



Montana Department of Corrections FACT SHEET *Reentry: The tools to succeed*

Background

Reentry is not a new concept. Reentry refers to the transition of offenders from prison back to their communities. It also refers to the programs and services provided to offenders to help increase their chances of success in that transition.

An estimated 97 percent of all inmates eventually are released from prison and about 1,200 leave every year.

The goals of reentry programs are to provide offenders with skills and services needed to reduce recidivism, thereby, decrease future victimization and control correctional spending.

Reentry Initiative

The Department of Corrections, as is the case throughout the nation, is putting a renewed emphasis on the reentry services that it provides and, more importantly, is connecting the dots between prison, prerelease, treatment centers, parole and the communities in which offenders will be returning.

Three years ago, Sen. Kim Gillan of Billings brought together the departments of Labor and Corrections, Montana State University Billings and numerous community and faith-based partners to address the issues that female offenders face when they are released from incarceration. That began the Billings Area Reentry Task Force, which has used a pair of federal grants to launch a pilot reentry program for female offenders releasing into the Billings area. Grant funding will be ending in May of 2013.

In August 2011, the Department of Corrections created a task force to work with numerous state agencies, the university system, law enforcement, and faith-based and other community organizations; to on improving reentry services and creating better coordination among programs that can assist offenders.

The task force's first priorities were development of a new tool for assessing offenders' risk to return to prison, enhancing contacts with those in communities able to provide housing and jobs to offenders, and working more with offender families to improve chances of successful reentry.

The task force identified a target population of inmates, who statistically are at greater risk to return to prison – those who are 25 years or younger or classified at a higher custody level when released from prison.

Inmates in one or both of those categories account for about one-third of all inmates released.

The task force set a goal of reducing the recidivism rate among that high-risk population by 10 percentage points. That would result in about 1,080 fewer offenders returning to prison during the next eight years. But the impact would go beyond that population and could result in about 900 fewer offenders returning to other correctional programs – prerelease and treatment centers – as well.

The potential long-term savings from those reductions could be substantial.

Reentry is about more than money. It is about salvaging lives and preventing future victims by giving offenders the tools they need to succeed and remain outside the correctional system.

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