



**Contra Costa
Reentry Initiative**

Executive Summary: Contra Costa County Reentry Strategic Plan

A vision of successful community reintegration

Developed by the Contra Costa Reentry Planning Initiative

Compiled by Urban Strategies Council and Ijichi Perkins & Associates

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Note on Report

This Executive Summary has been produced as a companion to the full **Reentry Strategic Plan Report**. The full report contains a Report Summary as well as the detailed report, maps and appendices. For copies of this Executive Summary and the full report, please go to www.cocoreentry.org.

Executive Summary

For the past four decades, the United States and the State of California have experienced a period of mass incarceration with prison populations steadily expanding. Consequently, there has been an accompanying mass release over this same period of time since over 90% of people incarcerated are eventually released.

BACKGROUND

Interested in addressing the issues formerly incarcerated people face upon release, DeVone Boggan, Director of the Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) and Supervisors Federal Glover and John Gioia, Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, of the Public Protection Committee of the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors, collaborated to establish the Contra Costa County Reentry Planning Initiative (Reentry Planning Initiative). The ONS secured funding from The California Endowment and hired the Urban Strategies Council (Council) and Ijichi Perkins & Associates (IPA) to facilitate a process to develop a Reentry Strategic Plan to improve coordination and collaboration among reentry stakeholders and, ultimately, to improve outcomes for the formerly incarcerated residents of Contra Costa County. During the period from August 2009 through July 2010, the Initiative convened 14 meetings of approximately 200 stakeholders including county, city and state agencies, elected officials, service providers, formerly incarcerated individuals, community-based organizations and residents from across the County to gather input and advise on the strategic reentry plan.

REENTRY POPULATION IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

The Planning Initiative defines reentry and reintegration as a process, beginning at the time of adjudication, which plans for and provides the necessary services and supports to enable the formerly incarcerated individual to reenter the community, achieve stability, successfully reintegrate back into family and community life and to complete probation and parole without being reincarcerated.

According to 2009 data, roughly 7,318 adults and juveniles are under state or county criminal justice supervision in Contra Costa County. Moreover, in 2008, Contra Costa County sent 494 adults to state prison and 1,927 adults were released: 558 released for the first time and 1,369 released from a parole violation.

Reentry Service Needs

Upon release, the reentry population and the communities to which they return face a wide array of challenges (for more information, please see page 6 of the strategic plan). For the approximately 4,138 adult parolees and probationers in Contra Costa County, based on available research we estimate the following service needs:

<u>Substance Abuse:</u>	3,062 treatment spaces
<u>Employment:</u>	2,482 job placements
<u>Housing:</u>	1,241-2,069 housing placements
<u>Health Services:</u>	662 primary care slots
<u>Education:</u>	1,696 adult education spaces
<u>Family Services:</u>	2,274 parolees and probationers may need family counseling, support or reunification assistance

Recognizing these unprecedented numbers of individuals reentering the County from incarceration and their estimated service needs, Contra Costa County stakeholders have undertaken steps to establish the Contra Costa County Reentry and Reintegration Collaborative (CCCRRC) and develop a system to more effectively address the needs of the formerly incarcerated and the communities to which they are returning. The Reentry Planning Initiative and this Strategic Plan are the first steps towards establishing such a system. The primary mission of the CCCRRC is to engage and support formerly incarcerated individuals, their families, and the communities to which they return and to assist formerly incarcerated individuals to become active and impactful members of their communities. The CCCRRC will accomplish this mission through the development and support of the necessary public policies, public safety strategies, community awareness and services (See the Recommendations section below for more information on the CCCRRC).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the research, discussions and deliberations of the Task Force and Work Groups, the Planning Initiative has prepared two sets of recommendations. The first set of recommendations is directed to the Board of Supervisors (see page 12 of the strategic plan). A second set of Program Recommendations is directed to the proposed CCCRRC and the community-at large and form the foundation for the work of the CCCRRC (more detailed information on program recommendations begins on page 26 of the strategic plan).

REENTRY SYSTEM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONTRA COSTA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1. The Board should adopt the Contra Costa County Reentry Strategic Plan as the county's strategic plan for reentry.
2. The Board should adopt the CCCRRC as the countywide mechanism for coordination and implementation of the Strategic Reentry Plan.
3. The Board should designate a single county agency to house the CCCRRC and to provide leadership and administrative support for its operations and to coordinate the support of other county and governmental agencies, non-profit, faith-based and business partners, and

community residents in achievement of the goals and objectives set forth in the Strategic Reentry Plan.

