

“America is the land of second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.”

-- President George W. Bush, 2004 State of the Union Address

Today, the Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) is hosting the first White House National Summit on Prisoner Reentry. The two-day conference is designed to highlight the success of the President’s reentry initiatives in changing lives and improving communities, share top innovations in the field, and to expand partnerships of Federal, State, and local corrections agencies with faith-based and secular non-profits that help ex-offenders successfully reintegrate into society.

The driving purpose of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative is to find fresh ways to address communities’ most important needs by partnering the strengths of government with the personal touch of community and faith-based organizations. President Bush captured the essence of this purpose when he described the Initiative as a “determined attack on need.”

The Challenges of Prisoner Reentry Are Great

- More than 90 percent of the 2 million individuals currently behind bars will someday be released. Each year more than 650,000 inmates are released from Federal and State prisons.
- According to the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, two out of three ex-inmates will be re-arrested for new crimes within three years of their release from prison, and more than half of those arrested will be re-incarcerated.
- Released prisoners face myriad challenges that foster a return to criminal activity, re-arrest, and re-incarceration, including limited job skills and education, substance abuse, mental health problems, lack of stable housing, and weak family support systems.

Ready4Work

- **In 2003, the Department of Labor’s Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives launched Ready4Work.** A \$25 million, three-year pilot program, Ready4Work uses faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) to help ex-offenders find work and escape cycles of recidivism. A total of 4,482 formerly incarcerated individuals enrolled in Ready4Work. On average, program costs were approximately \$4,500 per participant, compared with average costs of \$25,000 to \$40,000 per year for re-incarceration.
- Although facing a high statistical risk of recidivism, Ready4Work participants returned to prison at *rates 44 percent lower* than the 10.4 percent national rate of re-incarceration after one year of release.

The President's Prisoner Re-entry Initiative

- **President Bush announced his Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (PRI) in the 2004 State of the Union address to expand upon the promise of Ready4Work.** PRI links returning adult nonviolent offenders with FBCOs that help them find work and avoid relapse into criminal activity. PRI's FBCO partners serve thousands of ex-offenders annually.
- PRI sites began serving program participants in the spring of 2006, and early results are promising. As of November 9, 2007, 10,361 PRI participants have been enrolled in the program and 6,035 participants have been placed into jobs. PRI participants' one-year post-release recidivism rate is currently *less than half the national average recidivism rate*.
- The 2008 Budget merges PRI with the Responsible Reintegration of Youthful Offenders program, creating a single program (Reintegration of Ex-Offenders) to assist youth and adult ex-offenders.

The Serious And Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI)

- **From 2001 through 2007, DOJ provided \$90 million to develop new or expand existing programs offering integrated post-release supervision and reentry services through its SVORI program.** Reentry efforts were funded in all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia.
- The 69 grantees operated 89 adult and juvenile programs for serious and violent ex-offenders and received between \$500,000 and \$2 million in single, three-year awards. DOJ has funded a four-year comprehensive impact evaluation that will continue through 2008.

Mentoring Children of Prisoners

- **Mentoring Children of Prisoners (MCP) provides grants to FBCOs that pair children of incarcerated parents with caring mentors.** Since 2003-2004, MCP has *matched 70,425 children and mentors* -- and the initiative is on track to reach the President's goal of 100,000 matches by the end of 2008.

Other Post-Release Efforts

A wide range of other Federal programs support innovative models through which community and faith-based organizations enable ex-offenders to overcome the significant challenges of reentry. These programs include:

- The DOJ Anti-Gang Initiative, which helps youth to resist gang involvement, and the DOJ Weed & Seed program, which "weeds out" gang and criminal influences within communities and then "seeds" communities with positive human services and initiatives.
- The DOL Beneficiary Choice Contracting pilot program, which provides employment assistance for ex-prisoners, and the Department of Health and Human Services' Access to Recovery program, which provides funding for a variety of substance abuse recovery services.