

Offender Reentry

Issue Description:

State and local officials are joining federal government leaders in focusing unprecedented attention on the millions of people released from state prisons and local jails each year. Constituents in these communities know that the lack of affordable housing, drug and mental health treatment, jobs, and positive role models, undermine efforts to make individuals' transition from corrections institutions to the community safe and successful. Although government plays an important role in trying to address these problems, it cannot take them on alone. Service providers based in the neighborhoods where people released from prison and jail return know best how to access local resources to help former prisoners rejoin communities and families in positive ways. They are a tremendously valuable partner if government agencies can better engage them in prisoner reentry efforts. Comprehensive offender reentry programs support strategies to deliver pre- and post-release assessments and services, and to develop transition plans in collaboration with criminal justice and corrections agencies and faith- or community-based organizations.

Recommended Tactics/Strategies for Addressing the Issue:

The Second Chance Act will provide limited funding for grants to states, local governments and Tribes that may be used to promote the safe and successful reintegration into the community of individuals who have been incarcerated. Allowable uses of funds include mentorship, housing, education and job training, engagement with community colleges, family programming, initiatives addressing victim priorities and restorative justice, research to improve the effectiveness of release and revocation decisions using risk assessment tools, and re-entry court programs., identifying barriers to collaborating with child welfare agencies in providing services, collecting information regarding dependent children of incarcerated persons, and developing programs that support parent-child relationships. The Second Chance Act will also provide grants to nonprofit organizations that may be used for mentoring of adult offenders or providing transitional services for re-integration into the community; grants to improve the availability of drug treatment to offenders in prisons, jails and juvenile facilities; and grants to States, local governments, and Indian tribes to develop and implement prison-based, family-based treatment programs for incarcerated parents who have minor children.

Available Resources:

The Council of State Governments Justice Center (www.justicecenter.csg.org) has developed extensive resources which may be accessed through their website. The Urban Institute (www.urban.org) and the Center for Effective Public Policy (www.cepp.com) also have valuable resources on their website.

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