

Law Enforcement Reentry Initiatives: Learning Sites Solicitation

Nearly 700,000 people are released into the community from prisons each year, and more than 9 million people are released from jails.¹ Officers in small towns and large urban centers alike repeatedly encounter and arrest many of these individuals—often shortly after they leave prison or jail. Returning individuals’ safe and successful reentry depends on many factors, such as fulfillment of their educational needs, access to mental health and drug treatment, job readiness, connections with family, housing availability, and others that could help them avoid future criminal activity. Law enforcement professionals are uniquely positioned to engage their community policing networks of service providers who can help address these needs. They can also be important partners with institutional and community corrections, enhancing supervision when appropriate, which will increase the accountability of people released from prisons and jails and improve public safety.

The Council of State Governments Justice Center, in partnership with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), will be selecting four law enforcement agencies from across the nation to participate in a project to improve the safe and successful transition of people from prison or jail to the community. Supported by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), this effort will focus on how jurisdictions address the large numbers of people leaving correctional facilities, to help prevent future crimes and strengthen vulnerable neighborhoods.

In an effort to expand the knowledge base for law enforcement agencies interested in starting or enhancing a reentry effort, the Justice Center/PERF team will select four agencies to serve as “learning sites.” These agencies will receive on-site and off-site assistance in implementing selected core strategies (such as enhancing information sharing and identifying who will be served by the reentry program) outlined in the COPS-supported toolkit, *Planning and Assessing a Law Enforcement Reentry Strategy*. The lessons learned from the technical assistance work and other information-gathering efforts will provide valuable information to the field about specific aspects of difficult-to-execute law enforcement reentry activities.

Benefits for Selected Sites

- **Needs assessment**—Justice Center/PERF project staff will work with agency staff to apply the COPS reentry toolkit questions to their jurisdiction to generate an assessment that identifies areas in which the law enforcement agency can start or improve reentry strategies.
- **Targeted, individualized technical assistance**—Project staff will work with the law enforcement representatives and their reentry partners to develop a coordinated work plan designed to meet the needs identified by the assessment tool. Staff and expert consultants will then provide targeted on-site assistance to implement this plan, which may address such reentry issues as sharing information with corrections agencies, adopting collaborative supervision and policing strategies for high-risk individuals or areas, or identifying desired outcomes.
- **Access to data and analysis**—Project staff will review state and local data related to reentry that are readily available to jurisdictions. Findings will be provided to sites in states in which the Justice Center is currently conducting data analyses on what factors are driving recidivism, maps on where the majority of individuals leaving prison return, and other available related

¹ The number of people released from state prisons each year has been steadily increasing—from slightly more than 600,000 in 2000 to just less than 700,000 in 2005. See William J. Sabol, Todd D. Minton, and Paige M. Harrison, *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2006* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007), www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/pjim06.pdf; Allen J. Beck, “The Importance of Successful Reentry to Jail Population Growth” (presentation, Jail Reentry Roundtable of the Urban Institute, Washington, DC, June 27, 2006).

reentry information. For sites in other states, project staff will provide a list of agencies that can potentially provide data to inform decision making on program design and implementation.

- **National recognition**—Selected sites will be highlighted in publications that will be made available to law enforcement agencies across the nation. These resource materials will draw on the sites' experiences during the planning and implementation process and will outline suggestions and tools for overcoming challenges.

Responsibilities of Learning Sites

- **Assess reentry initiative**—Learning sites will identify on-site staff who will work with the Justice Center/PERF project team to assess their agency's reentry strategy. The sites will assemble personnel who will complete the COPS toolkit, representing all relevant ranks or positions, and help develop a work plan that will address identified needs.
- **Share information and provide assistance to project team**—Agency representatives will assist project staff with creating materials for law enforcement agencies in other jurisdictions that want to develop or enhance reentry activities. This work could involve helping project staff develop new templates, recommendations, or other practical guidance on discrete law enforcement duties in a reentry collaboration. On-site staff will also assist project staff with writing a case study that describes how the site was able to overcome challenges to planning or implementing a reentry initiative and lessons learned for potential dissemination to the field.
- **Assume leadership role for area law enforcement agencies**—Sites will be encouraged to take a leadership role within their state or regional network of local law enforcement agencies. The sites will promote the use of their law enforcement networks to help their members support one another in reentry activities. Sites are also urged to connect to state and local corrections agencies that can provide guidance on prison and jail reentry issues.

How to Apply to Be a Learning Site

The Justice Center and PERF, in collaboration with subject matter experts, will consider a number of criteria when selecting learning sites:

- **Commitment to community policing**—Agencies that promote and support strategies to address crime through problem-solving tactics and police–community partnerships.
- **Collaborative efforts involving local and state organizations**—Law enforcement agencies that have a significant role, or plan to assume a significant role, in a comprehensive reentry initiative that includes local and state agencies..
- **Jurisdiction diversity**—Urban and rural jurisdictions that represent different areas of the country of sufficient size to support a reentry initiative.
- **Technical assistance needs that represent common challenges**—Agencies that have experienced problems likely to be encountered in other departments throughout the country.
- **Dedication to data-driven reentry**—Law enforcement agencies with an individual(s) who can conduct in-house research or analysis. Site agencies should support data-driven policies.
- **Leadership commitment** — Agency leaders who are committed to provide staff or other resources needed to complete the reentry assessment questions and contribute to the work plan's development.

The application can be downloaded at www.reentrypolicy.org/issue_areas/reentry_law_enforcement.

Completed applications should be submitted to Laura Draper via email to ldraper@csg.org or via post to the Justice Center, 100 Wall Street, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10005. To be considered, applications must be sent or postmarked by June 16, 2008.