

Example 22. Georgia's Targets of Change

Georgia Reentry Impact Project

Recommendations

The Policy Team studied nine phases of offender reentry and developed the following three core recommendations:

1. Implement better interagency electronic communications as outlined by the interagency information technology working group to improve continuity and accountability for offender reentry. Utilize emerging XML technologies to develop a single repository and source for offender data that is accessible to all partner agencies. Overcome barriers (including HIPAA requirements) to sharing offender information with other pertinent agencies and community partners.
2. Develop and implement an automated assessment instrument that identifies an offender's risk to re-offend, as well as the offender's crime-producing factors and behaviors. This instrument will drive offender placement into evidence-based interventions. Task the criminal justice information technology interagency sharing group with reviewing existing electronic systems and determining information that can be shared and a timeline for sharing the information.
3. Driven by recommendations derived by the automated assessment instrument, a Transition Accountability Plan (TAP) should be developed as a pre-sentence investigation and will follow the offender through the criminal justice system from sentencing (or entry into the prison) to reentry into the community. The TAP will include critical pre-entry and reentry issues that are relevant for release planning (i.e. housing, disability, substance abuse, physical and mental health, employment, education, family and community supports). The TAP should be updated continually as needed and should take the place of a release-planning document. The TAP should be available electronically. The TAP should create a seamless system between institutional and community service providers to swiftly assess and treat the crime-producing behaviors of offenders.

I. SENTENCING

1. Authorize a pre-sentence investigation workgroup to review current sentencing practices; implement a criminogenic risk and needs based, victim

restoration and family/community pro-social supports assessment, and provide this information to judges prior to sentencing.

2. Review and recommend modifications to existing mandatory sentencing laws to accommodate community-based alternatives to prison, and a period of community supervision after release from incarceration.
3. Authorize a workgroup to examine utilization of existing sentencing alternatives and diversionary facilities, including specialty courts (mental health, drug, DUI, reentry, etc.); and consider expanding community-based sentencing alternative that are derived from evidence-based practices.

II. INSTITUTIONAL INTAKE AND CLASSIFICATION

4. Modify the intake/assessment process to identify and document gender-specific criminogenic risk and reentry needs and use the TAP as a component in making institutional placements.
5. Share the TAP with institutional program and parole staff, faith/community-based service providers and all other relevant parties; and provide a means for these individuals to input offender program participation and progress

III. INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMMING

6. Expand programming/beds allocated for special needs (substance abuse, sex offenders, mental health) and develop or expand specialized housing units to include faith and character-based dorms, work release and in-house transitional centers so that available space will exist to accommodate recommendations contained in the TAP and have offenders released in a timely fashion.
7. Target crime producing factors and behaviors that have been identified by an assessment instrument on offenders who are at a high risk of reoffending so as to address these factors and behaviors through programs and services delivered by designated staff.
8. Expand evidence-based institutional programming that prepares offenders for post-release employment or continuation of education or job training:
 - Vocational and job skill programming, alternative ways of providing skills training, and integration with prison industries;
 - Cognitive/Behavioral Training;
 - Education
 - English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes.

9. Consider expansion of existing relationships with technical colleges to broaden the range of available vocational programming to offenders. Also, continue to provide dual credit for programs offered by the Department of Technical and Adult Education in order to support enrollment in technical colleges upon the offender's return to the community.

IV. OFFENDER TRANSITION

10. Develop a transitional services procedure that includes factors that are necessary for successful reentry: housing, treatment, and programs, employment, family issues and financial obligations (i.e. child support and restitution to crime victims) and designate institutional staff responsible for implementation.
11. Work with driver's services and other organizations to ensure that necessary identification and other pertinent documents for employment are available to the offender prior to release.
12. Administer through the Georgia Department of Corrections a disability qualification advocate program to assist inmates in securing Medicaid and Social Security Benefits prior to release.

V. RELEASE DECISION MAKING AND TRANSITION

13. Consider the offender's progress on goals outlined in the TAP as a significant factor for release decision-making.
14. Assign pre-release and post-release conditions that are consistent with the goals of the individual offender's TAP.

