

**Sandusky County Commissioners**

**Sandusky County Courts**

**Sandusky County Adult Probation**

**Sandusky County Sheriff**

**Sandusky County Jail**

**Sandusky County Electronic Monitoring Program**

**Sandusky County Children and Family First Council**

**Sandusky County Department of Job and Family Services**

**Sandusky County Health Department**

**Sandusky County One Stop**

**Sandusky County Child Support**

**Treatment Alternative to Street Crime**

**Sandusky County Trips**

**Sandusky County Veterans Services**

**Fremont City Police Department**

**Fremont Municipal Court**

**Adult Parole Authority**

**WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc.**

**Vanguard/ Sentinel Vocational School**

**Vanguard Adult Education/ ABLE**

**Terra State Community College**

**Lutheran Social Services**

**Sandusky County Homeless Coalition**

**Goodwill Industries**

**Corporate Anointing Ministries**

**Sandusky County Court Mediator**

**Sandco Industries**

# **Sandusky County Community Corrections Offender Reentry Task Force**

# **5-Year Strategic Plan 2009**

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## Statement of Need

**The Pew Center found in 2008 that 1 in 100 adults in America are in jail or prison.**

**In 2008, states spent more than \$49 billion on corrections.**

**The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that only 46 percent of incarcerated individuals have a high school diploma or its equivalent.**

**One in six jail inmates reports that he or she dropped out of school because he or she was convicted of a crime, was sent to a correctional facility, or was involved in illegal activities.**

**Approximately two-thirds of people in prison and jail were employed...during the month before they were arrested for their current offense.**

**Nearly half of those leaving jail were earning less than \$600 per month immediately prior to their incarceration.**

**Vocational program availability is very limited for jail inmates, with only five percent of jail jurisdictions offering vocational training.**

**Many jail jurisdictions (33 percent) offer no educational or vocational training at all.**

According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, nearly 2,000,000 men, women, and juvenile offenders will be released over the next three years from Federal, state, and local correctional facilities. For every 1,000 offenders released, studies show that 283 new crimes will be committed, with victimization costs of over \$5 million and criminal justice costs of more than \$340,000.

The challenges associated with reentry from jails are daunting, large in scale and complex in task. Each year, U.S. jails process an estimated 12 million admissions and releases. That translates into 34,000 people released from jails each day and 230,000 released each week. In three weeks, jails have contact with as many people as prisons do in an entire year, presenting numerous opportunities for intervention.

Warehousing offenders has been proven to be ineffective. While incarceration as a form of punishment will always be a component of our penal system, it does little to alter the behaviors of persons who commit crimes. Individuals suffering from chemical addiction, anger management issues, joblessness, homelessness, dysfunctional relationships, and poverty need additional assistance to make lasting changes in their lives.

The lives of many who cycle in and out of jail are unstable at best. Substance abuse, employment and housing instability, mental illness, and a host

of health problems are part of the day-to-day realities for a significant share of the offender population. Given that more than 80 percent of inmates are incarcerated for less than 1 month, many for only a few hours or days, jails have very little time to intervene and address reentry issues. Therefore, the Sandusky County justice system must be clear and efficient in all phases of offender reentry.

Reentry efforts help strengthen the ties between incarcerated individuals and social networks, community programs and assistance programs. These efforts could yield substantial gains in terms of safer communities, improved public health, and a reduced burden on taxpayer dollars by

reducing recidivism. Reduced recidivism will also directly affect returning offenders need for public assistance.

Faye Taxman, principal investigator for the “Action Research for Reentry Partnership Initiatives,” sponsored by the National Institute of Justice wrote, “Reentry is the process of helping offenders identify criminal drivers that are likely to increase the odds that they will engage in criminal acts after release and to stabilize them after release from incarceration” Every offender is different. While evaluations must be conducted to determine the risk factors associated with each individual, most will require assistance.

The skills and pro-social behaviors they develop during an offender reentry program can be a key factor in their ability to avoid new crimes and costly re-incarceration, thus reducing recidivism. While there has been little academic focus on the effect of program involvement, research regarding the benefits of participation in correctional industry (prison) offender reentry programs results in a nearly 8% reduction in recidivism, which is significant in comparison to many other program outcomes. Offender involvement in such programs shows a cost benefit of \$23.63 in taxpayer savings per \$1 of cost. This is one of the highest returns on investment from an offender change program. Based on the research, it is safe to assume that such programs in jail would yield similar social and financial benefits.

### **Sandusky County Demographics**

Located just a few miles away from Lake Erie, Sandusky County (Ohio), which is diagonally crossed by the Ohio Turnpike Interstate 80/90, unemployment (10.9%) and poverty rates (10.6%) continue to rise as the economy turns and reflects an average that frequently exceeds state and national averages. This rural county has been plagued with continuous manufacturing companies downsizing or plants closing, which have left thousands of individuals in the area seeking employment or re-training.

These job losses are ripple effects of a continued contraction of the economy in Ohio. The closure of so many large employers has affected our communities within Sandusky County, and has caused additional criminal offenses due to stress and lack of purchasing power in the area. Because of this, the proposed target population is convinced that higher education or the labor market is bleak for persons of their background. Internal barriers such as fear of the unknown, despair, and low self-esteem often compound these offenders. These internal barriers undercut the motivation to seek employment or education and undermine the strength required to attain personal development. Individuals with these internal barriers need “something more” to sustain them during the difficult reentry journey, consisting of a reliable source of personal support and guidance to a better future.

