

Request for Applications for Reentry Courts Process Evaluation

Letter from the Director

December 20, 2000

Request for Applications: Process Evaluation of the Reentry Courts (RCI) Initiative
Funding Available: \$150,000
Date Application Due: February 28, 2001 (5:00 p.m. EDT)

Dear Colleague:

This year, over 585,000 individuals are projected to be released from state and federal prisons and return to communities across the country. While parole and probation authorities in a good number of communities are working to improve mechanisms for supervising these offenders, many jurisdictions have not fully focused on preparing either communities or offenders for reentry.

In February 2000, the Office of Justice Programs launched a Reentry Courts Initiative (RCI) that is exploring a new approach to improving offender reintegration into the community. The reentry court concept draws on the drug court model, using judicial authority to apply graduated sanctions and positive reinforcement and to marshal resources to support reintegration of the offender. The goal of this initiative is to establish a seamless system of offender accountability and support services throughout the reentry process. There are nine RCI pilots in this initiative; descriptions of each are included in the Scope of Work.

This letter requests applications to conduct a process evaluation documenting the efforts being developed in the nine states under this initiative. The description of what the process evaluation should include is also found in the Scope of Work. There is up to \$150,000 available for this effort.

In order to be eligible to apply, interested applicants should submit a non-binding letter of intent by **February 9, 2001**. It can be mailed (see address below) or faxed to the attention of ***Reentry Courts Process Evaluation*** at 202-305-8626. Full applications must be received at NIJ no later than 5:00 p.m. eastern daylight time, **February 28, 2001**. (Please note: fax or email applications are not permitted.)

If you have questions, or would like to discuss this further, please contact either Janice Munsterman (202-616-4648) or Cheri Crawford (202-514-6210). We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Julie E. Samuels
Acting Director
National Institute of Justice

Request for Applications for Reentry Partnerships Process Evaluation

Scope of Work

NIJ and its Federal partners in the Reentry Partnerships Initiative are interested in sponsoring research in two areas: (1) the development of logic models, (that is, documenting the program rationale for the model developed by sites); and (2) process evaluations for each of the eight sites (to include what is initially designed, what is actually implemented for those sites that reach implementation, and difficulties that occurred during implementation). For the logic models, the researcher(s) should outline the goals, objectives, and specific outputs that each site is attempting to achieve, the activities that it has undertaken to achieve these objectives, and the inputs or resources that are made available to conduct the activities. The process evaluations should detail the original model as presented, the actual model as implemented, and offer notions for any differences between the two that might occur. Further, an assessment of various difficulties or barriers encountered as the sites developed the initiative, as well as solutions that were employed, is expected.

The grantee will be required to submit a substantive six month interim report, as well as a final report at the conclusion of the 12 month grant period. Additionally, the grantee should be prepared to discuss the research project at two cluster conferences during the grant period, to which the Federal partners and the entire group of reentry partnership sites would be invited. Minimally, initial visits are expected to all sites to document the logic model or models being proposed by the site.

It should be noted that the sites vary in terms of the maturation of their program development; some sites are almost ready for implementation, while others are still refining their models. Five sites have set implementation dates: Nevada in June, and Florida, Massachusetts Missouri, and Washington in July, although the feasibility of these dates is unknown. None has actually begun implementation yet; some may start prior to this award being made, while others will extend these dates. Applicants should discuss how they will incorporate the variability in site maturation and uncertainty about actual implementation dates into their work and site visit plans.

A literature review is not required, but all other elements of a full proposal are expected. The application should present a research design for conducting the proposed work, including the information to be collected; the sources that would be used; an analysis plan; and suggested products. Tasks and time line, a clear staffing and management plan, and site visit schedule should be presented. Please return to the Funding page on our Web site (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm) for required application forms and guidelines.

To assist us in preparation for review of applications, interested applicants should submit by mail or fax (202/305-8626) a non-binding letter of intent by **May 19th**. Full applications must be received at NIJ **June 12th** no later than 5:00 p.m. eastern daylight time. (Please note: fax or email applications are not permitted.) The applications will undergo standard peer review, and the award will be made through a cooperative agreement. The anticipated start date will be mid-July.

