC and PC Jail and detention, and what plans are currently in place for supplying transitional medication prescriptions for new ex-offenders.
- Coalition Coordinator will work with mental health care providers on the coalition as well as other Portage County mental health professionals to determine how ex-offenders who need medications for mental health treatment are able to access medications.
- PCRC will explore the issue of creating and maintaining a tracking and monitoring system for ex-offenders with mental health issues, to be aware of those who might be at increased risk to re-offend or to experience a mental health crisis.

IX. Physical Health

A. Statement of the Problem

When offenders are released to Portage County, they have limited access to adequate health care. Lacking health insurance, accessing treatment, especially long-term, is extremely difficult.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Increased access to health care for ex-offenders who are released from prison, jail, or detention centers.
2. Enhanced health care for families of offenders.

Objectives

1. Evaluate the current physical health care systems available in PC for the treatment of prisoners before and after incarceration.
2. Explore strategies to enable community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide health care services for inmate populations following release from incarceration.
3. Promote comprehensive, integrated medical, mental health and substance abuse treatment services, both within correctional facilities and as a central component of corrections-community linkages.
4. Determine the cost benefits and cost-effectiveness of various approaches to dealing with ex-offender health care.
5. For community buy-in to improvements in healthcare for offenders, present reentry health as a strategy to promote community health and well-being

Strategic Performance Outcome

- | | | |
|-----------------|----|---|
| <i>Dec 2011</i> | 1. | Complete evaluation of the status of health care in PC as it relates to ex-offenders with complex reentry barriers. |
| <i>Apr 2011</i> | 2. | Complete analysis of strategies to engage CBOs in the delivery of health care services to ex-offenders |
| <i>Apr 2011</i> | 3. | Explore the protocols for use of medications, and ensure that prisoners about to be released are provided with a sufficient supply at discharge to maintain stability while arranging their health care follow-ups. |
| <i>Feb 2012</i> | 4. | Complete analysis of ways to implement health care programs for ex-offenders that provide the most benefit at the best cost for the county. |
| <i>Jun 2012</i> | 5. | Institute a tracking and monitoring system to ensure that offenders with physical health care needs are being linked to community services, and evaluate the efficacy of protocols used to treat ex-offenders |

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator will work with PCRC members to develop a report on the status of health care for ex-offenders in Portage County.

- PCRC will locate and investigate CBOs that may have the capacity to assist health care delivery in Portage County.
- Coalition Coordinator will work with health care providers to investigate the ways in which ex-offenders are able to access needed medications; work with PCRC to develop strategies to increase the availability of medications to ex-offenders lacking private health insurance or qualification for Medicaid, etc.
- Coalition Coordinator will engage coalition members in developing a cost-benefit analysis of expanding supported healthcare to ex-offenders.
- PCRC will explore the issue of creating and maintaining a tracking and monitoring system for ex-offenders with physical health issues, to be aware of those who might be at risk for chronic health problems, and those who are being underserved by the existing health care programs in the county.

XI. Transportation

A. Statement of the Problem

Ex-offenders are often required to follow up on a variety of referrals from their release plans; the expenses related to private and/or public transportation may prevent ex-offenders from getting and maintaining employment, and taking care of other obligations.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Increase transportation opportunities for ex-offenders to avoid missed appointments, inability to travel to work, maintain required contact with probation, parole, and other follow-up requirements.

Objectives

1. Create individualized transportation “treatment plans” to be initiated prior to prisoner’s release, or with service provider (i.e., probation officer, case manager) after offender has been released.
2. Develop instruction in the best ways to utilize public transportation to be made available to prisoners and ex-offenders. Make prisoners and ex-offenders aware of changes in the public transportation system that may increase flexibility in making travel plans.
3. Make available temporary (6-month, non-renewable) bus passes for ex-offenders to seek employment opportunities or for travel to work, if employed, while trying to develop personal transportation options .
4. Implement strategies for innovative use of scheduling to optimize under-utilized vehicles and routing.