In addition to the above barriers, according to a study titled Foreclosure Growth in Ohio 2008, produced by Policy Matters Ohio, a non-profit think tank, Sandusky County had the greatest increase in foreclosed homes sold by its sheriff's department of any other County in Ohio between 2005 and 2007. The county had 478 sheriff sales in 2007, up 183 percent from 2005. This represents the largest absolute gain in recent history. To make matters worse, the housing wage, the amount one must earn to afford a one-bedroom apartment within Sandusky County, is

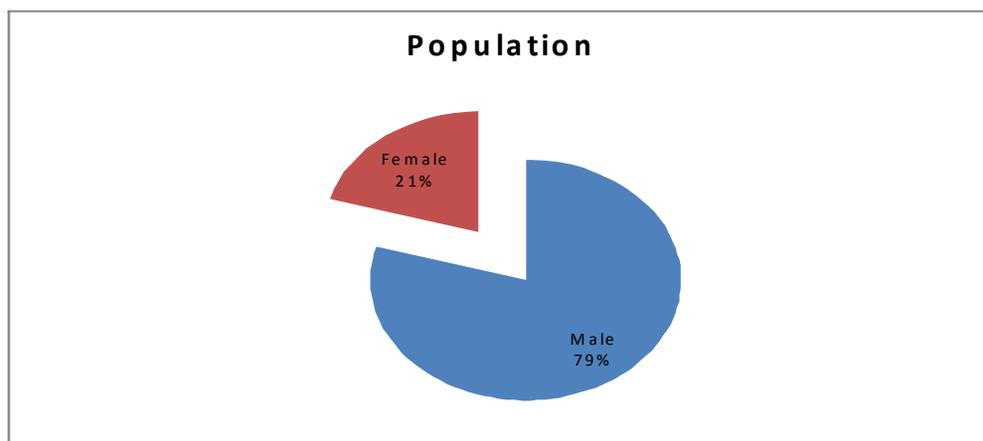
\$9.18 per hour (170% of the minimum wage), the housing wage for a two-bedroom apartment is \$10.81 per hour (200% of the minimum wage), and the housing wage for a three-bedroom apartment is \$13.39 per hour (249% of the minimum wage). Minimum wage workers must work at least 68 hours per week to afford a one-bedroom apartment, at least 80 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom apartment, and at least 99 hours per week to afford a three-bedroom apartment.

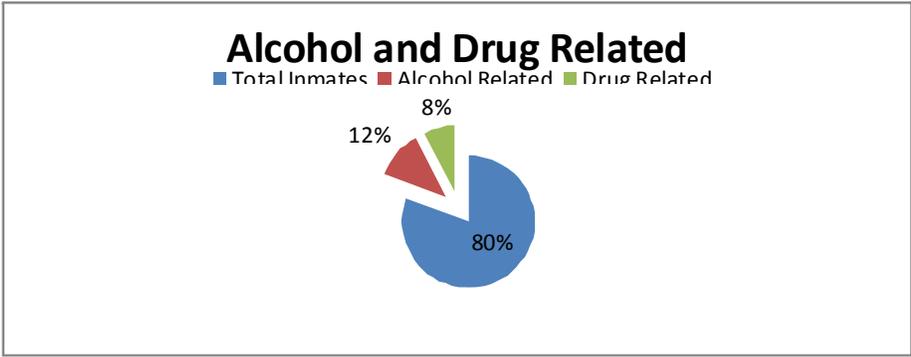
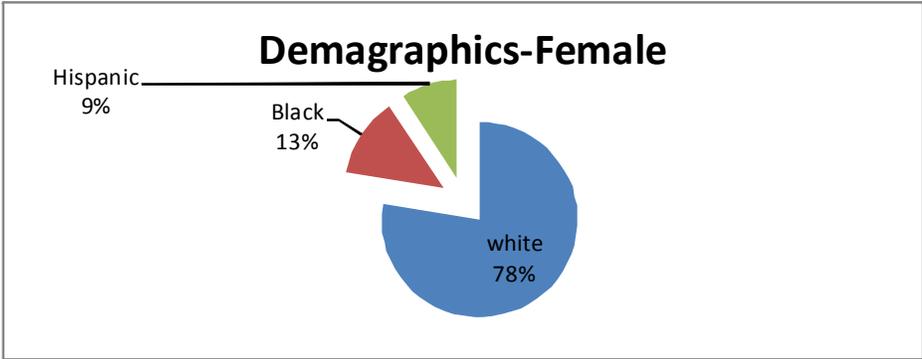
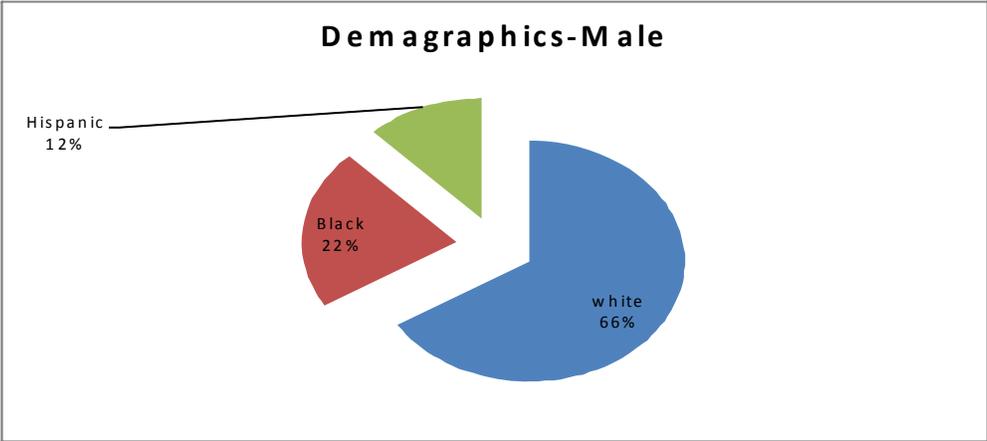
According to a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care sheltered and unsheltered count conducted by service providers January of 2008, it was found that during a single point in time in Sandusky County, there are 191 homeless individuals and 148 homeless persons in families with children.

