



# Issue Brief - 2011

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## Inmate Re-entry

### Overview

The Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) is responsible for more than 14,300 felons statewide. About 93 percent of all prison inmates will eventually be released from prison and return to our communities.

Statistically, 27.8 percent of released offenders are convicted of a new felony crime within three years; this measurement is referred to as recidivism. The consequences of repeat offenders are felt by families and communities in terms of public safety and by the criminal justice system, which bears the costs to investigate, arrest, convict and incarcerate repeat offenders.

To keep our communities safe, reduce pressure on the criminal justice system, and to slow the demand for prison beds, DOC strives to shape the kind of people offenders will be when they re-enter society. While they are in custody, DOC works to identify and address inmates' risk factors for future criminal behavior. The goal is to provide inmates with the skills and resources to choose to lead successful lives upon release.

### DOC Transitional Services Division

In 2004, DOC reorganized to better align agency operations with its mission and vision. A new Transitional Services Division was created, headed by DOC Assistant Director Ginger Martin. This division ties together the services that directly affect the ability of offenders to transition successfully back to Oregon's communities. The DOC Transitional Services Division includes the following transition-related functions:

- **Transition and Release Unit** – Release Counselors work with offenders, parole officers, other DOC divisions, the Parole Board, and other state and local agencies and organizations to create individualized release plans designed to help inmates be successful on community supervision. Release plans include supervision requirements, housing, employment, support services, medical and mental health care referrals (including pre-qualification for Medicaid and Social Security benefits for those with severe medical and/or mental health needs). Transition Coordinators teach classes on

employment, housing and other subjects to prepare offenders to successfully transition to the community.

- **Institution Programs** – All programs that target recidivism, including education, vocational programs, alcohol and drug treatment, cognitive change and parenting skills.
- **Religious Services** – Provides opportunities for offenders of all faith traditions to express and develop their spirituality in prison and after release.
- **Community Corrections** – Successful work with offenders after release depends on the partnership among DOC and community corrections agencies. Community corrections includes supervision, correctional treatment programs, support services and community-based sanctions to hold people accountable for non-compliance.

### Transition plans

Concerted release planning begins approximately six months before release. With an eye to public safety concerns, Release Counselors collaborate with the inmate, county community corrections agencies, the Parole Board, DOC medical and mental health professionals, state agencies and private providers to develop a plan designed to help inmates integrate into their communities, meet basic needs such as housing and employment, and ensure continuity of medical and/or mental health care post-release.

### Regional re-entry prisons

Instead of replicating programs and services at all prisons, DOC found it more effective and efficient to centralize services in certain prisons and assign inmates to those prisons based on individual program needs. Under this model, some prisons focus primarily on basic education, job training, and work, while others focus on treatment and transitional services. Approximately six months before release, most inmates are transferred to a regional re-entry prison located closest to their home community. Preparation for release is intensified. This time may also include alcohol and drug treatment, if appropriate.

## Alternative Incarceration Programs

Alternative Incarceration Programs (AIP) are special programs offered by DOC to selected inmates who are at risk of re-offending due to untreated addictions and criminal thinking. The 2003 Legislature authorized the expansion of AIP to include intensive alcohol and drug treatment programs at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility and Powder River Correctional Facility. These programs are open only to inmates without mandatory minimum sentences (non-Measure 11 offenders) who are within three years of release. In addition, the judge must include AIP on a person's sentencing order in order for that person to be eligible for AIP.

AIPs have three phases. Inmates who successfully complete the initial six-month residential phase move into the community. Still considered inmates, they are supervised for 90 days of "non-prison/transitional leave" while practicing the skills and discipline learned in prison. Those who complete this phase are eligible to have their prison sentences reduced. After non-prison leave, offenders are supervised by parole officers while completing their post-prison supervision sentences in the community.

## Faith-based re-entry programs

Under the leadership of DOC's Religious Services Unit, hundreds of volunteers and faith-based community organizations assist in reintegrating offenders. These re-entry programs help community members provide offenders with a pro-social support system, develop their spirituality, and role model pro-social attitudes and behavior for the offenders.

Moving beyond traditional government partnerships, DOC's development of an effective statewide community- and faith-based re-entry initiative is working to:

- Identify community chaplains in each county whose knowledge of resources in their areas make them ideal liaisons.
- Develop links with area churches and organizations including the Ecumenical Ministries of Portland, Metropolitan Alliance for Family Services and the Salem Leadership Foundation.
- Use these contacts to better connect offenders and families to their communities after release and to provide a support network that many offenders otherwise would not have.

## Transition/Re-entry Network

In 2008, the ODOC in partnership with the Oregon Association of Community Corrections Directors (OACCD), established the Transition/Re-entry Network to

improve the release planning process and information sharing between ODOC, Community Corrections, the Parole Board, and inmates. The Transition/Re-entry Network reviews information on best-practices and makes recommendations to OACCD and ODOC related to policy designed to help facilitate transition that is most effective for communities, the offender, and their family.

## The Governor's Re-entry Council

Recognizing that the successful reintegration of offenders returning from prison requires the efforts of multiple state and local agencies, then Governor Ted Kulongoski created The Re-entry Council in May 2007. The Council was established as a state-level, statewide leadership group to work collaboratively on improving the success and safety of incarceration to community transition. The Council consists of 21 members from multiple state agencies and from statewide associations representing the local criminal justice system and community service providers.

**The mission of the  
Oregon Department of Corrections  
is to promote public safety by holding  
offenders accountable for their actions  
and reducing the risk of future  
criminal behavior.**



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