



the NATIONAL REENTRY  
RESOURCE CENTER

— A project of the CSG Justice Center —

Statement by

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A project of the Council of State Governments Justice Center

With funding provided by the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance

Hearing on

Reauthorization of the Second Chance Act

September 29, 2010

Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

Judiciary Committee

U.S. House of Representatives

Thank you Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Gohmert, and members of the Committee for your efforts to highlight and address the extraordinary challenges to public safety presented by the ever increasing numbers of people released from prison and jail and for holding this hearing on the Second Chance Act. This legislation is a necessary first step in addressing recidivism rates nationwide. It is also the foundation to build on as criminal justice agencies and communities struggle to find more effective strategies to keep neighborhoods safe, promote public safety, and reduce victimization all while using resources more efficiently.

My name is Le'Ann Duran. I am the Director of the National Reentry Resource Center, a project of the Council of State Governments Justice Center. Prior to accepting this position, I was the administrator of the Office of Offender Reentry for the Michigan Department of Corrections where I helped design and implement the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI). You may be familiar with the incredible gains Michigan has made through its reentry effort in effectively reducing its costly recidivism rates by improving the long-term outcomes of parolees. The improved outcomes of returning citizens allowed the state to reduce its prison population by approximately 12% (6,500 individuals) and close 20 corrections facilities, which saved an estimated \$900 million.

Having been a practitioner working in a state that has had much success in reducing recidivism, I am hopeful that other jurisdictions will be able to see similar improvements to public safety. I am also keenly aware, however, that bringing about change of this magnitude is an extraordinary challenge. In my new role with the National Reentry Resource Center, a project of the Council of State Governments Justice Center, we have the important job of supporting states, local governments, and community and faith-based organizations as they design and implement reentry initiatives.

Following a highly competitive process, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, a division of the Office of Justice Programs in the U.S. Department of Justice, awarded the contract for the National Reentry Resource Center to the Council of State Governments Justice Center. The CSG Justice Center, using data-driven, bipartisan, consensus-based strategies, has emerged as one of the country's leaders in shaping smart corrections policy, serving policymakers and practitioners at the local and state level from all three branches of government. I am honored to be part of this impressive team.

I also wanted to thank the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for their commitment to seeing evidence-based reentry strategies take root around the country. Without their leadership, realizing the goals outlined in the Second Chance Act would not be possible.

## **The Problem**

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The numbers of people being released from prisons and jails is growing steadily in this country. In 2000, about 600,000 people were released from prison growing to more than 680,000 people in 2008.<sup>1</sup> Between 1990 and 2004, the jail population increased from

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<sup>1</sup> William J. Sabol, Heather C. West, and Matthew Cooper, *Prisoners in 2008*, NCJ 221944 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009)

approximately 400,000 people to just over 700,000.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, there has not been a corresponding increase in success rates for people released from prison: In a study of 15 states, more than two-thirds of state prisoners released in 1994 were re-arrested and more than half returned to prison within three years of their release.<sup>3</sup>

## **Current state of the field**

In the last decade, innumerable government officials and community leaders have emerged seeking to reduce the number of crimes committed by the record numbers of people released from prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities. What was once the goal of a relatively small number of corrections managers, jail administrators, and scattered service providers has recently become a national priority, resulting in the exponential growth of people, organizations, and government agencies interested in helping people who have been incarcerated become law-abiding and contributing members of families and communities. The Second Chance Act has played a significant role in this growth in reentry programs and priorities nationwide.

Government officials and community leaders recognize that people released into the community have significant and diverse needs. Halting the cycle of criminal behavior in youth, which is often the antecedent to adult criminal behavior, for example, requires strategies and programs distinct from those designed for adults. At the same time, the level of sophistication in the reentry field varies considerably. Some organizations understand effective practice and have retooled staff development and training efforts, modified policies, and invested in community-based interventions; however, most are still in the early stages of understanding and implementing effective reentry strategies. Some specialize in narrow focus areas, such as literacy or services for HIV, while others try to provide a comprehensive range of services. Some have received local, state, and/or federal funding; others operate solely on a shoestring budget of contributions and volunteer resources.

Yet these policymakers and practitioners share a common struggle: they must meet the needs of people returning from prisons, jails, and juvenile detention facilities often without immediate access to data-driven strategies, evidence-based practices, models for oversight and accountability, and other methods for efficiently and effectively carrying out their efforts.

The Second Chance Act has provided useful guidance about the key elements of a comprehensive, effective reentry effort and much-needed resources to support implementation. It has also elevated the issue of reentry nationwide and helped to greatly increase the number of jurisdictions that are working on reentry, which when done right, will increase public safety and prevent future victimization.