The facts and numbers that have been provided above about Sandusky County are minimal when it comes to speaking about the number of 18-24 (5,124) year olds who do not hold a High School Diploma or GED within our communities. 1,301 young adults represent a costly public liability. Of the 40,585 individuals age 25 and over, only 43.7% have obtained a high school diploma. These factors along with other criminogenic needs create a need to assist offenders reentering into society.

Ohio prisons in April 2009 held 50,889 inmates in 32 institutions. The capacity of Ohio prisons is 38,665, showing an overcrowding of 12,224. 92% of the populations were males and 8% were female. The average daily cost per inmate is \$67.77 daily or \$24,736.50 annually. Sandusky County committed 81 males and 10 females to the state prisons in 2008. Sandusky County currently has 99 offenders under supervision with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. In addition, 604 offenders are on probation. Recidivism rates for Sandusky County offenders committed to state facilities was 7.1% for technical violations, 24.6% for committing new crimes, and 31.7% recidivism over a three year period.

In 2008, there were 2,011 individuals booked into the Sandusky County jail. Of them, 1,052 were white males, while 286 were female. Demographic information includes 335 African American males, 51 African American females, 228 male Hispanics and 47 female Hispanics. Charges consisted of 2,348 misdemeanors and 824 felonies. The largest population was between 18-30 years old. Without intervention, more than two-thirds of these individuals will be rearrested for new serious offenses within three years of their release.





# **Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force**

## **Background and History**

In May 2007, the Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force was formed to address the growing needs of the county offender population as well as jail overcrowding issues. A roundtable meeting was held between the county corrections and social service agencies to study these needs and formulate a plan to address them. The study revealed that a large portion of the inmate population was due to alcohol related charges and most inmates did not have a high school diploma. Some other needs that were discussed were lack of social skills, employment skills and overall job history. The Sandusky County Community Work Program was the founding program to allow inmates to work off a portion of their sentence by completing community service projects throughout the county. In 2008, the Community Work Program provided 8,700 man-hours toward projects benefiting Sandusky County.

In December 2007, the county was awarded the Edward Byrne Memorial grant to establish a basic literacy and G.E.D. program within the jail. The grant also allowed the purchase of equipment to setup a classroom and small computer lab. A Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and social worker were hired to begin assessments and provide alcohol and substance abuse counseling within the jail.

In 2008, services began in the jail for G.E.D. and counseling services. Both programs were welcome with open arms and had a flood of inmates requesting services. The program quickly expanded and a collaboration of county not-for-profit and faith-based organizations was formed and began meeting monthly to discuss the progress of the program. As agencies came onboard and offered more services, the programming in the jail expanded to offer cognitive behavior training and therapy, and social and life skills training. Inmates also utilized the computer lab in the jail and the local One Stop services to create resumes and receive employment skills training.

By the end of 2008, counselors had served 66 inmates and provided over 600 hours of counseling services to the inmates. G.E.D. classes met regularly and served a total of 58 students with 16 passing their G.E.D. while incarcerated in the jail. Corporate Anointing Ministries joined the Task Force during 2008 and took the lead role as the community contact for the faith-based organizations. Corporate Anointing Ministries quickly made contacts with supporting agencies and became an offender “one stop” to address their community needs. The ministry implemented the “Citizens Circle” group in Sandusky County.

In 2009, the program once again received the Edward Byrne Memorial grant and continued providing G.E.D. classes but decided to take the program further and requested the State of Ohio certify the county jail as a testing facility to alleviate losing testing candidates due to release from incarceration. The state certified the jail as an official testing center and currently the Director of the Sandusky County Community Corrections Department administers the exam. In 2009, eighteen students have achieved the G.E.D. while incarcerated in the jail. In addition, therapy sessions were increased with the addition of providing mental health counseling.

Counselors have worked closely with judges, probation offices and attorneys to provide necessary information for sentencing and programming needs assessments. During this year, the counselors have begun to provide assessment services to the juvenile courts as well.

The Community Work Program has expanded to allow more offenders to complete community service hours. Inmates have worked approximately 12,000 man hours on projects ranging from litter cleanup to construction remodeling projects in county buildings. The work program also started a garden at the jail to offset the costs of meals within the facility and to provide the inmates with agricultural vocational training. The program utilized 67 inmates and all found the program to be very beneficial.

The Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force continues to grow and expand each month with new programs being added through community organizations who want to assist offenders reenter into their communities. In 2010, the program will expand and partner with WSOS Community Action Commission's Civic Justice Corp program. The program will assist up to thirty-two, 18-24 year old inmates. Offenders will complete 900 hours of education and community service through the Community Work Program. Once completed, the offender will be awarded a \$2,300 Educational Award to pay for vocational training or higher education. The program is being funded by the national Corps Network organization and is expected to be a "Best Practice Model" across the nation. Leveraged Resources through this program is estimated at \$187,200.

### **Mission**

To assist policymakers, community leaders, and service providers to identify the reentry challenges facing Sandusky County and work to provide resources for sound, comprehensive and cost effective solutions by collaborating with professionals committed to working together, towards a shared vision of enhanced service provision to assist offenders reenter society and become productive citizens.

### **Vision**

The Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force is committed to assisting offenders successfully reintegrate into the community and divert offenders from future criminal activity by:

- Assessing offenders risks/needs in order to help guide court decisions and to apply appropriate levels of services;
- Address criminogenic patterns and tendencies;
- Increase inmate social skills;
- Work in partnership with the community to provide research based prevention and intervention services;
- Ensure offender accountability through proven, innovative and timely intervention;
- Assist with connecting offenders with support services; and
- Provide training to enhance our professional skill and build leadership.

## **Goal**

To increase public safety and eliminate the confusion caused by the lack of coordination between over 20 governments, community and faith based organizations presently providing some form of reentry services to the offender population. This is accomplished by establishing a common message and process of engagement on behalf of community/faith based organizations.

## **Primary Roles of the Task Force:**

- Promote public understanding of offender reentry.
- Work to enhance resources available to local reentry partners to support local reentry efforts.
- Coordinate efforts with Task Force members to address employment, education, marital/family stability, personal/emotional stability, child support, parenting, housing issues, health, and substance abuse.
- Promote service coordination as a core strategy to effectively connect those persons transitioning from incarceration to needed services and supports.
- Coordinate and support a mentoring program to aid offenders successfully return home.
- 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 representatives from service providers, housing associations, community advocacy groups, faith communities, and other relevant stakeholders engaged in offender transition issues.
- Continually seek to expand partnerships to build the capacity with organizations whose efforts advance the Task Force's mission.

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

- Increase community support for reentry efforts.
- Increase utilization of evidence-based practices.
- Use positive incentives to encourage offender success.
- Increase research to establish best practices for Sandusky County.

## **Organizational Structure**

Sandusky County Board of Commissioners is made up of three publicly elected county commissioners who set policy and make all program decisions which affect all departments of Sandusky County government. The county employs over 120 workers and many departments, among them the Community Corrections Department. Community Corrections is governed by the Community Corrections Action Board and is administered by a Community Corrections Department Director, who is accountable to the County Administrator and the County Board of Commissioners. The Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force is the responsibility of the Community Corrections Department with the Director as the coordinator.

## **Responsibilities**

The County Board of Commissioners

- Set policy, appoint personnel, set salaries and appoint board members and committees.

- Sandusky County Administrator has the overall responsibility for administering all state and federal funds within the Department of Community Corrections.

#### The Director of Community Corrections

- Daily responsibility for the operation of the Department of Community Corrections.
- The Director reports to the County Administrator, representing the Offender Reentry Task Force on all administrative and fiscal matters.
- Program decisions are recommended by the Judiciary, the Community Corrections Director, to the Community Corrections Action Board and forwarded to the County Administrator or the County Board of Commissioners.
- An Advisory Board, appointed by the County Board, serves in an advisory capacity to the County Board, the Judiciary, the County Administrator, and the Community Corrections Director.
- The Advisory Board is responsible for developing, reviewing, and approving the annual Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Planning document.
  - Members are encouraged to be involved in program planning, evaluation, and development.
  - Surveys and ongoing committee discussion is encouraged to maintain efforts at improving the delivery of reentry services to Sandusky County offenders.
  - The Judiciary serves as an advisory body to the County Board and the Community Corrections Director.

### **Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force**

Executive Committee - The Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force has an Executive Committee, which consists of Officers of the Task Force:

- Coordinator
- Co-coordinator
- Secretary
- Each of the standing committee chairs.
- Three at-large members to the Task Force, one of whom must have been formerly incarcerated.

The following are active committees targeting key issues for the Task Force. These committees are standing committees for more than one year.

- Housing
- Education
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Health
- Family/parenting
- Employment
- Legal Issues
- Mentoring
- Identification

Ad Hoc Committees and Task Forces may be formed to accomplish more time-limited goals or projects (less than one year).

- Grant Development
- Professional Development Training for members
- Collaboration

Each Committee's Chairperson convene and preside over their committee meetings and report back to the Task Force on the status of the work to be accomplished by the committee.

Each member of the Task Force 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.

- Committees shall be formed as needed to accomplish the work of the Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force.
- The membership of each standing committee shall choose its Chairperson to represent them in the Executive Committee.

