

**The National Governor's Association Reentry Policy Academy
Application for Continuation of Project Activities**

As Virginia moves into the next phase of its reentry work, much of which involves partnerships between various state, local, and non-profit agencies (as well as federal agencies and faith based programs), assistance provided through continued participation in NGA's Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy would provide technical assistance, peer review, and ensure ongoing momentum for an effort that has, to date, shown much promise.

The report on the Status of Virginia's Prisoner Reentry Initiative, May 2005, previously submitted to the NGA, notes several measures Virginia has taken to date. Our main objectives remain the same – to ensure that we are making the best use of existing resources provided by a number of state, local, and non-profit agencies to improve public safety by better preparing offenders for return to their communities, and through strategies designed to address stress points (reducing reoffending and improving employment and home stabilities) once they return.

Integrating Service Delivery and Improving Utilization of Resources

Without reprising these accomplishments, our continuing goals are to further refine partnerships between the varying agencies and levels of government, including citizens, and to institutionalize those improvements in communications and coordination of services that are already underway. While we intend to continue to identify issues and measure the impacts of actions already taken, we believe that we can better our efforts in our four state/local pilot programs (each of which is spearheaded by a local social services department) through exposure to other states who have or are developing multi-governmental level programs. Development of governance structures may differ somewhat in each program, but each should be developed based on principles that can be applied in future expanded efforts. We hope to create flexible structures that can, if successful at one or more pilot sites, be adapted to other local areas in ways that meet the cultural and resource differences that exist across this Commonwealth.

Our workgroup has developed detailed work plans and documented actions taken that address a multitude of issues surrounding reentry. Strategies taken from these work plans will be tested in the four pilot programs, scheduled to begin in December 2005. Measured results will allow for testing and evaluation of these strategies, and will assist in decision making on the most cost effective methods for delivery of reentry services. Primary principles are integrated service delivery and interagency collaboration.

Directors of the local departments will serve as conveners of local reentry boards, bringing together representatives of public and private agencies, businesses, community-based service providers and faith-based organizations. They will develop reentry plans for their locality that identifies available resources, methods for interagency collaboration and implementation of policy academy recommendations. Each social services department is aligned with a specific prison from which offenders will be referred for participation in the program. The program will operate in three phases. Phase I will focus on providing realistic assessments of both services that may be available upon release, as well as notification of obligations and barriers that they

will encounter. Phase II brings representatives of the local boards, along with prison and probation/parole staff, into planning sessions with offenders to develop specific plans for their return to the community. Phase III will cover the 12 months following the ex-offender's return to the community. During this phase, local boards will develop methods for on-going communication, counseling and support for the returning ex-offender and their families. Working through One-Stops and similar programs, offenders will be followed through their jobs, and will receive assistance in finding and retaining appropriate housing. Established outcomes will be measured at one month, three months, six months and 12 months following release. Phase III will also include a family to family component in which trained mentors will work with the offender and his/her family through the reentry process.

Examples of strategies that will be implemented at these pilot sites include:

- Use of a database created by the Department of Correctional Education (DCE) of every Virginia employer who has hired ex-offenders over the past five years to identify those employers who utilize occupations matching the vocational programs offered in prison. DCE will develop partnerships, inviting selected employers (those with shortages of skilled employees) to come into prison and teach specific skills that they need to meet their manpower needs, and to then participate in job fairs.
- Implementation of Memoranda of Understanding that have been signed by the Departments of Corrections and Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services, and each of Virginia's Community Services Boards. The first action will be to provide timely assessments and coordinated treatment plans. Secondly, funds requested for the upcoming General Assembly would be used to target specific treatment priorities.
- The current agreement between the Department of Corrections, the Virginia Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Social Security Administration is being modified to increase pre-release assessments and applications for accessing Medicaid, SSI, and specific rehabilitative services. Intra- and inter-agency meetings are underway to reduce existing hurdles and improve benefit application processes.

As Virginia establishes this pilot interagency local collaboration, guidance from the NGA and participating organizations will help to avoid barriers to success and focus on methods that have shown promise elsewhere. We are seeking guidance in establishing additional interagency agreements operating procedures.

Support for Reentry Efforts Within Virginia Government

Virginia's constitution does not allow for governors to succeed themselves. As such, a new executive will be elected next month. This will likely also result in changes at the Cabinet level, from which much support has been provided for this reentry effort. However, actions taken by the executive, legislative and judicial branches ensure the continuation of current reentry efforts.

Two bills were enacted at the 2005 General Assembly which reflect continued support for the activities taken to date.

