

# POLICYOPTIONS ISSUE BRIEF

## Prisoner Reentry in New Jersey and the USA

### SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

- Nationally, about 50% of all former prisoners return to prison for a new crime or parole violation within three years.<sup>1</sup>
- Nationally, 95% of individuals with prison will go home at some point. This year, over 700,000 individuals will return to the community after spending time in prison.
  - At any given time, 750,000 individuals ex-prisoners are on parole supervision.
- In 2010, the Department of Corrections (DOC) reported a recidivism rate of 57% - an increase of 17% since 2002.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2010, New Jersey spent over \$2 billion of its \$28.3 billion budget (nearly 10%) on public safety and criminal justice. The \$1 billion budget for the DOC makes it the state's largest operating agency.
- Individuals leaving prison face many barriers to successful re-entry, including:

Housing	the Urban Institute found that at least 10% of people entering prison are homeless and of those leaving prison, at least 10% and sometimes up to 55% find themselves homeless. <sup>3</sup>
Employment	studies have shown that having a criminal record lowers an individuals chances of a call back or job offer by nearly 50%. <sup>4</sup> In New Jersey, only 37% of 2005 releasees found employment by 2007. <sup>5</sup>
Health	former prisoners are more likely to have major mental disorders and chronic and infectious diseases but many live in communities with insufficient health care facilities. <sup>6</sup> In New Jersey, 32% of state inmates have at least one diagnosed chronic or communicable physical or mental-health condition. <sup>7</sup>
Substance Abuse	a majority of prisoners have extensive substance abuse histories and most identified drug use as the primary cause of their problems, but fewer than one-third receive treatment after release. <sup>8</sup> In New Jersey, over 50% of state prisoners are diagnosed or assessed to have a drug or alcohol problem. <sup>9</sup>
Communities	a significant number of prisoners return to a small number of communities, many of which are facing high levels of social and economic disadvantage. <sup>10</sup> In New Jersey \$53 million of the DOC's budget is respectively spent incarcerating people from Newark and Camden cities. <sup>11</sup>

## PAST POLICY

### National

- *Mistretta v. United States* - the Court upheld federal "sentencing guidelines" which remove rehabilitation from serious consideration when sentencing offenders. Defendants were henceforth sentenced strictly for the crime, with no recognition given to such factors as amenability to treatment, personal and family history, previous efforts to rehabilitate oneself, or possible alternatives to prison.<sup>3</sup>
- "Tough on Crime Movement" - refers to the period between the late 1960s and early 1970s during which a set of policies were established that emphasized punishment as a primary, and often sole response to crime.<sup>4</sup>
  - Mandatory sentencing, "three strikes" rules, truth-in-sentencing, quality of life policing, zero tolerance policies, and other approaches were instituted.
  - These often resulted in longer and harsher penalties and the elimination of rehabilitation and other programs.

### State

- *New Jersey Safe Streets and Neighborhoods Strategy* refers to a strategy developed by Governor Corzine in 2009. The strategy's goal was to reduce violent crime and recidivism in New Jersey.<sup>5</sup>
  - Involved four main areas of attention: Enforcement, Prevention, Prisoner Re-entry and Oversight and Accountability.
  - The reentry portion of the strategy focused on creating a Reentry Oversight Committee to take charge of oversight; launching a Demonstration Project that focused on 1,300 offenders; increased support and opportunities for youth returning home from the Juvenile Justice Commission; and modifying policies that contained certain barriers to reintegration.