### **Membership**

Membership is open to all sectors of the community who are committed to successful reentry for offenders and their families and/or significant others. The Task Force invites 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.

The Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force has members from a wide array of service providers. They are equipped, able, and ready to face the many challenges that offenders meet after their release. 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 Offender Reentry Task Force has also partnered with the Sandusky County Jail, the Sandusky County Court System, Police Departments, Adult Parole Authority and Sandusky County Veterans Services.

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 Task Force.

### **Sandusky County Task Force Members**

The Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force is a collaboration of public agencies, not-for-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, citizens, businesses and community stakeholders committed to the successful reentry of local offenders being released from the county jail as well as assisting offenders returning from prison incarceration. These key partners are all the expert providers in their respective areas. All agencies are currently working under a Memorandum of Commitment in support of the Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force. The Task Force includes the following partners:

Sandusky County Commissioners  
Sandusky County Courts and Adult Probation

Sandusky County Sheriff  
 Sandusky County Jail  
 Sandusky County Electronic Monitoring Program  
 Sandusky County Children and Family First Council  
 Sandusky County Department of Job and Family Services  
 Sandusky County Health Department  
 Sandusky County One Stop  
 Sandusky County Child Support  
 Sandusky County Treatment Alternative to Street Crime  
 Sandusky County Trips  
 Sandusky County Veterans Services  
 Fremont City Police Department  
 Adult Parole Authority  
 WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc.  
 Vanguard/ Sentinel Vocational School  
 Vanguard Adult Education/ ABLE  
 Terra State Community College  
 Lutheran Social Services  
 Sandusky County Homeless Coalition  
 Goodwill Industries  
 Corporate Anointing Ministries  
 Sandusky County Court Mediator

The Task Force has established the following key components for successful offender reentry and will focus on them over the next five-year period:

Education	Employment
Mental Health	Substance Abuse
Mentoring	Housing
Health	Family/Parenting
Legal Issues	Identification

## **Education**

### *Statement of the problem*

The lack of adequate education contributes to a higher recidivism rate which includes lack of sufficient career development, educational and vocational training programs both pre-release and post release.

### *Strategic Performance Goal*

- Enhance the range and accessibility of education and vocational program opportunities for offenders during incarceration.
- Create local partnerships with Vanguard Vocational Educational Center and Terra State Community College to provide training opportunities.
- Enhance the accessibility of current basic literacy and G.E.D. programming while incarcerated.

- Create a resource center to allow offenders to research educational training opportunities.

#### Objective

- Increase accessibility of education opportunities while incarcerated and during transition.
- Increase the number of offenders provided with additional internal and external educational program opportunities.
- Allow offenders to pursue higher education through available resources.

#### Strategic Performance Outcome

- Increase the number of incarcerated offenders offered services by 2 each year.
- Increase the number of incarcerated offenders attaining G.E.D by 2 each year.

#### Major Tasks and Owners

- The Sandusky County jail, Vanguard Vocational Educational Center and Terra State Community College will develop a more inclusive protocol for identifying those offenders eligible to receive educational and vocational opportunities.
- The Sandusky County jail, Vanguard and Terra State Community College shall provide informational packets to offenders during transition detailing how to further their education, obtain financial aid information through the Ohio Benefit Bank, labor market trends lists, and the educational institutions in the local area.
- The Task Force and key stakeholders shall seek out, prepare and submit grants and foundation funding targeting this issue.
- The Sandusky County jail and Task Force members will explore the possibilities to implement a transitional education program through distance learning.

## **Employment**

#### Statement of the problem

The absence of adequate employment opportunities increases the risk of recidivism by offenders released from incarceration. Sandusky County's unemployment rate is 10.9% in comparison to 10.2% for the state of Ohio. With the nation in an employment crisis, returning offenders are competing for jobs with an average of 6 applicants for each position to be filled. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Fidelity Bond are tools, which can impact employment, recidivism, and retention for persons routinely classified as at-risk job applicants.

#### Strategic Performance Goal

- Broaden the work opportunities to ex-offenders in Sandusky County.
- Create a workforce development program during transition for offenders.
- Create an employment initiative with local employers for offender employment opportunities.
- Create a marketing strategy for promoting the WOTC and Fidelity Bond programs.
- Create a marketing campaign to provide outreach to local business leaders regarding the Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force.
- Expand the current training sessions to incarcerated offenders about employability skills and job training skills.
- Create a Virtual Career Center and provide a "One Stop" employment services to offenders.

- The Virtual Career Center- Technology based information system directly linked to the Ohio Department of Labor and local One Stop.

### Objective

- To increase the work opportunities to offenders.
- Increase the number of WOTC participants in Sandusky County.
- Increase the number of Fidelity Bonds in Sandusky County.
- To assist more offenders in obtaining gainful employment.

### Major Tasks and Owners

- The Task Force, Sandusky County Department of Job and Family Services, and the One Stop Job Store will explore the development of an employment initiative working with the local Chamber of Commerce, local Small Business Associations, and local officials to engage community business leaders.
- The Task Force and DJFS will explore enhanced funding for transitional employment programs.
- The Task Force and DJFS will explore creating a marketing campaign to provide outreach to local business leaders regarding Offender Reentry.
- The Task Force, Sandusky County Department of Job and Family Services, and the One Stop Job Store will explore Workforce Investment Act and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding that will support the development of these programs.