1. Senate Joint Resolution 273 created a joint legislative subcommittee to “continue the work of the Policy Academy in identifying and developing strategies to address key needs and overcome barriers for offenders, prior to and upon leaving prison, to reduce the incidence of reincarceration and increase their successful social adaptation and integration into their communities.” This subcommittee will provide a report and recommendations to the Governor and the 2006 legislature. Our workgroup has provided key staff assistance for this study.
2. House Bill 1763, passed by both houses, amended the Code of Virginia to require the Secretary of Public Safety to “establish an integrated system for coordinating the planning and provision of offender transitional and reentry services among and between state, local, and nonprofit agencies in order to prepare inmates for successful transition into their communities upon release from incarceration and for improving opportunities for treatment, employment, and housing while on subsequent probation, parole, or post release supervision.”

Although there will be a change of administration, both Democrats and Republicans in the legislature have shown a desire for our reentry work to continue. Our workgroup has, from the beginning, included legislative and judicial staff (including the Criminal Sentencing Commission). Additionally, support from local governments has been growing, as evidenced by the role they have accepted in the pilot reentry programs.

Other actions have also been taken to institutionalize the process and work that the multi-agency workgroup has undertaken. A new, full-time state Reentry Coordinator position was created. In addition to her work with the statewide workgroup, she also chairs a Department of Corrections Intra-Agency Reentry Committee. This committee was established to work on cross boundary issues within the Department giving the DOC a single voice when dealing with other agencies involved in prisoner reentry. Establishment of this committee ensures implementation of key committee recommendations, which include:

- Information sharing and coordination of overlapping issues
- Development of research projects, performance measures, etc.
- Identification of strategies for improvement within the institutional framework of the DOC
- Policy/procedure change recommendations
- Continuation of community outreach and information programs

Expanding Our Efforts to Address Reentry for Jail and Juvenile Offenders

Over the past two years, the focus of the multi-agency workgroup has been state inmate reentry. Recently another subcommittee of the large workgroup has been established to address issues relating to local and regional jail inmates. While a number of issues these individuals face are shared with adult state inmates, there are also many differences. The new subcommittee also

includes multiple members of state agencies, local jails, faith-based and offender-based service agencies, as well as former jail inmates. Through a survey sent to local Community Criminal Justice Boards, the committee is now establishing baselines for reentry services already in place at the local level. Recommendations will be developed for consideration by the localities and their elected representatives at the 2007 General Assembly. As representatives to the multi-agency workgroup have returned to their localities and shared with local governing bodies the ongoing work being done at the state level, a heightened awareness and increased activity related to prisoner reentry on the local level has occurred. Continued involvement with the NGA Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy would provide for the enhancement of the role of local level agencies in supporting reentry strategies.

The current chair of Virginia's Reentry Workgroup, formerly Deputy Secretary of Public Safety, has been appointed as the Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice and is working with several state agencies and local governments to develop new strategies for managing programs and transitional efforts for those being released from the state's juvenile correctional system. Separate tracks are being developed for those who are released at age 18 and over (in Virginia, the juvenile system can incarcerate youth until their 21st birthdays), and for those who will be 17 years old and younger at time of release.

Incorporation of Evidence Based Practices

Virginia has clearly demonstrated a desire and willingness to establish and improve state/local relationships. Within the last year four District Probation and Parole Offices have partnered with the local community corrections programs in their jurisdictions to implement evidence-based practices. Guidance has been provided by Dr. Faye Taxman, a professor at the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). Additionally, Dr. Edward Latessa, a professor at the University of Cincinnati, has come to Virginia several times to provide information on research based programming for improving reentry. The DOC has signed an agreement with VCU to conduct an evaluation of our processes and to review program outcomes. We were able to receive a grant to procure training for staff at each of our pilot sites on evidence-based practices. Implementation will focus on improved use of the risk/needs instruments, of motivational interviewing techniques, and will concentrate on high-risk offenders returning to the community.

Summary of Virginia's Reentry Efforts

Virginia has already incorporated numerous strategies to improve the reentry process for state inmates. Our initial efforts identified barriers to successful reintegration, and we developed teams to devise improved means to address these barriers, primarily through improved use of existing resources and increased communication and cooperation across multiple agencies and levels of government. We are about to begin key pilot programs that will test and improve the effectiveness of an integrated service delivery system. By working with those at the local delivery level and providing them with key roles in the decision making process, we believe that we will be able to bridge differences in demographics and culture that exist in different geographical components within the state. We recognize that there is no silver bullet and that programs that work in one area may not be successful across the Commonwealth. Our goal is to

define workable frameworks within which various state and local entities can create successful models.