## **Introduction to the National Reentry Resource Center**

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The National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC) provides education, training, and technical assistance to states, tribes, territories, local governments, service providers, nonprofit organizations, and corrections institutions working on prisoner reentry. The NRRC is operated

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<sup>2</sup> Paige M. Harrison and Allen J. Beck, *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2004*, NCJ208801, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Patrick A. Langan and David J. Levin, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*, NCJ 193427, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002).

by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, with support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Public Welfare Foundation, and the Open Society Institute. It was established by Congress through the Second Chance Act.

## **Background**

Signed into law on April 9, 2008, the Second Chance Act (Public Law 110-199) was designed to improve outcomes for people returning to communities from prisons and jails. 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.

By establishing a national reentry resource center, Congress and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) have made certain that the needs of anyone working in the area of reentry are met. They are effectively buttressing the government agencies and community-based organizations receiving federal funds to ensure the most effective use of those investments. They are also ensuring that the rest of the reentry field is progressing and maturing.

Before the enactment of the Second Chance Act and the subsequent launch of the NRRC in October 2009, government officials and community leaders, under pressure to launch and administer a reentry program, sought help wherever they could find it. Surfing the Web, they downloaded stacks of tools and guides, but were unsure which ones were credible or most relevant.<sup>4</sup> Research was similarly mystifying. Nothing succinctly reviewed what the evidence said are the essential elements of any reentry initiative, and it was similarly unclear who was setting a research agenda to address gaps in the knowledge base. The field was missing one place to go where reliable information was compiled, developed, and easily accessible as well as a single place to connect with an expert to navigate this sea of information and be linked to a peer who could share valuable experiences.

## **NRRC Goals**

The NRRC was created to be a one-stop resource for the field. Since opening its doors in October 2009, the NRRC has helped many individuals, agencies, and organizations, who have typically struggled to implement effective practices with scarce funding in order to better address community safety.

Reentry efforts must start with a strong program design that clearly describes who will be targeted for intervention and outlines the services and supervision appropriate for the target population. In order to create an effective program design, first, those involved in reentry must knit together a joint venture among state, county, and city justice and human services agencies that often have distinct missions—with varying levels of commitment to serving people involved in the justice system. Second, they must agree on how the reentry effort will target resources precisely and scientifically by collecting and analyzing data to identify a subset of people released from prison or jail most likely to reoffend. Third, they must determine the specific service packages and supervision strategies that are tailored to this target population and

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<sup>4</sup> Even the *Report of the Reentry Policy Council*—a seminal publication with hundreds of recommendations from more than 75 national experts—can be overwhelming, especially to someone just starting a program.

most likely to change those behaviors that can lead to reincarceration. Fourth, to sustain the initiative, reentry program administrators must demonstrate how many people they served, what those program participants received, and what difference it made.

Guided by these challenges, the NRRC has brought together the most experienced reentry practitioners and researchers to inform the tools and assistance provided by the NRRC.

### **NRRC Structure**

A Steering Committee includes several national organizations who have partnered together to inform the technical assistance approach provided by the NRRC. In addition to the CSG Justice Center, the Steering Committee includes the Urban Institute, Association of State Correctional Administrators, American Probation and Parole Association, and Shay Bilchik, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University.

The NRRC is also a great example of a public/private partnership. In addition to the support provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the CSG Justice Center has worked to bring private foundations into the partnership. Foundations like the Public Welfare Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Open Society Institute have been tremendous allies in the collaboration to further advance the goals outlined in the Second Chance Act.

The NRRC is grounded in a strong commitment to collaboration. In the years prior to the existence of the NRRC, the CSG Justice Center pulled together hundreds of stakeholders to weave together the best thinkers and the most promising practitioners to inform each other’s work. This history of partnership and collaboration continued after the Justice Center was awarded the grant to manage the NRRC. People released from prison or jail often need services and supports, such as housing, employment, mental health, best delivered by organizations that operate outside the criminal justice system. To convene these key stakeholders, tap their expertise, and demonstrate the type of collaboration essential to a successful reentry initiative, the NRRC established ten committees, and contracted with nationally recognized leaders to chair each of them.

<b>Advisory Committee</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Chair(s)</b>
Communities & Families	<i>Focuses on the challenges faced by individuals who have been incarcerated when they return to their families and communities, as well as the challenges faced by families and communities affected by incarceration</i>	Vera Institute of Justice
Employment & Education	<i>Focuses on improving educational and employment outcomes for individuals returning from prison and jail</i>	Safer Foundation Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College
Behavioral Health	<i>Focuses on the health, mental health, and substance use treatment needs of individuals returning from prison and</i>	Brown University Medical School University of South Florida, de la

	<i>jail</i>	Parte Florida Mental Health Institute
Housing	<i>Focuses on the housing challenges faced by individuals who have been incarcerated and their families</i>	Carol Wilkins, former Director of Corporation for Supportive Housing
Juvenile Justice	<i>Focuses on the particular challenges youth face as they return from correctional facilities and out-of-home placement</i>	Georgetown University, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform
Tribal Affairs	<i>Focuses on the particular challenges of reentry in tribal communities</i>	American Indian Development Associates
Local Government	<i>Focuses on government agencies working to improve reentry at the city and county level</i>	National Association of Counties (NACo)
Victims	<i>Focuses on integrating victims services and victim advocacy in the reentry process</i>	California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA)
Pre/Post Release Supervision	<i>Focuses on improving pre-release planning and post-release supervision to improve reentry outcomes</i>	American Probation and Parole Association (APPA)

Each committee is developing a series of practitioner-friendly tools including a compendium of dozens of reentry-related Frequently Asked Questions, policy and practice briefs, best practice at-a-glance guides, and webinars. These resources are described in more detail in the “Tools for the Field” section below.