## CURRENT POLICY

### National

- *Second Chance Act* - signed into law on April 9, 2008, the Second Chance Act was designed to improve outcomes for people returning to communities from prisons and jails.<sup>6</sup>
  - This first-of-its-kind legislation authorizes federal grants to government agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, victims support, and other services that can help reduce recidivism.
  - In fiscal year 2009, \$25 million was appropriated for Second Chance Act programs, including \$15 million for state and local reentry demonstration projects and \$10 million for grants to nonprofit organizations for mentoring and other transitional services.
  - In fiscal year 2010, \$114 million was appropriated for prisoner reentry programs in the Department of Justice, including \$14 million for reentry initiatives in the Federal Bureau of Prisons and \$100 million for Second Chance Act grant programs.<sup>7</sup>
  - Funding for the Act was put in jeopardy in September of 2011 when it was cut entirely by the Senate. In November, however, funding was restored at \$63 million. In April of 2012, the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Commerce, Justice, and Science released their FY2013 budgets with the House appropriating \$70 million and the Senate \$25 million.

## State

- In 2009, the New Jersey State Legislature passed a package of bills directed at prisoner reentry. The three laws aim at relieving some of the barriers faced by returning prisoners such as lifting the ban on food stamps, providing exiting inmates with their records and identification cards, and setting benchmarks for increasing educational standards in the prison system.<sup>8</sup>
- *Governor Christie's Initiative on Reentry* - In 2011, Governor Chris Christie presented "The Governor's Initiative on Reentry," a cross-departmental effort to expand the Drug Court Program and improve program management, coordination and accountability in order to reduce recidivism and help men and women successfully reenter society.<sup>9</sup>
  - The initiative established the Governor's Re-entry Task Force and the position of Coordinator for Prisoner Re-entry within the Governor's Office.
  - Executive Order No. 83 was signed by Governor Christie on November 28, 2011, which established the Governor's Re-entry Task Force.
- The New Jersey State Parole Board (SPB) works with more than 15,000 offenders statewide to ensure their return to society as law-abiding citizens.<sup>10</sup>
  - SPB's Community Programs Unit partners with government, non-profit and private agencies to connect ex-prisoners with vocational, mental health and related services targeted at breaking the cycle and risk of crime.

## MODEL PROGRAMS

### Reentry Preparation in Prison

- *Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative* is a collaborative effort committed to public safety through giving prisoners the tools they need to succeed in re-integrating into society. The MPRI is administered through a public-private partnership including the Michigan Department of Corrections and other state agencies, Public Policy Associates, Inc., and the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency.<sup>11</sup>
  - By 2006, Michigan had reduced its recidivism rate from 45.7% in 1998 to 36.4% in 2006.

### Restorative Justice Approach

- *Opportunities, Alternatives & Resources Fairfax County, Inc.* is a local non-profit restorative justice organization providing human services since 1971. OAR's mission is to rebuild lives and break the cycle of crime with opportunities, alternatives, and resources for offenders and their families to create a safer community.<sup>12</sup>
  - OAR found that for every \$1 spent on client saved taxpayers approximately \$145.00.<sup>13</sup>

### Holistic Approach

- *Boaz and Ruth* is an organization that realizes long term individual change is hard to come by without changing the community as well. Boaz and Ruth is a unique organization that integrates ex-offenders back into the community, providing the opportunity for safe housing, decent employment and healthy relationships through mentoring.<sup>14</sup>
  - In 2008, Boaz and Ruth had a 6% recidivism rate for program participants.
  - A study of training program graduates between 2003 and 2010 revealed that 72% had obtained employment outside of B&R within six months of graduation and 19% were hired by B&R.<sup>15</sup>

## KEY ORGANIZATIONS

### National

- *Government*
  - United States Department of Justice
    - Bureau of Justice Assistance
    - Bureau of Justice Statistics
    - Office of Justice Programs
    - National Institute of Justice
    - National Institute of Corrections
  - National Reentry Resource Center
- *Non-Profit and Foundation*
  - Annie E. Casey Foundation
  - Joyce Foundation
  - Project Return, Inc.
  - The Urban Institute
    - The Reentry Roundtable

### New Jersey

- *Government*
  - New Jersey Department of Corrections
    - Office of Transitional Services
    - Office of Community Programs
  - New Jersey Office of the Governor
    - Governor's Re-entry Task Force
  - New Jersey Office of the Attorney General
  - New Jersey State Parole Board
    - Division of Community Programs
  - New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- *Non-profit and Foundation*
  - New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
    - Integrated Justice Alliance
  - NJ Success