Virginia, without question, has been fully immersed in addressing the issues associated with prisoner reentry. We have approached reentry improvements in a quiet way with minimal fanfare, and only small increases in overall expenditures, primarily by making better use of existing resources. Our current Governor, with his Secretary of Public Safety and other key cabinet members have provided their vision and support for this initiative. The General Assembly has signaled its clear intent to see this process through, even though a change in the executive is imminent. The various members of our statewide work group have expressed their desire to continue their work.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence that Virginia has made progress toward improving prisoner reentry policies, programs, and services is seen through the pending pilot programs. The directors of the four social service departments have voluntarily taken a lead role in collaborative efforts. The use of strategies established by our workgroup will be tested at each of these sites.

Continued collaboration with the NGA Policy Academy would allow us to maintain our progress and to benefit from both peer and expert review and assistance as we move to the next phases of our efforts.



*Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor*

Executive Order

NUMBER TWENTY-TWO (2006)

ESTABLISHING THE VIRGINIA PRISONER REENTRY POLICY ACADEMY

Importance of the issue

Section 2.2-221.1 of the Code of Virginia directs the Secretary of Public Safety to establish an integrated system for coordinating the planning and provision of offender transitional and reentry services among and between state, local, and nonprofit agencies in order to prepare inmates for successful transition into their communities upon release from incarceration and for improving opportunities for treatment, employment, and housing while on subsequent probation, parole, or post-release supervision.

It is essential that Virginia continue with its efforts of fostering a successful transition of offenders into their communities, and reducing the rates at which they are returned to prison. If we improve their chances of acquiring and maintaining work and housing, it will significantly reduce the probability of offenders returning to a life of crime, which in turn would significantly enhance public safety. Accordingly, I am taking the following measures.

Establishing the Virginia Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy

By virtue of the authority vested in me by Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and Section 2.2-134 of the Code of Virginia, I hereby direct the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety to lead the Virginia Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy with the aim of promoting reentry strategies for offenders.

The Reentry Academy shall be chaired by the Secretary of Public Safety or his designee. The Academy shall be comprised of the following executive branch representatives:

- Secretary of Commerce & Trade
- Secretary of Education
- Secretary of Health & Human Resources
- Secretary of Public Safety
- Senior Advisor to the Governor for Workforce
- Counselor to the Governor
- Commonwealth Attorney's Services Council
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Correctional Education
- Department of Criminal Justice Services
- Department of Education
- Department of Health
- Department of Housing & Community Development
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Department of Medical Assistance Services
- Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation & Substance Abuse Services
- Department of Planning & Budget
- Department of Professional & Occupational Regulation
- Department of Rehabilitative Services
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Veteran Services
- Virginia Employment Commission
- Virginia Indigent Defense Commission
- Virginia Parole Board

The Reentry Academy shall invite additional participation by the General Assembly, Supreme Court, Law Enforcement, and Community Advocacy Groups. All executive branch agencies of the Commonwealth shall participate in the activities of the Academy upon request. Staff support will be provided by the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and such other agencies as the Secretary may designate.

The Academy shall have the following responsibilities:

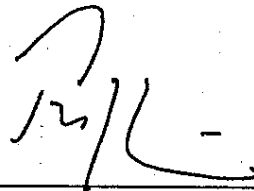
1. Provide on-going coordination at the executive level of reentry initiatives across the state;
2. Explore programs that will aid with the offender reintegration
3. Address policies and practices that impede successful reintegration

4. Work collaboratively to implement new policies and procedures
5. Submit a status report of actions taken to improve offender transitional and reentry services to the Governor and the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees no later than November 15 of each year.

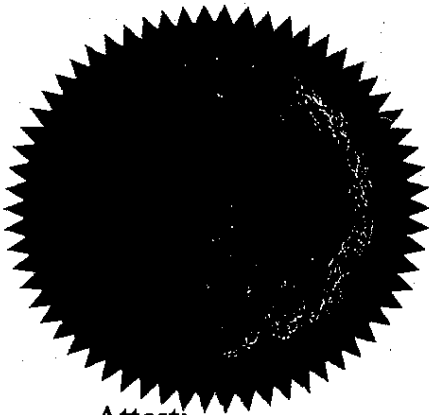
Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall become effective upon its signing and shall remain in effect until December 31, 2008, unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

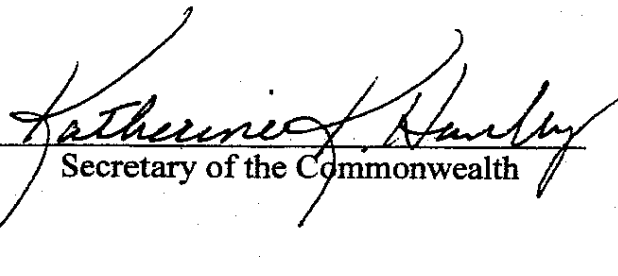
Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 16th day of June 2006.



Timothy M. Kaine, Governor



Attest:



Secretary of the Commonwealth