Strategic Performance Outcome

- Sep 2011* 1. Begin implementing transportation treatment plans for all prisoners leaving Portage County Jail and Detention Center.
- Nov 2011* 2. Begin using completed instruction tools on how to utilize public transportation, as well as methods to get license reinstated, access insurance, find money to purchase automobiles, etc.
- Sep 2011* Determine the feasibility of temporary bus passes, and develop funding strategies to pay for them.
- Dec 2011* Begin to provide access to new public transportation programs aimed at maximizing the use of agency vehicles, while providing more flexibility for travel needs of ex-offenders.

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator and PCRC members will work with PARTA and local corrections facilities to develop transportation treatment plans for ex-offenders.
- Coalition Coordinator and PCRC members will work with PARTA and local corrections facilities to develop instructional packages and presentations geared towards the specific needs of ex-offenders.
- PCRC members will explore strategies for developing temporary bus pass programs.
- PCRC will work with PARTA and local social service agencies to develop new transportation schemes for improving the travel flexibility of ex-offenders.

XII. Immediate Needs

A. Statement of the Problem

Ex-offenders returning from incarceration lack resources to access basic requirements for functioning effectively in the community.

Strategic Performance Goal

1. Make sure that offenders being released from prison, jail, or detention centers have at least the basic means to begin to establish initial reentry efforts

Objectives

1. Ensure interagency collaboration to effectively screen inmates for eligibility for TANF, Medicaid, supplemental security income, food stamps, and other benefits, and to facilitate successful prerelease application for these benefits.
2. Help inmates identify and apply for appropriate benefits and identification as part of their transition plan.

Strategic Performance Outcome

- Jan 2013* 1. All ex-offenders returning from prison to PC will be prepared to access benefits for which they are available, and have the means to access these benefits.
- Jan 2013* 2. All ex-offenders being released from PC Jail and Juvenile Detention will have appropriate identification (or the means to acquire it post-release) and other documentation necessary to receive benefits, apply for employment, access healthcare, etc.
- Oct 2011* 3. A clear plan for interagency collaboration to maximize ability of ex-offenders and their families to receive benefits, access housing opportunities, etc.

Tasks and Owners

- Coalition Coordinator and PCRC members will identify and work with PC agencies to develop a plan for all ex-offenders to understand and be able to access needed documentation to apply for and receive any benefits and financial support available to them.

Summary and Conclusion

Our target population will be adult men and women, and juvenile boys and girls who are incarcerated, on probation/parole, or formerly incarcerated or on p/p, and are considered medium to high risk for recidivism. We are looking at 2 levels of geographical concentration – (a) urban areas, and (b) the rural townships of the county. Primary focus will be on individuals with substance dependence and/or mental health issues including emotional & behavioral issues.

At this time, we are evaluating options that we have in terms of how to structure a reentry program. Several models will be considered, such as the “one-stop” concept that has been implemented with success in other areas of the country. Ideally, any reentry programs are brought into play shortly after an individual has been incarcerated. Uniform screenings and assessments can be given to individuals at various times during their involvement with the correctional system. Ideally, these would be completed shortly after arrest, but, if the ORAS instrument is to be used, it may be given at a number of different points along a continuum. The ORAS will determine level of risk at the time of the assessment, and that level will determine what kind of programs the individual will attend. Determination of the appropriateness and feasibility of several initiatives will be the primary focus of efforts to design a reentry program. Some examples of these are:

1. Expansion of Townhall II adult male & female groups in PC Jail
2. Emphasis on men with substance abuse/non-violent, non-severe mental illness
3. Employment of a PC Jail-based reentry Case Manager
4. Residential work-release programs for adult males – continuation of jail-based work-release program. Housing for men who have proven working skills.
5. Expansion of Horizon House for women.

We have developed a strategic plan timeline that structures our implementation priorities. For instance, employment has been seen as a key priority for reentry success by criminal justice personnel, social service providers, and ex-offenders themselves. At the same time, there are strong indications that changes towards prosocial thinking and behaviors are essential prerequisites to successful reentry, in that, without cognitive and behavioral changes, there is always a strong chance that criminogenic thinking will lead an ex-offender back to antisocial activities. There are currently programs in most correction facilities that address prosocial thinking. It is important that ex-offenders involved in such programs are able to continue them

after release. Likewise, for offenders with substance abuse and/or mental health issues it is essential that they continue without a break in the continuity of care or social support (AA, NA , etc.). In some cases, treatment will not be initiated until after release. It is important to ensure that, to the extent possible, newly-released prisoners or those about to be released, not be placed on long waiting lists.

