



Montgomery County Community-Wide Ex-Offender Reentry Task Force

Background

Efforts to improve and address the issues of Ex-Offender Reentry in the Dayton / Montgomery County Region have been moving forward for several years. From a time when most formerly incarcerated individuals were largely on their own in our community to a time when coordinated efforts and a climate of collaboration prevailed, the needs of the ex-offender remain paramount. The history of the community-wide effort to improve services for the formerly incarcerated began in 2002. Several attempts to foster community wide action met with various levels of success. In late 2005, the Montgomery County Family and Children First Council (FCFC), through its Economic Self Sufficiency (ESS) Outcome Team, focused its energy on a review of employment services and opportunities for Ex-Offenders.

In October 2007, the outcome team published its report entitled “Ex-Offender Reentry Employment Final Report”. The report identified local programs and resources, researched the current status of ex-offenders in the community, identified barriers to employment, identified established best practices to improve employment for ex-offenders and made recommendations for program development and system changes for ex-offenders returning to the community. The first recommendation was the establishment of a community-wide ex-offender reentry task force to implement the findings of the employment work group and to expand the scope of the effort to include all aspects of reentry. The Montgomery County Family and Children First Council allocated \$350,000 in local human services funding from its community initiative fund. These funds provide initial funding and but additional public and private funding is essential to Montgomery County’s successful reentry effort.

On February 26, 2008, the Montgomery County (Ohio) Board of County Commissioners established by resolution the Community-Wide Ex-Offender Reentry Task Force. The Board appointed Judge Walter H. Rice, United States District Court and Montgomery County Commissioner Deborah Lieberman as Co-chairs of the Task Force. The Task Force has a membership of over 75 community leaders, comprised of

- Ex-Offenders
- Elected Officials (State / County / Municipal)
- Ex-Offender Service Providers
- Law Enforcement Officials, Courts, Judges
- Public Defenders, Probation and Parole (Federal / County / Municipal)
- Faith based leaders
- Business leaders and employers
- Media and other community leaders

The Task Force’s structure incorporates seven work groups focused on Housing, Employment, Continuum of Care, Legal Issues and Advocacy, Children and Families, Technical, and Pre / Post Release Services and three special interest caucuses (Ex-Offenders, Faith Based Leaders, and Law Enforcement). Members of the

caucuses were invited to also serve as members of the work groups and one member of each caucus serves on the executive committee to help steer the formulation of the community-wide reentry plan. The ex-offender caucus provides a critically important role in “keeping it real” and identifying the needs of ex-offenders whom the task force intends to benefit.

The Community-Wide Ex-Offender Reentry Task Force has developed and utilizes a website to assist the members of the work groups to share their minutes and research with their members and members of all the other teams and caucuses. The site contains meeting schedules, presentations and reports. As the planning stages of the task force wind down and implementation begins, the website will be transformed into a public site that can help direct our returning citizens to information and needed services.

Implementation

By the end of July 2009, all seven of the work groups had completed Recommendation Reports which were presented to the full task force for input and are available here for viewing.

- Children & Families Work Group Recommendation Report
- Continuum of Care Work Group Recommendation Report
- Employment Work Group Recommendation Report
- Housing Work Group Recommendation Report
- Legal Issues/Advocacy Work Group Recommendation Report
- Pre/Post Release Services Work Group Recommendation Report
- Technical Work Group Recommendation Report

A Writing Team has been assembled and is currently drafting a comprehensive plan that sets goals for successfully rehabilitating and reintegrating ex-offenders within Montgomery County.

An Implementation Team has also been assembled that is designing the Montgomery County Office of Reentry which will take the recommendations in the Plan and turn them into reality.

In addition another team is developing the Reentry Marketing Campaign. The task force recognizes that it needs the support of the people and businesses in the community in order for the initiative to be successful.

The task force has submitted three grant applications so far in 2009 to help fund some initial programs:

- Department of Justice- Prisoner Reentry Demonstration Grant- **Second Chance Act**. Collaborated with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) and Lucas County Reentry Task Force for an offender reentry mentoring program.
- **Edward Byrne Memorial JAG Program**. Collaborated with Goodwill/Easter Seals to develop and implement a model an ex-offender Specialized Employment Center (SEC) to increase the employment rate and decrease the recidivism rate of ex-offenders within Montgomery County.
- Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) **Climate Showcase Communities** grant. Montgomery County will incorporate a unique approach to locally grown and distributed food and Ex-Offender Reentry through the TransPlant Project.

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