



CCDO-CNCS/VISTA Reentry Initiative

Leveraging Volunteer Resources with Youth and Adult Ex-Offender Reentry and Community Empowerment Initiative

The Opportunity

President Bush has established a national goal of marshaling support for mentoring children of prisoners and the reentry of youth and adult ex-offenders. More than 600,000 persons are released from prison every year; in some communities, these ex-offenders will return to a life of crime (and go back to prison) at a rate of 67 percent within the first three years of being released. The crime committed during the first three years can be avoided if, during this time, the returning offender has the opportunity for successful reentry into the community and makes a commitment to responsible choices. A successful reentry includes addressing basic needs of housing and employment as well as addressing other critical social issues (reintegration into the family, conflict resolution skills, addiction counseling, mentoring, etc.).

The Response

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is collaborating with the U.S. Departments of Justice and Labor to develop joint national service projects to support reentry, housing, employment, and mentoring initiatives in twelve cities of mutual interest that demonstrate need and capacity in FY 2005. CNCS plans to engage more than 20 full-time AmeriCorps*VISTA members who will build the capacity of organizations, create volunteer hubs in partnership with participating cities and grassroots, faith-based and community groups, and mobilize volunteer support for reentry initiatives in these cities.

The goals of this initiative are to:

- ◆ **Reduce ex-offender recidivism and crime, and promote successful reentry into society** by connecting mayoral and Department of Justice reentry initiatives with linkages to volunteer support and grassroots and faith-based and community initiatives. Promote ex-offender, youth and family empowerment in the reentry process through holistic leveraging of public and private resources for housing, employment, life skills, and mentoring for children of prisoners and their families.
- ◆ **Build capacity for President Bush's reentry and mentoring initiatives** using AmeriCorps*VISTA member support to establish volunteer hubs, in collaboration with U.S. Conference of Mayors Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives/Reentry Task Force, the U.S. Departments of Justice, Labor, and other federal partners, and state service commissions, and correction institutions.
- ◆ **Advance a wider scalable model of leveraging volunteers** with AmeriCorps and state service commissions, Senior Corps, private voluntary initiatives such as Volunteer Centers and Hands

On networks, Martin Luther King Day of Service partners, and USA Freedom Corps through resource and model dissemination and web-based volunteer matching.

Selection of the Cities

The following candidate cities were identified as being potential areas of mutual agency interest that demonstrated need and on-the-ground volunteer delivery capability. Further needs assessment and asset mapping are being developed.

- ◆ Charleston , SC
- ◆ Chicago, IL
- ◆ Columbus, OH
- ◆ Cleveland, OH
- ◆ Dallas (multi-site)
- ◆ Indianapolis, IN
- ◆ Miami, FL
- ◆ Oakland, CA
- ◆ Philadelphia, PA
- ◆ Portland, OR
- ◆ Providence, RI
- ◆ Washington, DC