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# Charting The Way Home



# ***A Reentry Strategic Plan for Southwest Alabama April 2017***

## ***Project HOPE Reentry Taskforce Members***

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**Vivian Davis Figures** Senator, Alabama Legislature

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# ***A Reentry Strategic Plan for Southwest Alabama April 2017***



## ***I. Background and Planning Process***

Kenyen R. Brown was nominated by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the U. S. Senate to serve as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama in 2009. The U. S. Department of Justice, Attorney General Eric Holder, adopted an agenda for encouraging local districts to organize and support reentry efforts and services for released inmates returning to the federal districts. In 2011, U. S. Attorney Brown organized Project HOPE (Helping Offenders Pursue Excellence) as an ongoing collaborative dialogue for service providers and agencies involved with reentry activities. Monthly meetings have served to update information about efforts to improve services and to link participants for referrals and cooperative actions.

In January 2015, the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles requested regional task forces be formed for coordinating state-wide planning to reduce inmate recidivism. It was recognized that a strategic plan was needed for securing federal funding in support of reentry and other activities geared to reducing the recidivism rate for Alabama.

In July 2015, U. S. Attorney Brown spearheaded the founding of the Project HOPE Reentry Task Force for Southwest Alabama as an extension of the general group. The Task Force was charged with the following responsibilities:

1. Develop a strategic plan with annual goals and measurable outcomes for reducing the rate of recidivism by 50% over five years and concomitantly increase public safety and promote economic and community development.
2. Generate community consensus and support for a strategic plan that will garner the resources required for implementation and sustainability.
3. Review best practices and identify resources that could be shared with reentry stakeholder agencies and organizations, and encourage collaboration by local policymakers for addressing reentry barriers.

State Senator Vivian Davis Figures agreed to chair the Task Force and recruit its membership. A total of 44 community leaders including elected officials, law enforcement, attorneys, judges, service provider executives, college educators and administrators, pastors and business executives were recruited. This strategic plan was developed to address Mobile and Baldwin Counties reentry needs, and will be expanded to serve adjacent counties as capacity for response increases.

To increase community awareness, the Task Force sponsored a series of reentry simulation events to better inform the community about the power structure of barriers released inmates encounter. Each event provided stations that represented the components that must be transacted to successfully transition back to the community, such as the probation office, food stamps, health care, employment search or a job, housing resources, social security office, and driver license office. Each game participant was given an identity as a released inmate with specific handicaps that made accessing resources difficult. For example, transportation could be limited to bus passes. One possible outcome over the 1-hour game was to be arrested and returned to jail.

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Seven subcommittees were formed to facilitate strategic plan development: Drug Treatment and Health Services, Community Awareness, Housing and Transportation, Education, Training and Employment, Prison In-Reach, Documentation and Restoration, and Research and Evaluation. A Chair and a Facilitator were appointed for each subcommittee, and the Chair selected the members of his or her subcommittee.

Each subcommittee, with the exception of Research and Evaluation, was charged with the following general responsibilities:

- Develop an understanding of the issues, concerns, and barriers related to the topic area;
- Prepare a written summary of committee activities and findings for each calendar quarter and present in advance to the Task Force chair and at Task Force meetings; and
- Propose solutions to the Research & Planning committee for inclusion in the strategic plan.

Research and Planning responsibilities included:

- Inventory existing services and resources in support of reentry;
- Receive notes and information generated by the working committees;
- Summarize identified issues and barriers to reentry and proposed goals and strategies;
- Draft a southwest Alabama strategic plan for reducing recidivism over 5 years; and
- Propose agencies to be assigned responsibilities for each goal and strategy.

The subcommittees began their work in the fall of 2016, with a deadline to submit their work to the Evaluation and Planning Subcommittee in early December 2016, with the goal of having a draft strategic plan ready to present to the Taskforce Steering Committee in early February 2017.

The Southwest Alabama Reentry Strategic Plan's goal is to reduce the Alabama recidivism rate 50 % by the end of 2021.



### ***II. Understanding the Problem and What Can Be Done***

When prisoners in the United States are released, they face an environment that is challenging and actively deters them from becoming productive members of society. Within three years of release, 67.8 percent of ex-offenders are rearrested, and within five years, 76.6 percent are rearrested. With more than 2 million people incarcerated in the United States, recidivism harms both the families of inmates and society in general, as taxpayers continue to support a broken system that sets ex-offenders up to fail once they are released.