### **SCA Grantee Overview**

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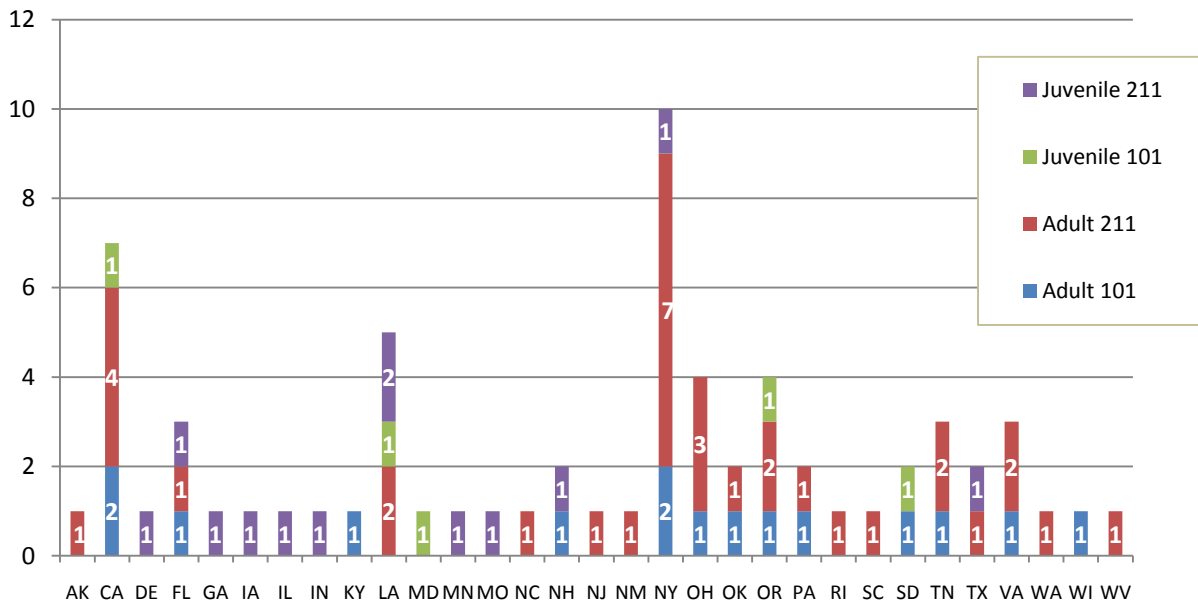
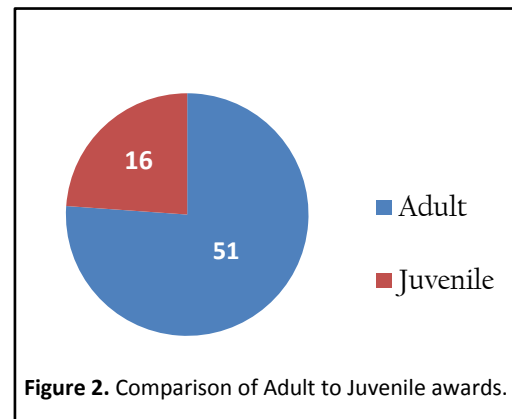
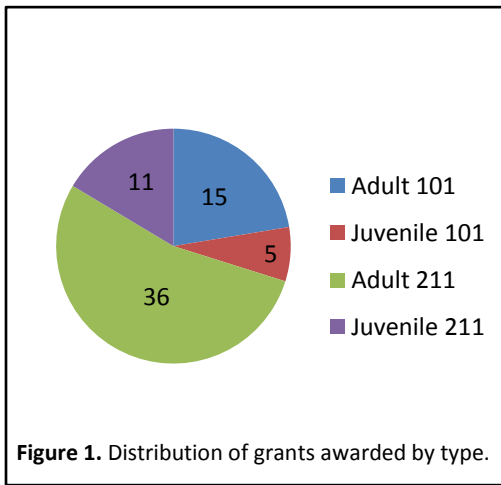
The Second Chance Act grant programs have been incredibly popular. In fiscal year 2009, the first year that funding was available, 955 applicants applied for SCA funding. The reentry field enthusiastically responded to the opportunity to apply for federal funding to support state, local, and community-based reentry initiatives. Of the 955 applications, 67 grantees were funded in 2009, spanning 31 states. This demand establishes the Second Chance Act as one of the most competitive justice programs, with only a seven (7%) percent funding rate in the first year. Based on the volume of phone calls field by the NRRC, demand for continued and expanded funding in FY2010 is likely to grow.