## Related Policy Options Issue Briefs:

- Employment Barriers for Ex-Offenders
- Prisoner Education
- Juvenile Offender Reentry

<http://bit.ly/HYOZ7Y>

<http://bit.ly/JD5vws>

<http://bit.ly/JUNTte>

## Endnotes:

1. "Prisoner Reentry." 2012. *The Urban Institute*, <http://www.urban.org/Pressroom/prisonerreentry.cfm>.
2. Greenwald, Richard et al. 2011. "Prisoner Reentry Services in New Jersey: A Plan to Reduce Recidivism." Prepared for the Office of the Governor, State of New Jersey, by the *Manhattan Institute for Policy Research*, [http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/Prisoner\\_Reentry\\_Services\\_in\\_New\\_Jersey.pdf](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/Prisoner_Reentry_Services_in_New_Jersey.pdf).
3. Petersilia, J. 1999. "Parole and Prisoner Reentry in the United States." *Crime and Justice*, 26, pp. 479-529.
4. "Conservative Agendas and Campaigns: The Rise of the Modern 'Tough on Crime' Movement." 2005, *Defending Justice*, *Political Research Associates*, <http://www.publiceye.org/defendingjustice/pdfs/chapters/toughcrime.pdf>.
5. "Reentry: A Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods." 2009. *Office of the Governor*, <http://www.nj.gov/oag/crimeplan/safe-reentry-plan.pdf>.
6. "Second Chance Act." 2012. Reentry Policy Council, *Justice Center - The Council of State Governments*, [http://reentrypolicy.org/government\\_affairs/second\\_chance\\_act](http://reentrypolicy.org/government_affairs/second_chance_act).
7. "Funding." 2010. The National Reentry Resource Center. *Justice Center - The Council of State Governments*, <http://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/funding>.
8. "P.L. 2009, c. 328." *State of New Jersey*, [http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/PL09/328\\_PDF](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/PL09/328_PDF). "P.L. 2009, c.329." *State of New Jersey*,

[http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/PL09/328\\_PDF](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/PL09/328_PDF). "P.L. 2009, c. 330." *State of New Jersey*, [http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/PL09/330\\_PDF](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/PL09/330_PDF).

9. "Governor Chris Christie Takes Action to Help Offenders Successfully Re-Enter Society and Lead Productive Lives." 2011. New Jersey Office of the Governor, <http://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/552011/approved/20111128c.html>.

10. "About Us." 2012. *New Jersey State Parole Board*, [http://www.state.nj.us/parole/about\\_us.html](http://www.state.nj.us/parole/about_us.html).

11. "Michigan ReEntry Initiative 2010 Progress Report: Making Strides in Public Safety," Michigan Department of Corrections, *Public Policy Associates, Inc.*, Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, [http://www.mi.gov/documents/corrections/MPRI\\_2010\\_Progress\\_Report\\_343664\\_7.pdf](http://www.mi.gov/documents/corrections/MPRI_2010_Progress_Report_343664_7.pdf).

12. "About OAR." 2012. Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources Fairfax County, <http://www.oarfairfax.org/about-us>.

13. "Impact & Success Stories." 2012. Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources Fairfax County, <http://www.oarfairfax.org/impact--success-stories>.

14. "Boaz & Ruth 2008 Annual Report." 2008. Boaz and Ruth, [http://www.boazandruth.com/documents/2008\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.boazandruth.com/documents/2008_annual_report.pdf). 15. "Boaz &

15. "Boaz & Ruth 2010 Annual Report." 2010. Boaz and Ruth, [http://www.boazandruth.com/documents/2010\\_Annual\\_Report.web\\_with\\_inserts\\_-5.25.11\\_final.pdf](http://www.boazandruth.com/documents/2010_Annual_Report.web_with_inserts_-5.25.11_final.pdf).