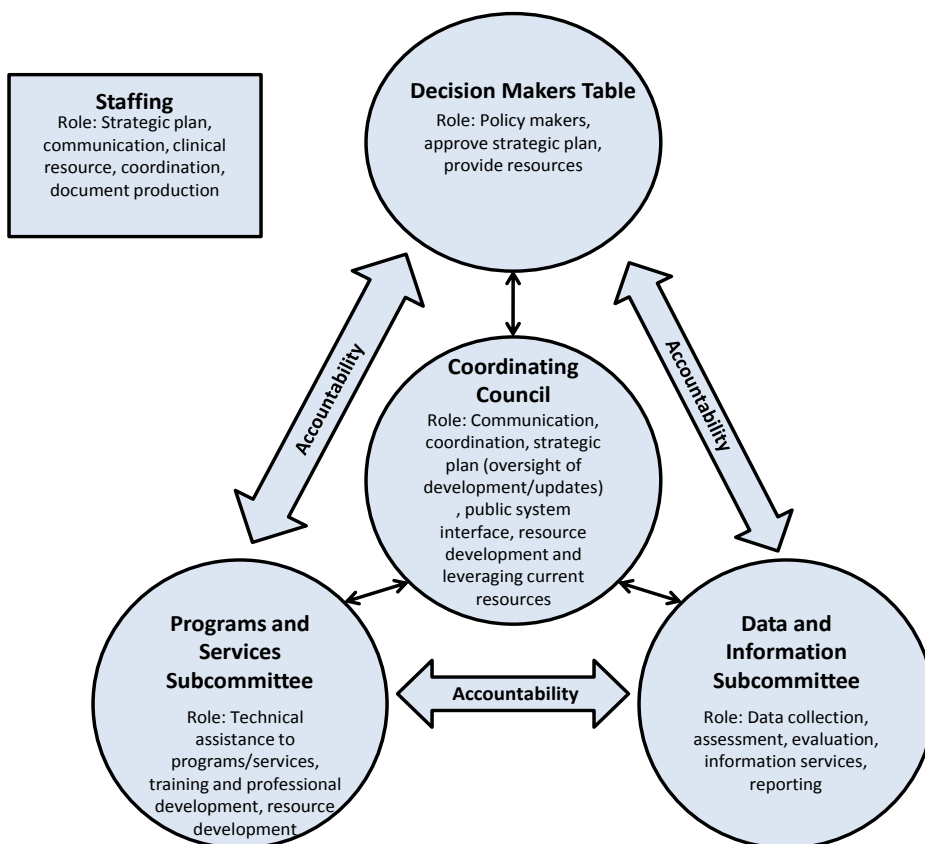
ABOUT THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY REENTRY AND REINTEGRATION COLLABORATIVE

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In order for the CCCRRC to continuously improve its ability to meet the needs of individuals reintegrating into the community, reduce recidivism, and maintain public safety, it addresses a wide range of reentry-related issues including:

- Increased job training, placement, and employment opportunities
- Increased educational opportunities
- Reduced violations of conditions of supervised release
- Increased payment of child support
- Increased housing opportunities
- Reduced drug and alcohol abuse through participation in substance abuse services
- Increased participation in physical and mental health services
- Increased financial literacy
- Increased family and community engagement in reentry

STRUCTURE OF CCCRRC



Program Recommendations to CCCRRRC

The Reentry Planning Initiative also produced a series of programmatic recommendations for critical services. System-wide recommendations are supplied in the following areas:

Reentry Process

The reentry process includes several stages: sentencing, incarceration, pre-release, release and reentry. Risk and needs assessment should be conducted at sentencing and adjusted throughout to meet the needs of the individual.

Service Delivery System

Develop a system of sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the formerly incarcerated that will include trainings and professional development for service providers and county employees.

Education and Computer Literacy

Offer appropriate educational and computer skills training programs to both inmates and the formerly incarcerated.

Financial Literacy and Services

Provide basic financial literacy to the formerly incarcerated and connect them with financial services such as credit and budget counseling, bank accounts, public benefits and tax preparation assistance.

Employment

Develop and enhance job training and certificate programs targeted at the formerly incarcerated.

Develop and implement a county “Ban the Box” policy to remove the question about criminal records from county employment applications during the initial application stage of the hiring process except for certain identified sensitive positions in public safety and children’s services or as determined by the agency. Policies vary across jurisdictions but have some of the following elements:

- delete the criminal background question from initial application;
 - ensure that federal law, which requires that a conviction be “substantially related” to job responsibilities, is enforced;
 - perform a background check once the candidate is selected or determined to be a serious prospect;
 - identify all positions for which background checks will be conducted due to the nexus between offenses and job duties, or as required by law;
 - consider the gravity of the offense, the age of the candidate at the time of the offense, and how much time has elapsed since the conviction and the application;
 - the right of the applicant to be notified that they were disqualified because of information in the background check and the right of the applicant to correct information and appeal the decision. Candidates for jobs with conviction restrictions can be notified of such restrictions in position announcements; and
 - apply the policy to county/city vendors and contractors.
- For examples of “Ban the Box” policies, please visit the National Employment Law Project website: http://www.nelp.org/index.php/content/content_issues/category/criminal_records_and_employment/. For a “Q and A” on the policy, please visit: <http://www.crmintegrators.com/transformationnetwork/Advocacy/tabid/71/Default.aspx>.

Mental Health

Identify individuals requiring mental health services prior to release and develop a transition process that will allow for the seamless transference of medical records between institutions. Connect youth to Contra Costa County Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Transition Age Youth (TAY) program.

Substance Abuse

Improve the coordination of and access to substance abuse services for the reentry population beginning pre-release. Provide technical support to Addiction Recovery Counselors to ensure that prisoners suffering from substance abuse receive an integrated approach to treatment during and after incarceration.

Health

Create a special committee to coordinate all health issues and services with a view towards implementing a system for providing the reentry population with health services, including transference of medical records, connecting them to services and establishing reimbursement mechanisms.

Mentoring/Community Engagement

Create a task force dedicated to exploring structured mentoring opportunities and evidence-based practices specific to addressing the needs of formerly incarcerated individuals. Identify and obtain financial support to develop, evaluate and sustain mentoring efforts.

Housing

Involve the Inmate, community-based case manager and parole/probation officer in pre-release planning process to identify housing opportunities. Collaborate with the housing authority to implement policies that remove barriers to housing.

Legal Services

Connect reentry population to free and low-cost legal services including family court order modifications, housing, “Clean Slate” clinics, Homeless Court and Traffic Court. Create reentry courts, drug courts, mental health courts and alternatives to incarceration/diversion programs.