Two program types were funded in fiscal year 2010: demonstration projects and mentor programs.

- Section 101 of the Second Chance Act authorizes demonstration projects grants to state, local, and tribal governments interested in advancing reentry initiatives. Eleven percent (11%) of the applications received for demonstration grants were awarded funding.
- Section 211 of the Second Chance Act authorizes mentor programs grants to nonprofit organizations to advance their prosocial support or case management efforts.

Approximately 769 applications were received in 2009 and 47 adult and juvenile mentor projects - or about six percent (6%) of the applications received - were awarded funding.

FY2009 SCA Grant Program Application Results			
FY09 Grant Program	Total applications received	Total grants awarded	Total amount awarded
Adult Demonstration (101)	119	15	\$7,732,726
Adult Mentoring (211)	507	36	\$10,000,000
Juvenile Demonstration (101)	61	5	\$3,660,172
Juvenile Mentoring (211)	262	11	\$4,707,524 <sup>5</sup>
Reentry Resource Center	6	1	\$2,200,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>\$28,300,422</b>



**Figure 3.** Distribution of grants across state, by program type.

<sup>5</sup> Congress appropriated \$25 million for the Second Chance Act grant programs in fiscal year 2009, but the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention supplemented the available funds to provide grants for 11 juvenile mentoring programs.

# 2009 Second Chance Act Grantees





## 2009 Demonstration Grantees

Demonstration grants were awarded to both adult and juvenile-focused projects. The adult projects focus on either jail reentry or prison reentry and most grantees are delivering key services based on an individual assessment of risk and need. Nine grantees are units of local governments and six grantees are state departments of corrections. In the first nine months of their grant award, adult demonstration grantees have focused on strengthening their collaborative partnerships with other agencies engaged in their reentry projects, hiring grant-funded staff, defining the scope of work for contractors, and re-engineering facility operations to ensure the target population is in-place and ready to participate in their projects.

Most often, adult demonstration grantees have requested assistance on designing case management operations, improving their reentry strategic plan, and responding to the performance measures required by BJA. In addition to the Advisory Committees, the NRRC has partnered with jail and prison reentry experts from the Criminal Justice Institute and Northpointe Institute for Public Management to deliver targeted assistance, customized to address individual grantee needs.

The criminal histories of many adults involved in the criminal justice system traces back to their youth. The primary objective of the juvenile justice grantees is to improve youth-specific interventions during these early years by employing an approach that requires the use of an ecological model, which focuses on peers, schools, and families. In the first cohort of SCA demonstration grants, five focus on youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Two grantees target high-risk youth. Another two grantees are using a “wrap-around” model with a variety of services and supports available to youth participating in their programs, and one focuses exclusively on youth with substance abuse disorders.

Most commonly, the demonstration grantees focused on youth are requesting assistance to help better integrate youth intervention across many complex government agencies. They also seek guidance on how to implement evidence-based practices. Building on the strong history of research supporting youth-specific interventions and working closely with the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention, the NRRC has partnered with Shay Bilchik, Director of the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University and David Altschuler, Professor at Johns Hopkins University, to inform the technical assistance strategy for addressing the unique needs of grantees working with youth.

The chart below describes the type of adult and juvenile projects funded and the target population for their reentry programs.