The Congressional Research Service defines recidivism as “the re-arrest, reconviction, or re-incarceration of an ex-offender within a given time frame.” Because of systemic legal and societal barriers, once ex-offenders are released, it is more difficult for them compared to the general populace to find gainful employment, secure a consistent source of housing, and generally function in society. Often viewed as sub-citizens, ex-offenders are perpetually punished for crimes. The causes of these restrictions are systemic and affect ex-offenders at all levels of society.

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Former prisoners face challenges at every level. These challenges come in many forms, but Ann Jacobs, director of the Prisoner Reentry Institute at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, summarizes them as, “A person’s successful re-entry into society can be viewed through how adequately they are able to meet six basic life needs: livelihood, residence, family, health, criminal justice compliance, and social connections.” Attaining each life need presents unique challenges, many of which are interconnected.

Many of the challenges facing ex-offenders are systemic and require policy changes and a shift away from the attitude of some that punishment should continue after sentences have been served. “Ban the Box” is a national campaign against continued punishment in hiring that calls for employers to remove the box on job applications that requires applicants to disclose criminal records.

In addition to lobbying for policy changes, many nongovernmental organizations are leading grassroots efforts to help ex-offenders with recidivism. A 2013 National Criminal Justice Reference Service study found that when inmates complete degrees before re-entering society, recidivism rates substantially decrease.

This strategic plan addresses both systemic and grassroots changes to attain the goals of reduced recidivism and successful reentry for all clients in the southwest region of Alabama.



### ***III. Reentry Goals***

- ***Goal 1: Reduce recidivism by 50% in five years.***
- ***Goal 2: Successful reentry for all clients, to include:***
  - *Reunite families*
  - *Improve life skills*
  - *Reduce criminal thoughts and behaviors*
  - *Maintain long term recovery*
  - *Promote healthy lifestyles*
  - *Reduce jail populations by providing alternatives to incarceration*
  - *Serve and assist veterans*
  - *Prevent homelessness for clients served*
  - *Assist clients obtain decent, affordable housing*
  - *Assist clients obtain high quality employment*



### ***IV. Programmatic Strategic Priorities***

#### **Programmatic Strategic Priority 1: Transition**

##### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: There is a lack of necessary integration, coordination, and a mechanism to monitor and evaluate in-house pre-release services; some policies limit both community organizations’ and family members’ from providing assistance that will increase the likelihood of successful reentry.

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## Strategies:

### **1. Strengthen programming, policies, and staff investment so local agencies and families are able to provide enhanced support to individuals returning to the community as early as possible.**

- a. Educate penal institution staff about reentry services for returning individuals.
- b. Identify who is returning to the community.
  1. Obtain Release of Information from inmate.
  2. Receive information on all returning to the community with needs and risks (understand unique needs of different populations, i.e. transition to adulthood, elderly, sex offenders, veterans, work release, individuals returning from federal prison etc.).
  3. Develop/update and circulate resource guide to all returning to the community.
- c. Conduct standardized pre-release activities.
- d. Understand and connect to programming that supports reentry.
- e. Review and advocate for improvements, when necessary, in relevant policies, including:
  1. Family orientation and visitation
  2. Contractor access
  3. Training and supervision of volunteers
  4. Medication policies
  5. Obtaining benefits

### **2. Standardize local organizations' orientation, assessment, and service provision model in penal institutions and upon return, ensuring quality service provision, accountability, and reporting on results.**

- a. Connect with every individual returning to the community; if resource limitations exist, focus on populations with the least services and highest risks/needs.
- b. Obtain information on all organizations from the community currently providing services.
  1. Identify organization's target population
  2. Identify organization's service objectives/purpose
  3. Define services provided in jail and community
  4. Define who does what best and develop integrated system of services
  5. Educate organization staff
- c. Partner with state agencies to develop and implement statewide pilot reentry partnership between the community and jail/institutions resulting in comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach, to include:
  1. Group orientation
  2. Individual assessment
  3. Culturally sensitive and gender specific services, as needed; activities of daily living; cognitive restructuring; legal issues; medical; financial literacy, etc.
  4. Individual meeting just prior to release, and within days after release
  5. Community orientation and linkage to services and staffing agencies
  6. Connection to parole
- d. Develop system of reporting, monitoring, and accountability.