## **Mental Health**

### Statement of the Problem

Offenders with mental illness lack hope of recovery from their mental illness. Mental illness, coupled with the high co-occurrence of criminogenic needs, impede the offender's ability to function in society and leads to increased recidivism.

### Strategic Performance Goal

- Increase capabilities to assess mental illness during pretrial sentencing.
- Create a Wellness and Recovery Program
- Increase the number of released offenders with mental illness participating in the (WMRP) or support programs.
- Decrease the recidivism rate of those predicating in WMRP.
- Enhance mental health counseling and support services while incarcerated.
- Create a mental health court.

### Objective

- Develop a uniform assessment tool to utilize during pre- sentence investigations.
- Develop a Wellness and Recovery Program
- Develop and implement a plan to link offenders with mental health illness to WMRP and support programs in the community.
- Develop and implement a mental health court to address mental health offenders with alternative sentencing guidelines.

### Major Tasks and Owners

- The Task Force will explore funding for mental health programs that provide immediate treatment for offenders on community supervision.
- The Task Force and Sandusky County courts will join forces in creating a uniform assessment tool to identify mental health issues and share that information with corrections and mental health counselors.
- The Task Force and Sandusky County Mental Health Board will work in partnership to create a Wellness and Recovery Program.
- The Task Force and Sandusky County courts will act as a team in creating a mental health court.

## **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. Substance abuse, coupled with the high co-occurrence of criminogenic needs impede offenders' ability to function in society and lead to increased recidivism. Ninety percent 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 Task Force seeks to improve access to treatment services for all ex-offenders. (Source; ODADAS Budget Testimony 2009)

### *Strategic Performance Goal*

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

### *Objective*

- Develop a standardized assessment process for offenders during intake.
- Create working partnerships with community agencies, Treatment to Alternative Street Crime (TASC) and non-profit organizations to establish a continuum of care practice during transition.
- TASC, a high accountability recovery support model operating within Sandusky County, has shown success in improving treatment outcomes while reducing the likelihood of recidivism.
- Work to incorporate TASC into all alternative sentencing probation orders.
  - Work to establish funding strategies that will expand TASC's capacity to provide the desired service.
- Provide access to intervention programs while incarcerated.
  - AA, NA, Counseling services
  - Establish support groups for offenders after release.

### *Major Tasks and Owners*

- The Task Force and community organization directors will establish working relationships to address substance abuse needs of offenders.
- The Task Force along with TASC leadership and substance abuse counselors will explore funding options to assist TASC in expanding its capacity.
- Establish a list of AA, NA programs to display in resource center.
- Establish a list of AA programs willing to provide services in the jail.

## **Mentoring**

### *Statement of the Problem*

There are approximately 30,000 individuals currently within the state of Ohio's correctional institutions. Of that number, many will only be incarcerated for a year or less. In Sandusky County jail, more than 80 percent of inmates are incarcerated for less than 1 month, many only for a few hours or days. Jails have little time or capacity to address the deep rooted and often overlapping criminogenic needs of offenders. Unfortunately, because of the numerous challenges these 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 faith-based community, in partnering with a number of other social service 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.

Project FBI is seeking those within the faith-based community to offer support and to engage offenders prior to their release, particularly mentorship to all who are serious about not returning to incarceration. These mentors would initiate the relationship while still incarcerated 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*

To establish Fathers Being Involved and a Community Partners in Reentry Program.

### *Major Tasks and Owners*

- The Task Force along with Corporate Anointing ministries and other faith-based organizations will partner to develop a mentoring program utilizing the FBI and CPR programs.
- Expand the role of Citizens Circle involvement with Sandusky County offenders.
- Establish a list of volunteer mentors and provide training to assist them in their roles as mentors.

## **Health**

### *Statement of the Problem*

In Sandusky 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 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

offenders stop their treatment, which often results in behaviors that lead to new offenses. Simply connecting offenders to health care resources will have a positive impact on recidivism rates. The Sandusky County Reentry Task Force 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 offenders in Medicaid or providing other outside resources for health care in Sandusky County.

#### Objective

To create an easy way for offender to seek out medical attention or provide health care for their families.

#### Strategic Performance Outcome

- Increase the access for health care for offenders and their families
- Provide resources and referrals to outside agencies for health care issues.

#### Major Tasks and Owners

The Task Force, along with DJFS and Sandusky County Health Department and outside agencies, will explore options to provide needed health coverage and services to offenders.

## **Housing**

#### Statement of the Problem

Housing for offenders is critical at this time when homelessness is rising. The number of individuals released from prisons is 300% greater than it was twenty years ago. In order to prevent offenders from further contributing to the overall homeless population, we must assist offender with finding secure and stable housing. Secure housing is a vital component in the stability of the reentry process and in reducing the recidivism rate of offenders. Housing stability has proven to reduce recidivism by 27%. Because released prisoners require a safe place to sleep the very night they are released from prison, housing is a critical component of successful reentry, even if that initial housing is temporary or transitional in nature. Most inmates will reside with family, friends, or in their own home on the first night of release. While living with family and friends may appear to be the best and most affordable option for returning prisoners, these living arrangements may not be stable or even feasible in the long run. Many recently released inmates reported that they had few options but to live with their family in subsidized housing; finding an apartment of their own was improbable, and few desired to live in the shelter system.

