

Strengthening Families and Reentry: Engaging the Faith Community & Mentors

Presentation to SJR 273 Joint Subcommittee

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- The National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices announced that Virginia was one of seven states selected to participate in its Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy.
- Virginia's Policy Academy project team brought together representatives of the agencies and organizations that deliver services to ex-offenders and their families.
- NGA assisted state teams in developing effective prisoner reentry strategies designed to strengthen public safety and reduce costly recidivism rates by improving pre-and post-release services.

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- Virginia Reentry group has met together and as sub-committees to identify the specific causes for reentry failure in the state and develop strategies to address these.
- The overall reentry group identified and prioritized reentry barriers and needs.
- Four subcommittees were then established based on broad categorizations of need or barriers to successful reentry.

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- Financial Obligations, Housing, and Financial and Community Resources
- Social Reintegration
- Employment and Education
- Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse

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- Each subcommittee identified roadblocks to successful reintegration.
- Sub-committees developed workplans that included and proposed actions to address those.
- Together the workplans form the Virginia Reentry Project recommendations.

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- Pilot programs will be conducted in five localities.
- These pilot programs will allow for testing and evaluating implementation of the recommendations developed from Virginia's participation in the NGA Policy Academy on Prisoner Reentry.
- Pilot localities were selected on a volunteer basis.

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- Directors of local departments of social services will serve as the convening agency in the pilot localities and will bring together representatives of public and private agencies, businesses, community-based service providers and faith-based organizations to form a local reentry council. Sub-committees developed workplans that included and proposed actions to address those.
- Local councils will develop a reentry plan for their locality that identifies resources available, methods for interagency coordination and implementation of policy academy recommendations.

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- Each locality will have an assigned state correctional facility from which a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 50 offenders will be referred for participation in the pilot program.

- Proposed localities are:

Richmond

Norfolk

Culpeper

King George

Greensville/Emporia

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Pilot projects will be characterized by:

- Community collaboration
- Integrated service delivery
- System of support

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- Information about services and obligations that effect them and their families during their time of incarceration.
- Representatives of the correctional facility and the local reentry council will meet with the offender and develop plans for their return to the community.

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- In the 12 months following release there will be ongoing contact with a team member representing the reentry council.
- Councils will develop methods for on-going communication and support for the returning ex-offender and established outcomes will be measured at one month, three months, six months and 12 months following release.
- Pilots will include family to family mentoring during the re-entry process and for 12 months following release.

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- **Team Approach**

 - Mentor Team – Goal Two Mentor Families**

- **Family to Family Mentor Training**

 - Mentor Sponsor Organization**

 - Mentor Supervisor**

 - Mentors**

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As well as relationship building and support, mentors will promote and facilitate ex-offender and family member skills building.

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- **Fatherhood/Motherhood**

The goal is to improve the emotional, social, mental and physical health of children through positive father/mother involvement. The focus is to get and keep fathers/mothers involved with their children and to improve the quality of their relationships.

- **Parenting**

Assist parents to enhance their parenting skills

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- **Strengthening Marriages**

Communication

Conflict resolution

Problem Solving

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■ Education

Support ex-offender and family members in achieving education goals

Facilitate communication between home and school

Facilitate links with education resources in community– Race to the GED, etc

- Of those released from Virginia correctional facilities last year, 52% entered prison without a high school diploma or GED.**

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- **Financial Literacy**

Assist ex-offender and family members in strengthening skills in the management of personal financial affairs including income, financial obligations, banking, savings, consumer protection, Earned Income Tax Credit

- **Department of Correctional Education data shows 37% of those leaving Virginia prisons report money and credit a post-release problem and 21% report is somewhat of a problem.**

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- **Most incarcerated men and women return to communities and to families.**
- **Better reentry preparation, integrated service delivery and a support system of people that care will help decrease reentry barriers and help increase the opportunity for those returning to experience restoration within and without and to be contributing member of the communities to which they return.**