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### **3. Provide support to family members (both children and adults) and opportunities that enable appropriate family reunification.**

- a. Identify family members of individuals currently in penal institutions.
- b. Make presentations in community about resources for family members and those returning (i.e. at City Council meetings, churches, etc.).
- c. Orientation and assessment of needs.
- d. Provision of culturally sensitive and gender specific services, as needed, such as training in coping/expectations, anger management, counseling, transportation for visitation, Family Matters curriculum, family mentors, etc.
- e. Provide fatherhood programming.
- f. Utilize churches to provide support to family members and address feelings of shame.
- g. Make visitation more accessible and offer alternative methods of interaction (i.e., monitored video visitation, monitored Skype, phone calls at no cost, e-mailing, transportation provided, family friendly environment).

### **Programmatic Strategic Priority 2: Education, Training and Employment**

#### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: According to “Reentry Facts” provided by the National Reentry Resource Center, “Employment rates and earnings histories of people in jails and prisons are often low before incarceration as a result of limited education experiences, low skill levels, and the prevalence of physical and mental health problems; incarceration only exacerbates these challenges”. Further, “A large, three-state recidivism study found that less than half of released jailers had secured a job upon their return to the community.”

#### Strategies:

##### **1. Enhance employer awareness**

- a. Create an Employer’s Tool Kit to be posted on a reentry website that will include information on:
  1. Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC)
  2. Federal Bonding Program
  3. Updated Title VII/Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidance
  4. Employment readiness service providers
  5. Retention and supportive services for new and entry-level employees
  6. Services available to employers
  8. Background check providers
- b. Conduct annual employer education sessions.
- c. Recruit corporate champions that have hired formerly incarcerated persons.
- d. Engage formerly incarcerated individuals who have been successful in the workplace to share stories with employers.
- e. Promote program to buy services or products from employers that hire formerly incarcerated individuals.

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**2. Support holistic models that offer a menu of services that include a balance of evidence based, as well as innovative pilot programs for individuals who already live in the community, those returning from penal institutions, and those who would benefit from alternative employment methods such as entrepreneurship.**

- a. Align services in the community to develop a comprehensive menu of services to include:
  1. Enlist voluntary participation from formerly incarcerated individuals.
  2. Provide job readiness (include use of computer and appropriate communication/wording).
  3. Provide strong case management with follow up.
  4. Provide supportive services, including behavioral health.
  5. Provide scholarship funding for:
    - a) Credentialed training
    - b) On-the-job training, transitional employment, or apprenticeship
  6. Provide education remediation (i.e., GED or math).
  7. Promote employer engagement, focusing on industries that are more likely to hire and require the skills that formerly incarcerated individuals possess.
  8. Provide front-end risk and employment readiness assessments.
  9. Contracted linkages between service providers
- b. Influence work-readiness programs in Community Based Corrections Facilities pre-release activities leveraged by federal funding sources like DOL and BJA grants.
- c. Explore the use and development of innovative or promising pilot programs such as entrepreneurial programs and linkages.
- d. Develop a funding strategy which includes a diverse portfolio of funders to ensure the implementation of these models.

**3. Continue advocacy that promotes criminal justice reform specific to employment**

- a. Increase community awareness of the employment barriers faced by formerly incarcerated individuals.
- b. Build a broad based coalition to work towards eliminating or reducing these barriers.
  1. Fair hiring
  2. Reduce employment related collateral sanctions
  3. Create policies that support career pathways in growing industries providing a voice and a vehicle for participation by the people most impacted by these policies that preclude restored citizens from entering the workforce
  4. Address search engines conducting background checks that do not have current information (i.e., charges identified and later dismissed or reduced)

### **Programmatic Strategic Priority 3: Housing**

#### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: According to the 2010 Council of State Governments' "Reentry Housing Options: The Policy Makers Guide", "When individuals are released from jail, the ability to access safe and secure housing within the community is crucial to their successful reentry. Studies have shown that the first month after release is a vulnerable period during which the risk of becoming homeless and/or returning to criminal justice involvement is high." It is widely recognized that the emergency shelter system is not an acceptable housing option for individuals returning from jail, despite its frequent use over the years due to the challenges in obtaining adequate private and federally assisted housing.