<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Program Focus</b>
<b>Allegheny County, PA</b>	350 male and 40 female adults whose jail sentence is greater than 6 months.	The program primarily focuses on delivering appropriate behavioral health services, and transitional and support services.
<b>City of Baltimore</b>	60 youth identified as high risk for being a victim or perpetrator of violence, and are returning to Baltimore City from the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services.	The program primarily focuses on delivering appropriate enhanced case management to youth from incarceration to supervised-release. Increased monitoring, service referrals, and support for the youth and their families will be provided as well.
<b>City of Memphis</b>	150 participants, 18 years or older, with one felony conviction or past history of failure after release and at least 90 days remaining in sentence with plans to return to one of five identified zip codes, will be selected. Approximately 90% of participants will be male, and the other 10% female.	The funding will support enhanced case management and enhanced community supervision, as well as family reunification services and pre-release preparation services.
<b>City of Richmond, VA</b>	From the jail population, 50 participants aged 30 or older who have express an interest in reuniting or enhancing their role in family life, and have a substance abuse disorder, will be given the opportunity to participate.	Funding will support a wrap-around model that includes substance abuse treatment, education, employment readiness, life skill, victim services, health care, family counseling, and housing services.
<b>Florida Department of Corrections</b>	Approximately 400 men and 100 women, listed as Medium to Highest risk (based on LSI-R scores), age 18 and older, returning to Jacksonville/Duval County will be given the opportunity to participate.	Funding supports employment, housing, substance abuse/mental health treatment and case management services.
<b>Kentucky Department of Corrections</b>	500 individuals in prison or jail, returning to the Louisville-Jefferson County area, who are at highest risk of recidivism, will be selected. Approximately 250 will receive continuing services upon release.	Funding will support medical services, mental health and substance abuse services, educational/vocational training, and case management.
<b>Louisiana Juvenile Justice</b>	200 youth returning to the New Orleans and Acadiana areas from residential placement will be selected.	The program primarily focuses on delivering appropriate case management, mentoring and service referrals.
<b>Marion County, OR</b>	Approximately 200 (~95% male) medium to high risk of adults will be selected. They must exhibit motivation to change and participate in the program, and must be returning to the Salem metropolitan area.	The program primarily focuses on identifying transitional housing, and supplying employment services and treatment/cognitive programming.
<b>Monroe County, NY</b>	50 individuals moderate-to-high-risk individuals returning to northeast Rochester from federal, state, or local facility, whose family members are also willing to participate, will be given the opportunity to participate.	The program primarily focuses on community and family development.
<b>New Hampshire Dept. of Justice</b>	High risk adults in Concord, NH, as identified with validated assessment tools--specifically: parolees and those in transitional housing.	Funding will be used to ensure validated assessments of reentry risks and needs will inform parole planning, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, and other reintegration and recovery support services.

<b>NYC Mayor's Office: Harlem Reentry Court</b>	200 high-risk parolees, both men and women, 18 years of age and older returning to East and Central Harlem will be selected.	Funding will support: Pre-Discharge Planning, Judicial Monitoring, Case Management, Assessment, and Coordinated and Aftercare Services.
<b>Oklahoma Department of Corrections</b>	200 high-risk men returning to Oklahoma County (Oklahoma City), who are otherwise excluded from other programs, will be given the opportunity to live in a transitional facility where they can get services.	Substance abuse treatment, education services and employment readiness, as well as cognitive-based treatment are the primary focus of this program.
<b>Oregon Youth Authority</b>	150 paroled youth returning to the 21 targeted counties with ongoing alcohol or drug, or co-occurring needs will be selected.	Funding will support alcohol and drug treatment, mental and physical health services, education/vocational training, employment services, housing needs, living skills training, and other reentry services.
<b>San Francisco Department of Public Health</b>	High risk women sentenced in San Francisco to a state facility, and plan to return to San Francisco following release, will be selected.	Funding will support enhanced case management.
<b>San Fran. Juv. Probation</b>	100 high risk San Francisco youth committed to out-of-home placement will be selected.	The primary focus is to deliver coordinated and comprehensive reentry case planning and aftercare services.
<b>San Mateo County, CA</b>	High-risk individuals sentenced to a minimum of 60 days or more in the San Mateo County Jail, who be released to the County of San Mateo will be selected to participate. Participants must show interest and dedication to be considered.	Funding will support intensive, individual case management; substance abuse treatment; housing support; employment services; family reunification services and health care, and support system-wide program restructuring; and improve information sharing.
<b>South Dakota Department of Corrections</b>	Juvenile Program: 130 Youth released from a juvenile residential facility to the Rapid City area, and youth transitioning to the community through West Farm (near Sioux Falls), will be selected.  Adult Program: 350 high-risk and high-need adults on parole returning to the Sioux Falls and Rapid City areas.	Juvenile Program: Funding will help create transitional centers to address deficiencies in academic skills, workforce skills, independent living skills, pro-social skills, and moral reasoning skills.  Adult Program: Funding will support improved institutional services, address gaps in services provided by community based organizations, improve interagency case management, and incorporate assessed needs into release plans.
<b>Stark County Court of Common Pleas</b>	60 adults with felony convictions and returning from prison to Stark County on judicial release will be given the opportunity to participate.	Funding will support employment services among other transitional and support services.
<b>Wisconsin Department of Corrections</b>	40 people returning to the Green Bay Area and 160 people returning to Milwaukee will be enrolled in "Windows To Work" (WTW). The program serves high risk participants with a 3-yr community supervision sentence upon release; and participants must be able to work and express strong interest in the program.	Funding will be used to help roll-out the WTW program across Wisconsin, where WTW focuses on: employment services; cohesive and comprehensive pre- and post-release case planning activities; post-release community supervision; and community based housing, health, mental health, and family & victim services.

## **Mentor Grantees**

The current cohort of mentor grantees is very diverse. Eleven of the 47 grantees focus on serving youth while the remaining 36 target adults. Some are small organizations with a specific mission to deliver mentoring to people involved in the justice system; others are large non-for-profit service agencies that have added mentor programs to their services for clients. For a good number of grantees, their Second Chance Act grant represents their first federal grant award. The most common service delivered in conjunction with mentor support is case management. Using formal and informal strategies, nonprofit grantees are focused on building the prosocial support network of returning citizens and linking them to the appropriate community-based services.