#### Strategic Performance Goal

To assist offenders in finding secure and stable housing.

#### Objective

- To provide offenders returning to the community; safe, secure and affordable housing.

#### Strategic Performance Outcome

- Increase housing opportunities to offenders

- Develop transitional housing for offenders in Sandusky County.
- Compile a list of private and public housing available to offenders.

#### Major Tasks and Owners

- The Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force and the Sandusky County Homeless Coalition will partner to explore housing opportunities for offenders.
- Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force will develop an outreach program to promote housing opportunities for offenders.
- Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force will partner with WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc. to promote offender transitional housing.

## **Family/Parenting**

### 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 two parent families; youth who never had a father in the household experienced the highest probability of incarceration. In addition, youth are more at risk of first substance use without a highly involved father in their life.

Correction-based programs for inmates can enhance parenting skills, treat addictions, increase literacy, raise educational level, and prepare inmates for outside of incarceration. However, for various reasons these programs are not readily available. Inmates' relationships are substantially burdened by "lock-up". Separation of a spouse or a partner creates enormous strains on a relationship, frequently ending the relationship. The individual incarcerated 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 as a whole.

### Strategic Performance Goals

- Strengthen family relationships for the offender to help reduce risk of repeat incarceration.
- Enhance communication skills through hands-on training sessions in order to foster a creative atmosphere for trust.
- Provide tangible tools to equip families to handle everyday life events.
- Present Parenting and Childhood Developmental Education to the offender.
- Enroll qualified candidates into WSOS Community Action Commission's Fatherhood and Children Services programs

### Objective

Over the next three (3) 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

- Implement Case Management Program with current reentry individuals and their families.
- Assess, support, and educate the families through resources, services, classes and workshops to strengthen the family structure and support systems.
- Increase involvement of family and support network during case planning and transition services.
- Provide staff training for policies, procedures, curriculum, and staff empowerment.

## **Legal Issues**

### Statement of the Problem

Many offenders face substantial civil legal problems after release. Such legal issues often have been left unresolved for months or years while the inmate was incarcerated. These legal problems often prevent the offender from maintaining stable housing and employment, two of the biggest predictive factors for whether an offender is likely to return to prison or face homelessness or other severe hardships. Without legal assistance from an attorney or a local legal aid organization, many of these problems are virtually impossible for an 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 offender's ability to maintain stable employment and housing.
- To develop forms, checklists and other resource materials to help 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 offenders, their mentors and their families in resolving legal issues.

### Objective

- Recruit, train and support a panel of 5 to 10 lawyers and students who would assist re-entering offenders in dealing with common civil law problems.
- Increase by 50% over 5 years the number of 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; and family law disputes which cause difficulty in maintaining housing or employment.

### Strategic Performance Outcome

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

### Major Tasks and Owners

- Legal Aid of Western Ohio and the Sandusky County Bar Association Pro Bono Program will work with the Task Force, mentors and family support agencies to develop effective legal assessment and outreach programs.

- Legal Aid of Western Ohio will develop training and support resources for volunteer attorneys and law students.
- Volunteer attorneys and law students will meet at least once every two months with inmates inside the county jail to evaluate legal needs prior to release.
- Develop The Reentry Legal Corps:
  - a. Training and support for volunteer attorneys and law students.
    - The Task Force, WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc. and law students will work with the bar association to create the Reentry Legal Corps to assist reentering prisoners in dealing with common civil law problems.
    - Partner with the Sandusky County court mediator to provide resources to offenders.

## **Identification**

### *Statement of the Problem*

Proper documentation of one's identity including state-issued photo identification cards, social security cards, birth or marriage certificates, and educational credentials are often necessary to secure housing, open a bank account, prove employment eligibility, and obtain necessary health benefits. Former offenders adjusting to life on the outside will often find it difficult to obtain these necessary documents following their release. Some individuals may view the cost associated with obtaining these documents as a barrier (the cost of a birth certificate ranges from \$5-23; Sandusky County Health Department) while others will lack the initial documents needed to obtain other papers or identification. Many agencies require multiple forms of identification to access resources or receive benefits such as state Medicaid agencies, which now require a birth certificate and photo identification in order to issue Medicaid benefits and the Department of Motor Vehicles, which typically require multiple forms of identification and proof of residency in order to issue a state ID card.

### *Strategic Performance Goals*

- Increase the number of returning offenders having proper identification upon release.
- Partner with local Bureau of Motor Vehicles and Social Security office to streamline process of applying for identification.
- Assist offenders in filling out applications for proper identification.

### *Objective*

To ensure all offenders returning to the community have the proper identification.

### *Strategic Performance Outcome*

- Ensure all inmates leaving incarceration have proper identification
- Streamline process for incarcerated individuals to apply for identification.
- Increase local resources and supportive services for offenders to obtain identification.

### *Major Tasks and Owners*

- The Task Force will partner with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and Social Security Office to streamline process of applying for identification documents.

- The Task Force will assist offenders in filling out application paperwork to obtain identification documents.