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## Strategies:

### **1. Advocate for resources for homeless or at-risk of homelessness inmates to establish housing stability at release from penal institutions, to include:**

- a. Prevention Strategies
- b. Emergency Shelter
- c. Rapid Rehousing
- d. Transitional Housing

### **2. Advocate for permanent/affordable housing once housing stability is established.**

- a. Expand admission and Tenant Selection Criteria for HUD-Assisted housing (Project-based Section 8 housing).
  1. Gather more information
  2. Adopt an advocacy strategy
- b. Monitor and continue advocating for expansion of public housing admissions criteria.
- c. Continue to advocate for a shortened no “look-back” period for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.
- d. Frame housing as an Affordably Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) issue and use the tools of Fair Housing, coordinating with the Center for Fair Housing and its work on reentry issues.

### **3. Investigate/coordinate/collaborate on the creation of centralized intake for formerly incarcerated individuals that are in need of housing**

- a. Integrate with Housing First Community Connections Network and HMIS systems.

### **4. Create a full range of housing options that assist in obtaining permanent/affordable housing**

- a. Offer emergency housing options other than the homeless shelter system that move individuals to permanent housing.
- b. Establish new housing options such as a pilot voucher program that offers the full range of supports needed.
- c. Develop a comprehensive approach to providing adequate and appropriate housing to sex offenders given the unique challenges presented by this population due to special requirements and community attitudes.
- d. Develop a roster of private homeowners or businesses that are willing to rent transitional housing to formerly incarcerated persons.
- e. Enter into partnerships with agencies with the capacity to create transitional housing.
- f. Seek to place formerly incarcerated persons in county/rural areas as well as in-city hubs.

## **Programmatic Strategic Priority 4: Transportation**

### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: When returning to the community, access to transportation is limited by a number of factors including financial resources, distance from public transportation, and lack of a car or driver’s license. This, in turn, negatively impacts employment opportunities and an individual’s ability to access services that support successful reentry.

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## Strategies:

### **1. Identify and arrange for a variety of transportation options**

- a. Institute bicycle rental/ownership program.
- b. Make cars more accessible:
  1. Obtain donated cars from auto dealerships, churches, and others.
  2. Promote carpooling and car-sharing programs.
  3. Establish volunteer driver services.
  4. Address insurance issues.
- c. Establish low-cost van service.
- d. Provide assistance in obtaining a driver's license.

### **2. Establish a partnership with the Mobile Public Transit, The Wave, for non-profits and reentry service providers for reduced cost of bus tickets.**

- a. Determine current Wave discounts, if any.
- b. Conduct survey data on transportation to determine status of agencies that are receiving discounts.
- c. Determine most effective individuals to advocate with Wave Board of Directors and General Manager to implement a model program for no cost or discounted bus tickets.

### **3. Provide help with cost or communicating transportation options.**

- a. Target specific faith based groups who currently have forums or organizations where they meet regularly.
- b. Arrange for provision of information at reentry events explaining options for transportation.
- c. Provide opportunities to formerly incarcerated persons to earn money to cover the cost of transportation or provide funds for transportation.

## **Programmatic Strategic Priority 5: Mental Health and Substance Abuse**

### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: Addiction is a chronic and progressive disease deserving of the same treatment as other chronic diseases like diabetes, epilepsy, cancer, etc. When family members are engaged in treatment, the individual is more likely to comply with treatment protocol and show improvement. Drug treatment and health services for the individual and their families should begin prior to their release.

## Strategies:

### **1. Establish effective medication and treatment protocols for program participants.**

- a. Develop local and state partnership to provide prescription medications to formerly incarcerated individuals leaving programming by billing a central pharmacy in the same way that medication prescriptions will be handled through the ODRC allowing for a more seamless, efficient and protective process for the offender and the community.
- b. Make appropriate connections for on-going mental health and substance abuse services.

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### **2. Address three main classifications of status transitioning out of incarceration, each having unique needs and requiring different levels of care. The three classifications are as follows:**

- Probation with possible split sentence.
  - Parole with possible early out.
  - Out - sentence complete.
- a. All individuals are provided a comprehensive assessment while incarcerated.
  - b. Services are backed-in to the penal institution.
  - c. Families have access to services beginning during their loved one's incarceration.

### **Programmatic Strategic Priority 6: Life Services**

#### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: Inmates and formerly incarcerated persons face challenges at every level. These challenges come in many forms, but successful re-entry into society can be viewed through how adequately they are able to meet six basic life needs: livelihood, residence, family, health, criminal justice compliance, and social connections. Attaining each life need presents unique challenges, many of which are interconnected.