By far, the greatest demand for funding has come from the nonprofit sector. At the grantee conference held in May 2010, the mentor grantees were enthusiastic and highly motivated. They demonstrated resourcefulness in weaving together their programs and services with other organizations in their communities. The most common requests made to the NRRC come from mentor grantees seeking information on evidence-based practices, managing federal grants, and interfacing with justice systems. Each mentoring grantee included in its application a signed memorandum of understanding from the collaborating corrections agency or jail. Despite this demonstration of collaboration, the nitty-gritty of aligning nonprofit, community-based programs with prison, jail, and juvenile detention center operations is an enormous challenge.

The NRRC is partnering with several highly successful nonprofit organizations, such as the Center for Employment Opportunities and the Safer Foundation, that have extensive experience in building effective programs and collaborating with justice systems to develop strategies to respond to the emerging needs of mentor grantees.

## **FY2010 Programs**

Thanks to the increased appropriation for the Second Chance Act grant programs in fiscal year 2010, BJA issued solicitations for five new SCA grant programs this year, which will provide funding for technology career training programs, family-based substance abuse programs, reentry courts, treatment for people with co-occurring disorders, and evaluating and improving correctional education programs. The NRRC supported potential applicants in responding to these funding opportunities as through webinars and other information for the field. BJA expects to announce the 2010 grant recipients in September and over 180 new grantees are anticipated.

## Tools for the Field

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The NRRC and its partners have designed three core strategies to respond to grantee needs as well as the field at-large: create web-based tools for distance learning, facilitate peer-to-peer learning and provide individualized assistance to grantees. The following sections describe the assistance the NRRC has provided to date.

### Develop web-based tools for distance learning

A top priority for the NRRC is to make knowledge accessible to the field and to help policymakers and practitioners help themselves.

The Justice Center launched the website for the [National Reentry Resource Center](http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org) ([www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org)) on October 1, 2009. The purpose of this site is to create a destination, user-friendly hotspot that synthesizes and disseminates knowledge about what works to reduce risk to reduce risk and improve outcomes with adults and youth leaving prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities.

The website is a portal for distance-based technical assistance, making available products such as webcasts, webinars, enhanced podcasts, audio podcasts, and a “what works” research library. Since its launch, over 47,000 discrete individuals have visited the website resulting in over 324,274 page views.

The NRRC has commissioned from each committee the development of a suite of web-based tools, including at-a-glance practice guides, policy and practice briefs, and a comprehensive reentry-focused compendium of frequently asked questions. Each Advisory Committee is currently working on the development of these tools which are scheduled to be released later this year.

### Create a “What Works” Library

The National Reentry Resource Center is working with the Urban Institute and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to develop a “what works” library, which provides a user-friendly, one-stop shop for practitioners who want to know what the research says about the design and implementation of evidence-based reentry practices, programs, and policies. By offering an organized, searchable and routinely updated compilation of the most recent peer-reviewed studies, this library will also assist the growing community of scholars developing a

## *Tools for the Field*

47,000 discrete website viewers

324,274 webpage views

7600 newsletter subscribers

35 spotlight announcements

6 monthly newsletters issued

15 webcasts disseminated

9 webinars conducted

1 enhanced podcast disseminated

37 expert Interviews filmed

9 committee-developed webisodes scheduled

9 At-A-Glance Guides under development

9 Policy in Practice Briefs under development

Reentry FAQ Compendium under development

What Works in Reentry On-line Library under development

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[www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org)

reentry research agenda. The online library will be easily searchable, updated regularly, and expanded over time.

To date, the project directors at the Urban Institute and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice have conducted a systematic review of the universe of “what works” literature to determine how past “what works” efforts have classified and categorized evaluative research and interventions into levels of effectiveness/strength. They examined 34 meta-analyses and other reports from the criminal justice, education, substance abuse, physical and mental health, and youth/families fields, and reviewed “what works” online databases and websites.

On April 12 and 13, 2010, the Urban Institute convened the What Works in Reentry Roundtable in Washington, DC, to glean “lessons learned” from both the implementation and evaluation of federal reentry initiatives, and to solicit input on the development of the “what works” library. Roundtable participants included federal representatives, practitioners, and academics who have been involved with both the implementation and the evaluation of large-scale national reentry initiatives.

Following the Roundtable, the Urban Institute and John Jay College developed classification criteria and categories of evidential strength, incorporating findings from the systematic review of “what works” literature and input from the roundtable. They also identified over 500 evaluations of reentry interventions for classification and developed procedures for rating and classifying evaluations. In the next year, they will begin to code and tag the evaluations and develop practitioner-friendly one-page overviews of each evaluation. They will also begin to develop an electronic prototype for the “what works” library and hold focus groups to test the utility and user-friendliness of the library. The goal of the project is to launch the online library by fall 2012.

