



## Nationwide Justice Trends:

### Corrections and Community Corrections Byrne JAG Purpose Area

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program (Byrne JAG) is the nation's cornerstone public safety grant program. Under the law, states and localities may invest the funds across the entire justice system under eight broad purpose areas.\* One of those, the **Corrections and Community Corrections** purpose area, may include intensive post-release supervision, drug treatment in correctional facilities and other projects which support the priority of recidivism reduction.

States and territories have used or plan to use Byrne JAG funds to implement and support a broad range of such activities, including, but not limited to:

- Individualized reentry programs
- Medications for addiction treatment (MAT) in facilities
- Re-entry navigation support Workforce hiring and retention
- Transportation to post-release services
- Educational/vocational opportunities in facilities
- Residential treatment services for substance use disorders
- Specialized correctional units focused on reentry preparation

NCJA provides training and technical assistance (TTA) to the state administering agencies (SAAs) in each state and territory responsible for planning how Byrne JAG funds will be allocated. This brief provides a high-level **overview of trends and agency needs** in the Corrections and Community Corrections purpose area that states may find valuable as they conduct Byrne JAG strategic planning.

## National Corrections and Community Corrections Trends

A scan of national Corrections and Community Corrections programming trends found several current areas of focus. These include:



The use of [medications for addiction treatment \(MAT\)](#)<sup>1</sup> is considered a gold standard of care for opioid use disorder. Many jails and prisons are increasing their use of MAT both inside correctional institutions and in transitioning

to community treatment providers during the reentry process. The practice is not without its critics. Some professionals in the criminal justice and treatment fields view MAT as "[substituting one substance for another](#)."<sup>2</sup> However, [decades of research](#) indicates that MAT greatly reduces relapse and overdose death and improves reentry outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

\* To learn about the Byrne JAG program and the eight purpose areas, see NCJA's [Investing Byrne JAG webpage](#). (<https://www.ncja.org/investing-byrne-jag>)



There is an overlap between homelessness and criminal justice involvement. Formerly incarcerated individuals are almost [ten times more likely](#) to be homeless than the general public.<sup>4</sup> Many jurisdictions are [providing resources](#) to support the housing needs of those reentering into the community.<sup>5</sup> The [Volunteers of America](#) website offers a good overview why reentry housing is so important and describes programs being run across the country.<sup>6</sup>



Special populations such as youth and women often face difficult circumstances within the criminal justice system. Initiatives such as special housing units, trauma-informed practices and policies and specialized reentry services enable these people to get access to innovative practices that enhance their chances of success. Example: the [WORTH](#) (Women Overcoming Recidivism Through Hard Work) unit in Connecticut is a specialized housing program within a secure facility.<sup>7</sup> The curriculum is designed to serve an adult female population with approaching release dates, helping the women acquire and maintain the necessary skills to achieve a successful reentry.



[Employment is often a barrier to successful reentry](#) and stable employment can reduce recidivism.<sup>8</sup> Returning citizens face difficulties finding employment due of their criminal records and a lack of skills. Job training programs such as the [Baltimore City District Court’s Re-Entry Services program](#) (DCREP) offers willing criminal case defendants a chance to participate in job training as a condition of probation, or in lieu of short jail sentences.<sup>9</sup>



Data sharing between community service providers and correctional professionals can lead to enhanced continuity of care both when individuals enter into correctional settings, during their period of incarceration and during reentry planning. In Colorado, [Health Information Exchange](#) (HIE) allows connected jail medical staff to access critical health information such as medications and chronic conditions.<sup>10</sup> This is [important](#) not only during intake but also in reentry planning.<sup>11</sup>

### Example of a Jail-to-Community Reentry Planning Process



Source: National Institute of Corrections (NIC) [Transition from Jail to Community Initiative \(TJC\)](#)



## National Corrections and Community Corrections Needs

Justice systems face policy, training and programmatic needs in the Corrections and Community Corrections area, many of which may be addressed with Byrne JAG funding, including:

**Workforce hiring and retention**—correctional workforces are in crisis nationwide due to a lack of employees.<sup>12</sup> The shortage goes beyond numbers; even when adequately staffed, many correctional workers lack rigorous training and the experience that only comes through time on the job. The situation can lead to increased violence and mistreatment of incarcerated individuals.<sup>13</sup>

**Reentry navigation support**—Reentry Navigators are trained personnel that serve as a resource for returning citizens, helping them readjust to life in the community and avoid activities that might lead to re-incarceration.<sup>14</sup> The Bureau of Prisons has published a 900-page guide to help individuals self-navigate their reentry.<sup>15</sup> One-stop transition centers are also proving to be effective in helping individuals with successful reentry.

**Support to administer all forms of medications for addiction treatment (MAT)** for substance use disorders<sup>16</sup>—MAT saves lives and helps individuals on their path to recovery. However, it must be administered by adequately trained professionals and used in concert with other treatment modalities to be effective.

**Reduce jail and prison overcrowding**—One of the biggest concerns of the corrections and community corrections field is overcrowding in jails and prisons. Crowded institutions are dangerous for incarcerated people and staff and greatly reduce the chances that incarcerated people will receive programming that might improve their reentry chances. Crowding reduction strategies have been proposed and tried in local, state and federal systems since the incarceration boom that began in the 1980s.<sup>17</sup>

## Looking for Assistance?

With support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) the NCJA Training and Technical Assistance team provides Byrne JAG support to all state and territories free of charge. SAAs interested in training or guidance in completing a Byrne JAG strategic plan, accessing resources and information on promising practices, or opportunities to connect with and learn from their peers should visit [www.ncja.org](http://www.ncja.org) or email [strategicplanning@ncja.org](mailto:strategicplanning@ncja.org).

This document was created with the support of Grant No. 2019-YA-BX-K002 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



## Endnotes

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