## **“Best Practice” Reentry Program - Jail to Community Continuum**

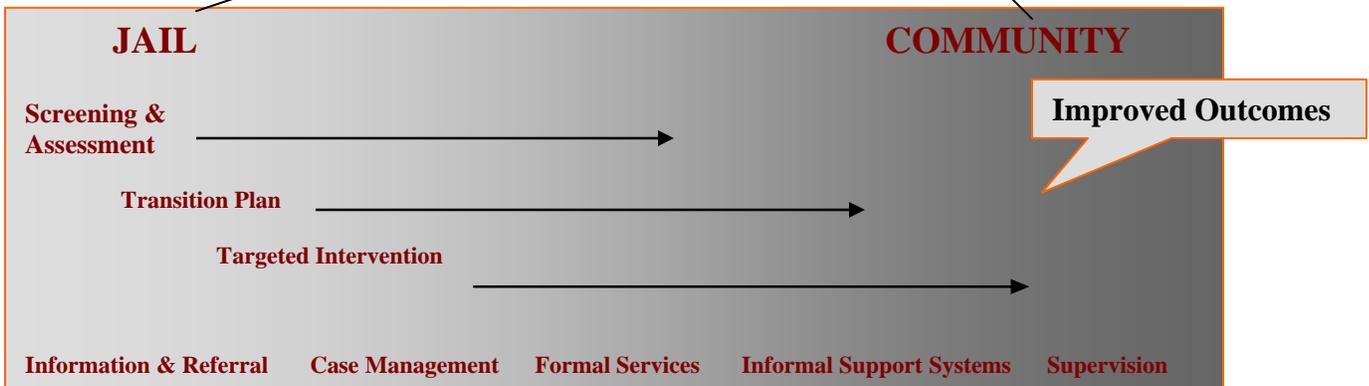
The Sandusky County Offender Task Force follows the “*Transition from Jail to Community*” (TJC) initiative. The TJC model is about system change and targeted interventions. The model bases its success on a collaborative structure and joint ownership by both jail and community stakeholders to develop and share responsibility for shared outcomes of interest. The key components to a successful program include the clear understanding of the returning population and local barriers and resources available for the returning offenders.

Targeted intervention strategies form the core of the TJC model at the individual level, and comprise the basic building blocks for effective jail transition. The strategy to improve transition at the individual level involves introducing interventions at critical points along the “Jail-to-Community Continuum”. The underlying premise is that interventions at these key points can improve reintegration and reduce re-offending, thereby increasing public safety.

### **TJC System Elements**



### **TJC Intervention Elements**



Critical to this approach are the principals that:

- Intervention begins in jail with the booking process and continues, as needed, throughout the incarceration and into the community upon release.
- Interventions are tailored to the specific needs, risks, and strengths of each individual.
- Interventions must prepare inmates to succeed the day they leave incarceration.

Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force will focus on three phases to the offender reentry program:

1. Assessment of risks and needs, including support systems
2. Tailor interventions to target the criminogenic needs and risks identified through assessment. The Task Force will use both in jail interventions and post release programs to target these needs and risks.

a. Targeted in jail interventions

- Transition Plan Development
- Basic Remedial Training
- G.E.D. Preparation and Testing
- Identity Program
- Alcohol/Substance Abuse Counseling
- Mental Health Counseling
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Thinking for Change Cognitive Behavior Program
- Career Assessment and Exploration
- Employability Skills Training
- Life Skills Training
- Civic Justice Corp Enrollment
- College Readiness Training
- Bridges Out of Poverty
- FDIC Money Smart
- Parenting Education
- Personal Occupational Development
- Work Ethic
- Anger Management
- Treatment to Alternative Street Crime

b. Post release interventions

- Citizens Circle
- Offender “one stop”
- WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc Referral Network
- Fatherhood Initiative and Childhood Programs
- AA
- Alcohol/Substance Abuse Counseling
- Mental Health Treatment
- Thinking for Change Program
- Ex-offender Support Groups
- Mentoring Program
- Treatment to Alternative Street Crime
- Employment and Educational Attainment

### 3. Community based interventions and follow

- Offender “one stop”
- Citizens Circle Follow-up
- Mentoring Completion
- AA Continuation
- Ex-offender Support Groups
- Case Management
- Community Referral and Linkages
- Self-Evaluation and Sustainability

Sandusky County is committed to assisting offenders reintegrate into society and become productive citizens. The Task Force accomplishes its mission by working directly with offenders to address their specific needs and reward them for successes based on completion of programming or overcoming a barrier to reintegration. This is accomplished by graduated sanctions imposed by the courts such as, passing G.E.D. in jail could justify early release, to home monitoring, or completing a substance abuse program which could possibly reinstate work driving privileges. These rewards motivate offenders to take ownership of their own reentry and encourage them to become successful in reentering the community.

Many offenders want to change and *can* change with the right training, education, treatment, and support. All citizens within Sandusky County are affected by offender reentry as by the crimes those individuals originally committed. Formerly incarcerated individuals shop next to us in grocery stores, have children who attend school with our own, and spouses who work with us every day. They are sons and daughters, and friends and neighbors. It is in our collective best interest that people be given the tools to change *before* they return to the community. Well designed and managed offender reentry programs are one of the best tools we have to accomplish that goal and the Sandusky County Offender Reentry Task Force will continue to strive to promote successful reentry, reduce recidivism, and promote public safety within Sandusky County communities.