### **Promote peer-to-peer learning**

People doing the hard work of designing and implementing reentry initiatives must be brought together -- both virtually and in-person -- to share their experiences, learn from one another, motivate each other, and bring cohesion to the fragmented reentry field. The NRRC facilitates these connections, using national and regional training and technical assistance events, webinars, conference calls, and other approaches.

The first national conference for Second Chance Act grantees, “Making Second Chances Work: A Conference for Grantees Committed to Successful Reentry,” took place in Washington, DC on May 25 and 26, 2010. Over 200 individuals representing FY09 Second Chance Act grantees participated. Front-line professionals learned from experts and peers about approaches in housing, employment, mental health and substance abuse treatment, community supervision, and other areas that help support a person’s transition from a correctional facility to the community. Participants accomplished the following:

- 1) learned more about the types of technical assistance available through the National Reentry Resource Center;
- 2) met with other grantees from across the nation, sharing challenges and successes; and
- 3) received training from subject matter experts in relevant issue areas.

As part of its commitment to support not only the grantees but the reentry field generally, the NRRC ensured that key sessions were filmed and made available on the web. These “webisodes” can be downloaded for free on-line at <http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/making-second-chances-work>.

In addition to the face-to-face opportunity during the conference, the NRRC has also hosted over 65 conference calls with grantees on selected topics in an effort to provide useful information and connect grantees to each other. These calls have provided grantees with a chance to learn more about topics like complying with their grant award, responding to federal reporting requirements, collecting data to report on SCA performance measures, and developing system maps to improve grant-funded program designs. During these calls, grantees learn about the creative solutions being employed around the country and questions addressing the specific issues most important to them.

- 65 Conference Calls on Hot Topics for grantees since October 2009

### **Provide individualized assistance to grantees.**

The NRRC has assigned a coach to each grantee to provide targeted assistance to each site. Since October 2009, NRRC coaches have fielded hundreds of calls addressing the needs of grantees and other reentry practitioners.

Over 500 coaching calls have been conducted to date, along with nine site visits and another 24 scheduled technical assistance site visits. The following provides a sample of some of the most common inquiries.

**Employment.** *How do I design an effective employment program in this economy?*

**Data Collection.** *How do I collect the data BJA requires for grantee performance measures?*

**Federal Reporting.** *I need help to meet the federal grant reporting requirements.*

**Funding.** *Where do I find funding to supplement or sustain my program?*

**Strategic Planning.** *How do I develop and implement a strategic plan for my reentry effort?*

**Contracting.** *How do I structure and manage my subcontractors?*

**Case Management.** *Can you help me design a system-wide case management process?*

**Collaboration.** *I need help bringing partner organizations to the table.*

**SCA Applications.** *I want to apply for a SCA grant, how can you help?*

To respond to these questions, the NRRC coaches pull together research and synthesize available information on best practices. If additional assistance is needed, the coach will coordinate expert assistance for follow-up conference calls and on-site visits. Since October 2009, the NRRC team has conducted 9 on-site visits and has 24 visits scheduled in the coming months.

- Conducted over 500 coaching calls.
- Completed 9 site visits.
- Scheduled 24 site visits.

### **Emerging Common Challenges and Recommendations for Implementation**

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As the NRRC team has become familiar with the first cohort of SCA grantees and has connected with the reentry field at-large, several challenges have emerged.

***Assistance with Program Design.*** Grantees and the reentry field generally are becoming increasingly familiar with the emerging body of evidence about strategies that reduce recidivism, but they continue to struggle with translating these concepts into policy and practice.

Although a rich body of evidence is emerging, grantees and the reentry field generally continue to struggle with translating what they have learned about data-driven, effective strategies into policy and practice. In recent years, the message that corrections should shift to implementing evidence-based practices has been heard by many policy makers and practitioners; however, decades of standard practice in corrections, coupled with the political realities of managing these populations, make transformation of these systems complicated. What evidence demonstrates as effective practice often runs counter to the way the justice system has functioned over past decades. For example, individuals who are at a high risk of reoffending are often hard to serve, but yield the greatest results in reductions in recidivism and criminal activity. Supervision, reentry planning and other services must focus on the right populations if we really want to see significant reductions in recidivism.

The Second Chance Act is a strong first step to providing the reentry field with smart guidance about how to build effective criminal justice interventions, but it will take decades to turn the battleship of corrections in a data-driven direction.

Currently, demonstration grantees (Sec. 101) can apply for one large demonstration project grant for up to \$750,000. Our work with grantees and non-grantees has revealed that each jurisdiction is at a different point in planning or implementing their reentry strategy. As such, many sites interested in Second Chance demonstration grants are at the very beginning of their planning process and would be better served by smaller grants with greater technical assistance, such as a planning grant, to help design their interventions.