#### Strategies:

##### **1. Establish a Life Services program within the penal institution to include four levels;**

- a. Level 1 Assessment: Criminogenic assessment; 1<sup>st</sup> job readiness assessment; enrollment and pre-release contract; ROI for confidential ServicePoint database; individualized case plan; initial IEP; Alabama JobLink preview.
- b. Level 2 Skillsets: Remedial education, active listening; computers, GED or other high school equivalency program.
- c. Level 3 Personhood: Setting goals; anger & relationships; time management, financial management; style & appearance; personal interests/expressions; family life.
- d. Level 4 Thinking Work: Resumes & applications; interviewing; registration Alabama JobLink; 2<sup>nd</sup> job readiness assessment; revised IEP; personal case plan update; debriefing in preparation for release.

##### **2. Establish comprehensive post-release Life Services programs, including individual case management and the following service components:**

- Family Reunification and Counseling
- Grief Counseling
- Healthcare/Medication management
- Anger Management
- Life Skills
- Financial literacy
- Child Support payments
- Court ordered payments
- "Thinking for a Change" curriculum
- Motivational enhancement
- Recreation/healthy living/wellness
- Legal obligations

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**3. Build client advocacy through case management and community-based mentoring and volunteering programs.**



### ***V. Operational Strategic Priorities***

#### **Operational Strategic Priority 1: Stakeholder Collaboration and Coordination**

##### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: It is necessary to gain the support and participation of a wide range of key traditional and non-traditional stakeholders. Communicating regularly with information and messages that help these stakeholders to understand the significance of reentry to them and the larger community will increase the likelihood of moving them to action in a way that removes barriers to successful reentry.

##### Strategies:

##### **1. Educate the decision makers and other key stakeholders.**

- a. Continue to research “Smart on Crime” policies nationally (i.e., increase the usage of alternative to incarceration programs, such as specialized courts, diversion, community based corrections).
- b. Develop a Reentry 101 series (both live and online).
  1. Educate community on the reentry issues facing Mobile using data, offering resources, and presenting solutions and how to join/participate in activities that support successful reentry (i.e., Citizen Circles)
  2. Challenge negative stereotypes
- c. Implement multi-site visits for key stakeholders showing them where our county/city resources are going, who they are serving, and why it is important.
- d. Host briefings.
  1. Historical disenfranchisement impact on communities economically and politically; status of reentry population; updates on the levels of service being provided in the community; testimonials from those who have received service and have been “rehabilitated”; how to be involved.
  2. Conduct quarterly meetings for all stakeholders such as those individuals formerly incarcerated and their family members, service providers, advocates, funders, etc.
  3. Host quarterly roundtable discussions with County stakeholders; semi-annual roundtable with State and County representation.
- e. Offer reentry simulation events to better inform key stakeholders of barriers previously incarcerated persons encounter.

**2. Create a reentry webpage with links to services, resources, research, and best practices for professionals involved in reentry to access relevant information for education and data-driven decision-making.**

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## **Operational Strategic Priority 2: Community Awareness and Outreach**

### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: In order to advance the programmatic and policy changes envisioned in this Strategic Action Plan, it is necessary to gain the support and participation of the community. Communicating regularly with information and messages that help community residents to understand the significance of reentry that will increase the likelihood of moving them to acceptance and action in a way that removes barriers to successful reentry.

### Strategies:

#### **1. Develop a unified message.**

- a. Create a county-wide vision statement such as “To improve the quality of life in the community by having formerly incarcerated individuals become productive citizens and successfully reenter the local community”.
- b. Use words that are understandable and respectful to those involved (agree on how to refer to individuals who have been incarcerated, i.e., returning citizen, restored citizens, etc.) – language matters
- c. Create an on-line centralized website for all reentry information.

#### **2. Educate the community**

- a. Continue to research “Smart on Crime” policies nationally (i.e., increase the usage of alternatives to incarceration programs, such as specialized courts, diversion, community based corrections).
- b. Develop a Reentry 101 series (both live and online).
  1. Educate community on the reentry issues facing Mobile using data, offering resources, and presenting solutions and how to join/participate in activities that support successful reentry (i.e., Citizen Circles)
  2. Challenge negative stereotypes.

