

MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE OFFENDER REENTRY PLAN

The Problem

Minnesota, like many other states, is experiencing dramatic growth in the number of offenders entering prison. Successfully preparing offenders for reentry is an investment in public safety and the social and economic health of families and communities throughout the state.

History

The State of Minnesota, in cooperation with Hennepin County, was the recipient of a Department of Justice Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) demonstration grant in 2003-2004. Under the title of Project SOAR, Minnesota's initiative sought to demonstrate the benefits of early engagement of offenders to plan their post-release reentry and develop a seamless transition from incarceration to successful community reentry.

- *39% increase in the prison population in the last five years (FY2000-2005)*
- *3% projected increase in the prison population each year to 2010*
- *95% of incarcerated offenders return to the community (6,857 in fiscal year 2005)*
- *33% reconviction rate three years post-release*

As the SVORI grant came to an end, the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) developed a long-term reentry strategy based on three components: a rational planning process, offender management practices, and multi-agency collaboration.

The Planning Process

The Minnesota reentry strategy is built on three major schools of thought: lessons learned from the SVORI grant, work from the National Institute of Corrections' Transition from Prison to Community Initiative, and the National Governor's Association Reentry Policy Council Report.

A target population has been identified for the first phase of the initiative to begin in early 2006. This population will consist of all medium and high-risk offenders who will return to two zip code areas in Minneapolis, one zip code area in St. Paul, and two rural counties in greater Minnesota – all communities that receive the highest number of offenders.

Offender Management Practices

Successful offender reentry begins at the time the offender first enters prison and continues through his or her reentry back to the community as a productive, law-abiding citizen. To better prepare offenders for successful reentry, the DOC is organizing

around three phases: the institution phase, the transition phase, and the community reintegration phase.

Two reentry managers oversee a target population of offenders selected to test out the first phase of the initiative. Currently the department and community have multiple services in place designed to aid offenders in transition and reentry. One goal of this initiative is to coordinate those services into a comprehensive approach.

Multi-Agency Collaboration

In February 2005, the DOC created the Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Plan (MCORP), a strategic initiative between invested state agencies, the courts, and the community to plan and oversee the statewide offender reentry approach. Joining the DOC, the following agencies have committed to the success of MCORP:

- Education
- Employment & Economic Security
- Health
- Housing Finance
- Human Services
- Public Safety
- State Courts Administration
- Veteran Affairs

The mission of MCORP state agencies is to identify points of intersection and collaboration for state and community-provided services to the target population of released offenders. Services will be organized



around the highest criminogenic needs of the target population as measured by the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R). Case plans will be developed and reviewed that target the two or three high-risk/need areas for each offender.

- Develop an electronic case plan that will travel with the offender.
- Secure foundation and grant funding to develop community resources.
- Develop community councils in each of the four targeted areas.

MCORP Accomplishments

- A state agency steering team is in place and overseeing the initiative.
- A statewide work plan was developed and is being implemented.
- A website posts all agendas, minutes, and announcements (www.forums.doc.state.mn.us/mcorp/default.aspx).
- A gaps analysis was conducted to guide the targeting of an offender population.
- A target population has been selected based on LSI-R data linked to zip code data.

MCORP Next Steps

- Work plans and outcomes for the initiative will be developed by two DOC reentry coordinators and one housing coordinator.
- Train key DOC staff on their role/s in successful offender reentry.
- Secure long-term technical assistance to aid in implementation of the initiative.
- Recruit community and faith-based agencies for the steering team and ongoing workgroups.
- Put a system in place that ensures thorough assessment and case planning for each offender in the target population.

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