These planning grants would allow for early intervention during the critical planning period and only grants with strong program designs and a good likelihood of reducing recidivism would be awarded implementation grants to demonstrate their effectiveness. Allowing pre-implementation planning to happen with grant funds would enable agencies and collaborative reentry teams to take the time necessary to work through the tough decisions on implementing data-driven strategies and system integration issues cited above. Technical assistance would be provided by the NRRC during this period to help strengthen program design. Currently, grants are awarded after the strategic planning process has been completed by applicants, and it is difficult to redirect these efforts once implementation funding has begun.

We recommend that a program structure similar to Drug Court Program or the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction program be implemented with a tiered grant structure, including both planning and implementation grants. This would ensure that newer sites that require more planning and early stage work aren't overwhelmed with the expectations and dollars associated with a more advanced grant. Planning grantees can then apply for an implementation grant once the planning phase is complete.

***Measuring Performance.*** Like the rest of the reentry field, grantees struggle with understanding what to measure and how to obtain and routinely track quality information. Most justice agencies have little experience linking program operations to performance measures. Congress, through the Second Chance Act has been very clear: strong performance is expected of SCA grantees. However, corrections agencies must have the staff capacity and ability to



modify and integrate management information systems to reduce inefficient, redundant data entry and make the best use of limited staff time.

Given these challenges, the Bureau of Justice Assistance has taken strong steps to improve grantees' ability to respond to the required performance measures. BJA has developed a grantee performance measurement tool that helps clarify what information should be tracked, implemented a standardized definition of recidivism, required baseline recidivism data be collected, and they have asked the NRRC to conduct additional site visits and work with grantees to improve their data collection operations.

Lack of data collection capacity, limited information management infrastructure, and nascent knowledge on how to effectively measure performance also limits the type of evaluative research that can be conducted within the reentry field. The SCA provision requiring the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics to conduct research on reentry issues was enthusiastically embraced by practitioners, policymakers, and researchers alike; however, we recommend restructuring the research section during reauthorization to provide more capacity and performance measurement assistance to grantees as well as adding new research areas.

While there is no dispute that more credible research on the effectiveness of reentry initiatives must be conducted, these research efforts must account for capacity within the field. Until this investment is made, current grantees will continue to need a tremendous amount of technical assistance and support to understand how to change their operations to streamline data collection; there is no quick solution to the need to increase performance measurement capacity.

***Reducing recidivism.*** The Second Chance Act sets appropriately high expectations for sites that receive federal funding to reduce recidivism. Grantees are keenly aware that they are under significant scrutiny to demonstrate positive results quickly. Currently, grantees are in the process of gathering data to submit for their first required performance measurement report. It is anticipated that they will be serving additional numbers of clients for the remainder of their grant period.

Because SCA programs are new programs, the first cohort of grantees has demonstrated many lessons that can be applied to future cohorts of grantees. Namely, while significant reductions of recidivism remain the goal of every SCA grantee, large reductions are not likely in the first year of implementation. As described above, flawed program designs, insufficient systems to collect and analyze program data, deep budget cuts, and imminent changes in state and local leadership across the US make dramatic reductions in recidivism in a very short period of time challenging. As grantees learn through their first year of implementation, make improvements to their program design, enhance the efficacy of their implementation efforts, and act on the trends revealed from the data they collect, increasing numbers of program participants will receive the targeted interventions needed to support prosocial behavior change and ultimately result in fewer crimes. But until grantees have an opportunity to try new policies, programs, and practices, and learn from these early efforts, reductions in recidivism are likely to be modest.

Nevertheless, the leadership Congress has shown by authorizing the Second Chance Act and providing funding for its implementation will permanently alter the trajectory the field and

over time make a tremendous difference in the likelihood government agencies and communities will be able to implement more effective practices and protect their citizens. Before the Second Chance Act, the justice field did not share a common definition of recidivism. By building a common measure for recidivism, comparing outcomes of different approaches to reentry will be easier to measure and will increase the likelihood that truly effective programs are replicated in the future.

We also recommend that Congress consider adding flexibility to the award length. By expanding the length of the demonstration awards beyond 12 months, grantees will have more time to demonstrate their effectiveness and have additional opportunities to received technical assistance and support in implementing their initiatives. New grantees need between two to four months to finalize the grant details and have their budgets cleared, which makes the current 12 month grant period unrealistic to achieve the project goals. Flexibility will improve the ability for grantees to achieve desired results.

## **Conclusion**

The enactment of the Second Chance Act was a monumental step in changing how state, local government and community-based organizations address prisoner reentry. While still very early in the process, the program is thriving -- both in the immense demand for grants, the establishment of a resource center for the field, and early accomplishments by the first class of grantees.

I would like to thank the Chairman and the Members of the Committee for allowing me this opportunity to provide an update on the status of Second Chance grantees and the work of the National Reentry Resource Center.