VI. HOUSING AND COMMUNITY/FAMILY SUPPORT

15. Complete housing arrangements in accordance with offender's TAP at least 90-120 days prior to release.
16. Utilize the Alternative Living Facilities Manual or create a similar resource directory of housing options with links to other sources as noted by other pertinent agencies.
17. Provide offenders with a certificate of progress when they have successfully completed one year of community supervision. This document will assist the offender in accessing housing and employment options.

18. Implement a program whereby inmates who participate in prison work programs will place their residual earnings (after restitution and/or housing in prison) in escrowed savings accounts and use these funds for transition obligations including housing.
19. Develop and implement model guidance on offender eligibility for public assisted housing.
20. Expand interaction with faith/community-based organizations to create additional transitional or reentry housing, particularly for offenders with special needs.
21. Share information concerning offender's circumstances with public housing authorities.

VII. COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

22. Establish protocols that incorporate supervision with social services, law enforcement and other agencies that interact with offenders and their families.
23. Integrate the post-release supervision plan with the offender's TAP.

VIII. COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

24. Develop linkages between institutional treatment and community treatment providers, particularly for groups requiring specialized services (i.e. sex offenders, brain injured, mentally retarded, HIV+ offenders).
25. Sanction and encourage regular collaborative events and information sharing opportunities between institutional staff, local supervision and service provider staff to discuss offender eligibility and intervention issues, capacity and available slots in community programs.
26. Develop and improve existing collaborative partnerships with local community service boards to provide more effective community-based offender programs. Identify additional community staff and resources that will target the indigent offender population for expedient and affordable substance abuse and mental health treatment options.

IX. NEXT STEPS

27. Implementation: Establish an implementation team consisting of representatives from each of the policy team agencies to operationalize the recommendations.

28. Communication: Develop an orientation for partner organizations on the “big picture” benefits of effective offender reentry; publicize the benefits and outcomes of the GRIP program to local governments and organizations.
29. Evaluation: Create measurable benchmarks and standards against which the GRIP program can be evaluated.

Juvenile Offender Reentry Considerations

During the preparation of the TPC recommendations, much attention was focused on the development of ideas related to the adult offender population. However, the following were a list of considerations that have been developed specific to the juvenile offender population. Further collaboration is necessary to provide a complete list of juvenile recommendations.

I. SENTENCING

1. Evaluate the need for and the cost of juvenile courts having juvenile pre-disposition assessments and reports available to the court prior to disposition.
2. Review and recommend modifications to juvenile disposition options to further reduce or further eliminate the short term program provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice. Study recommendations made by the Juvenile Code Re-write Committee to consider dispositional options relating to the serious, violent or chronic juvenile offenders.

II. INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMMING

3. Target the risks and needs of juvenile offenders at a high risk of offending through evidence-based practices, programming and services.
4. Expand the existing Department of Juvenile Justice program of youth to community transition to all state Youth Development Campuses (YDCs).

III. OFFENDER TRANSITION

5. Evaluate whether family involvement in juvenile release and transition planning activities can be increased or improved in order to better support transition and achieve successful reintegration into the community.
6. Study and recommend ways to ensure that released juveniles are transitioned to an appropriate educational placement upon release and not be automatically funneled to an alternative school.

IV. RELEASE DECISION MAKING AND TRANSITION

7. Support the Juvenile Code Re-Write Committee's recommendations that support DJJ flexibility to request designated felon release based on program progress and success rather than the minimum length of stay.

V. HOUSING AND COMMUNITY/FAMILY SUPPORT

8. Recommend that the Department of Juvenile Justice continue and improve its current planning/aftercare planning processes.
9. Seek to provide older juvenile offenders with needed housing and employment assistance by expanding existing agreements with the Department of Labor and other faith and community-based groups as appropriate.

VI. COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

10. Support the Juvenile Code Re-Write Committee initiative to strengthen support for mental health and substance abuse treatment in the community for juveniles involved with courts who have mental illness, substance abuse or whose competency may be an issue.

VII. COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

11. Strengthen and broaden existing Department of Juvenile Justice initiatives that link institutional treatment with community service providers for special needs populations.

VIII. NEXT STEPS

12. Consider specific juvenile justice system issues both as part of the overall justice system as well as based on the special needs of the juvenile system population.
13. Identify the specific juvenile system issues that are of interest to local governments, schools and other community organizations. Consider whether there should be a separate process within the GRIP TPC framework to focus specific juvenile issues.