When we reach the first anniversary of the start of our coalition in May, we will be evaluating our initial performance goals, and those which have been designated in this strategic plan. Then we will evaluate our need to modify or create new long-term goals. As we have developed our 5-year strategic plan, we have sought input and feedback from our key partners. Much of the coalition design to this point has been done by the coalition coordinator. Increasingly, we are receiving guidance from other coalition members, who are also key partners in the county reentry effort.

We are currently developing strategies to create the best and most appropriate ways to measure goals. Supervision strategies are going to be dependent on the creation of subcommittees and task forces within the coalition. In this sense, they are still being developed. They will become of increasing importance to implementation of the strategic plan as they are developed. We are continuing ongoing training and research into best practice supervision methods, part of which is examination of the appropriate performance measures.

Also, we are in the process of developing strategies for the sustainability of the coalition and the reentry program itself. We are still actively recruiting key stakeholders for coalition membership. Participating members are asked to recommend other potential coalition members and partners. These include local officials who are familiar with funding mechanisms in the County. It is also part of the coalition strategy to access Federal and state grants that will support dedicated reentry staff and programs within the overall reentry improvement effort.

To acquaint the citizens of Portage County with the coalition's activities, we anticipate the creation of a media subcommittee which will be charged with disseminating information to the

community. It is hoped that this will result in awareness of the efforts of the coalition, as well as consciousness-raising about the need for ex-offenders to have access to programs aimed at reducing recidivism and increasing public safety. We will be following the example of other local coalitions in designing strategies for media exposure. Also, there are several models currently being used for employer awareness-building and explanation of benefits they may access by hiring ex-offenders. We will develop strategies for responding to negative events involving initiative participants, and prepare agency executives, staff, crime victims and formerly incarcerated people to serve as initiative spokespeople; furthermore, we will have a documented procedure for responding to press inquiries.

By definition and necessity, a strategic plan such as this is a dynamic document. Changes, modifications, additions, and deletions will take place as the plan evolves. The Coalition and the subcommittees created to address the most significant barriers to reentry will provide guidance and support to achieve the identified goals and objectives, and to monitor the outcomes of reentry efforts. Each of the objectives has an associated set of tasks and timelines for implementation. These tasks and timelines will be carefully monitored to ensure that implementation is proceeding on schedule and to make appropriate adjustments, as necessary. As a dynamic document the strategic plan will be subject to continuous review to ensure its long-term viability and impact. As things go forward with the implementation of the plan, we will issue yearly reports on Coalition activities and the progress and results of significant elements of the plan. This report will also highlight barriers that continue to present roadblocks to successful offender reentry, and will recommend appropriate remedies to address these challenges.

COALITION MEMBERS	
MEMBER	AFFILIATION
Tracy Deep, M.Ed. LPCC-S Project Director	Family & Community Services, Inc.
Cathey Debord	Family & Community Services, Inc.
Jim Eskridge, Chief P.O.	P. C. Adult Probation
Rev. Douglas Fidler	Trinity Lutheran Church – Kent, Ohio
Karen Fleming, Ph.D.	Coleman Services, Inc.
Matt Giorgio, Parole Officer	Adult Parole Authority
Wendy Johnson, M. Ed. , RA	P.C. Prosecutor – Victim’s Assistance
Diane Kerr, Ph.D., CHES	KSU School of Health Sciences
Mary McCracken, LISW	Children’s Advantage
Diana Miller	Family & Community Services
Capt. Rick Neal, Jail Administrator	Portage County Jail
Jim Penter, M.Ed.	Family & Community Services
Penny Ray, Administrator	Public Children Services Agency
Michael Root	Community Representative
Valerie Root	Community Representative
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Lee Simunek, Parole Officer	Adult Parole Authority
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REDUCE RECIDIVISM – REINTEGRATE EX-OFFENDERS – MAINTAIN PUBLIC SAFETY