#### **3. Identify media outlets and create a brand for reentry**

- a. Create a toolkit for engaging media.
- b. Develop solid contacts.
  1. Reentry specific contacts (media)
    - a) How best to leverage
    - b) News/magazine format
    - c) Newspaper article series
    - d) TV series, “a month in the life of...”
    - e) Special events
- c. Create an awareness campaign.
  1. Enlist the participation of a public relations firm to assist
  2. Explore as many no cost/low cost engagement strategies
  3. Create a message
    - a) Develop talking points
    - b) How do we get more positive hits in the media
    - c) Consistency and redundancy is key

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## **Operational Strategic Priority 3: Research and Evaluation**

### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: A strong system of data collection, program evaluation, and research is necessary to ensure effective use of limited resources and services are promoting successful reentry. Expected outcomes from programming should be defined and a system of data collection that allows for evaluation and reporting should assist in modifications that improve outcomes.

#### Strategies:

#### **1. Understand and optimize data already collected (e.g., agency level data reported to funders, local and state agencies).**

- a. Include data from clients (demographic/outcome/recidivism), agencies (organizational efficiency/effectiveness), and families/children.
- b. Assess adequacy and completeness of these data.
- c. Make these data accessible for analysis on a real-time basis.
- d. Examine data at the aggregate level, but also make individual data available for planning.

#### **2. Create standardized definitions of recidivism and factors that might predict recidivism; utilize comprehensive recidivism analysis protocols correlating data from multiple data sources; use appropriate multivariate statistical approaches to examine key outcomes that link client and service data to predict outcomes.**

- a. Identify stakeholders available from each domain to commit to research and evaluation.
- b. Determine current and desired evaluation capacity based on projected resources.
- c. Develop and implement a common sharing of information form/capacities/protocols so that all relevant information can be aggregated across domains.
- d. Use HMIS as a centralized database.
- e. Build the collection of a common set of core indicators into contracts that include performance-based accountability, as well as more specific indicators on a by contract basis.

#### **3. Provide opportunities for ongoing dissemination of information about the reentry population, bringing people together for education, development, and training; include the reentry population and faith-based providers in the process.**

- a. Share information and arrange for training on evidence-based and promising practices.
- b. Provide reports on results of local and national evaluations and research.
- c. Present data on the reentry population.

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## **Operational Strategic Priority 4: Sustainability**

### **Problem Synopsis and Strategies**

Problem Synopsis: Moving the strategic priorities identified in the community planning process to action requires efficient use of existing resources and a more organized and coordinated approach in obtaining new funding. Recognizing that competition for limited resources both within and beyond the issue of reentry is a reality, a system that has the capability of identifying funding opportunities that support priorities and best practices, addressing concerns related to resource distribution, and making the process transparent to stakeholders will maximize fundraising opportunities.

### Strategies:

#### **1. Fund what works.**

- a. Use models supported by research to reduce recidivism, Department of Justice or Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration approved evidence-based practice models.
- b. Match services to risk/need - RFP requires standardized risk/needs instrument (ORAS/OYAS/GAIN) for program screening/eligibility determination.

#### **2. Funding/grant applications focus on ensuring that programming match State and local priorities.**

- a. Funding requests/grant applications support implementation of local priorities established in this strategic action plan.
- b. Funding requests/grant applications follow policy and legislative mandates.

#### **3. Central coordination of grant applications.**

- a. Establish organizational structure and capacity for review of grants for purposes of support letters; determine criteria and system to determine who applies for grant solicitations.
- b. Remove barriers created by governmental authorities that limit the ability to submit the strongest, most competitive applications for funding.
- c. Establish organizational structure and capacity to assist with preparation of grants, writing of proposals, dissemination of information, and identification of agencies that may collaborate in grant initiatives.
- d. Serve as clearing house of information.



## ***VI. Implementation and Action Steps***

The Reentry Strategic Plan committee members participating in the planning process have identified strategic priorities for a five-year timeframe. An effective and efficient implementation process must be established. The key ingredients in successful implementation are:

- Maintain focus on the strategic priorities identified;
- Develop detailed implementation plans for each strategic priority, identifying what needs to be done, who needs to be involved, and timing for completion; and
- Develop a structured reporting system that communicates progress and barriers to successful implementation.

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This plan calls for the development of an Implementation Task Force. The task force will be responsible for creating a plan for implementing the Reentry Strategic Plan, identifying actions steps, and creating a time line for implementation. Additionally, the task force will determine measurable outcomes for the strategic priorities and objectives for the related strategies in order to achieve the goals of reduced recidivism and successful reentry for returning citizens.

Recommended action steps and an action plan template are offered below.

### ***Focus on Strategic Priorities***

It is necessary to conduct a planning process to establish strategic priorities because fiscal resources are limited; to a large degree, there is a logical progression or evolution of what needs to be done to improve the reentry system of services; and the commitment and contributions of a large number of stakeholders will be required to institute desired improvements. It is important to maintain a focus on these priorities in order to maximize the progress that is possible. That is not to say that there will not be emergent issues and opportunities that must be addressed, but there must be thoughtful consideration and justification for diverging from the established strategic priorities. A new funding source or a strong advocate for their particular service should not necessarily divert fiscal and human resources from the strategic priorities established by this community process.

**Action Step:** Establish criteria and a process to review emergent issues and opportunities that are inconsistent with established priorities so that needed focus is appropriately maintained.

### ***Implementation Plans***

The six programmatic and four operational strategic priorities present a challenging agenda to accomplish within five years. In order to be successful, an organized and efficient approach must be utilized. In each strategic priority, work was begun on what needs to occur to address that area; however, additional delineation of tasks and responsibilities is required. In addition, it may be necessary to further focus efforts due to resource limitations and identify the strategic priorities that are most important to accomplish.

**Action Step:** Form and Implementation Taskforce challenged to develop action plans for all strategic priorities.

- Identify and embed current resources into the detailed implementation plans relevant to each strategic priority.
- Identify new community resources to strengthen collaboration and implementation of the implementation plans.
- Strategize for development of new resources to fill gaps in the reentry network of services.

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**Action Step:** Complete a detailed implementation plan for each priority as follows.

<b>Strategic Priority</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Leadership Responsibility</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Completion/ Impediments</b>
<b>Programmatic Priorities</b>					
Transition					
Education, Training, and Employment					
Housing					
Transportation					
Mental Health and Substance Abuse					
Life Services					
<b>Operational Priorities</b>					
Collaboration & Coordination					
Community Awareness and Outreach					
Research and Evaluation					
Sustainability					

***Reporting***

Accountability was identified as one of the benefits of pursuing a community planning process to establish strategic priorities. Biannual reporting in a standard format at an open community meeting on progress in implementation of the strategic priorities will support this accountability. A more thorough discussion at the end of Year 1 on possible modifications should also be instituted.

**Action Step:** Publicize dates and locations of biannual meetings and develop reporting format for these sessions.

**Action Step:** The Implementation Taskforce and Project Evaluator provide continuous monitoring and evaluation of the plan implementation process.

- Provide quarterly progress reports for dissemination to the Project HOPE Taskforce.
- Prepare and present an annual Reentry Strategic Plan Status Report.
- Revisit the Strategic Plan in Year 3 to assure strategic priorities are meeting goals, objectives, and deadlines. Revise the Plan, if necessary, based on current programmatic, operational and outcome data.

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## ***VII. Credits and Contributors***

1. Challenges of Prisoner Re-Entry into Society (July 12, 2016), Simmons School of Social Work
2. Cuyahoga County, OH Strategic Action Plan (2013)
3. Jefferson County (AL) Reentry Planning Council Strategic Plan (2013)
4. The Transition House, St. Cloud, FL
5. Office of the U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Alabama
6. Mobile Area Interfaith Conference, Inc. Staff Support
7. Khalid Al-Shethry and Berna De, Graphic Artists, Spring Hill College

## ***VIII. Resources***

1. Quick Reference Guide – Designed for the Returning Ex-Offender
2. Reentry Services Inventory – Reentry Services Google Map was created in partnership with Spring Hill College. As of this month, the map currently lists 59 service providers and has been viewed 1054 times. The Reentry Services Map pings where service providers are located on a map, states what services the entity provides, list the service hours of the provider and the telephone number, as well as shows a photo of the service provider's building. The Reentry Services Map also shows all the bus routes that would take formerly incarcerated persons closest to the different service providers. The map is linked to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District website on the webpage for Project HOPE: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdal/programs/ex-offender-re-entry-initiative>.

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***Project HOPE Reentry Strategic Plan Subcommittee Chairs, Facilitators, and Members***

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- 3. Housing & Transportation** Wallace Davis, Chair  
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- 6. Documentation & Restoration** John Lockett, Chair  
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