Send letters and full applications to:

Reentry Partnerships Process Evaluation
National Institute of Justice
810 7th St. NW
Washington, DC, 20531 (overnight mail service zip is 20001)

Reentry Partnerships Initiative

NIJ, CPO, EOWS, and COPS have developed the Reentry Partnerships Initiative (RPI) as a corrections, law enforcement, and community-based collaborative model. Its purpose is to improve risk management of released offenders by enhancing surveillance and monitoring, strengthening individual and community support systems, and repairing the harm done to victims. This concept is part of an effort by the sponsoring Federal agencies to help address the continuing problem of offenders entering the community after incarceration with little or no surveillance, accountability or resource management.

This view of a reentry partnership requires three partners—State corrections agencies, local law enforcement, local community-based organizations—to develop reentry plans for offenders scheduled for release into the community and then oversee the implementation of those plans. These reentry plans would be based on a network of community resources, such as employment, treatment, family, faith-based organizations, and peer support, that would encourage positive reinforcement and reintegration. This community network would be supported by a network of criminal justice agencies (institutional corrections, probation, parole, and police) that would work together in this initiative.

Some important elements that these reentry partnership models should address are strengthening partnership and collaboration among police, corrections, and community to enhance public safety; increasing the system's ability to identify offender needs so there can be a match to appropriate resources; strengthening support services for victims whose offenders have returned to the community; and maximizing offenders' accountability and positive contributions to their communities. (For a complete description of the Reentry Partnerships Initiative common elements, please see [Attachment A](#).)

Eight States are taking part in this initiative; sites selected by each State include Columbia County, Florida; Baltimore, Maryland; Lowell, Massachusetts; Kansas City, Missouri; Las Vegas, Nevada; Columbia, South Carolina; Burlington, Vermont; and Spokane, Washington. A brief description of each site model follows. For a more extensive update call the DOJ Response Center at 1-800-421-6770 and ask for *Reentry Partnerships Initiative Site Updates*.

Each site was assigned two Federal site liaisons, comprised of designated staff from the sponsoring agencies. These teams have conducted initial site meetings to the participating jurisdictions to discuss the implementation plans being undertaken. Depending upon the need, the staff teams may conduct additional site visits as necessary. Although the Federal agencies do

not offer direct financial support to local sites, they do provide in-kind support through hosting semi-annual joint cluster conferences for all applicant sites, and delivering local technical assistance.

There have been three cluster conferences to date (May, 1999; October, 1999; and March, 2000). The sponsoring agencies will continue to provide periodic cluster conferences in which participating sites can share information and experiences. Participating sites may request technical assistance (TA) as needed for the purpose of designing and implementing various program elements. TA will be coordinated by CPO, and may be provided by NIJ, COPS, EOWS, other Office of Justice Programs bureaus, the National Institute of Corrections, and the US Department of Labor, as appropriate.

RPI State Program Descriptions

Florida

The Florida Department of Corrections selected Columbia County as the pilot site in which to implement its program. Columbia County is located in Northeast Florida with a population of approximately 57,000. All offenders who will be released from prison to this county (approximately 160 annually) will be targeted for program participation.

The partnership includes the Department of Corrections, Daytona Beach Community College, Columbia County Sheriff's Office, Lake City Police Department and various community-based agencies that provide assistance with employment, housing, food, transportation, counseling, substance abuse treatment, medical and mental health treatment.

The pre-release plan includes the following components:

- Work Release;
- 100-Hour Transition Skills Program;
- Job Fairs;
- Offender Job Placement;
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Pre-Release Planning;
- Family Reunification;
- Community Based Organization Assistance;
- Lake City Probation and Parole Support.

Case management and offender tracking will be designed by D.C. Central Office with the assistance of Lake City Probation and Parole Office, local law enforcement, community-based agencies and Daytona Beach Community College.

July 3, 2000, is the projected implementation date. Major obstacles that the site experienced during the planning process included developing a mechanism for the transfer of inmates for the pre-release component, and ensuring good communication between all stakeholders. During the next six months the department will screen inmates for participation and begin to transfer inmates to designated institutions and facilities for pre-release.

Maryland

During initial planning, the Maryland Department of Corrections (DOC) determined that approximately 60% come from Baltimore city and will return to Baltimore upon release, and are concentrated in a small handful of neighborhoods. A recent survey conducted by the DOC identified jobs, education and housing as the top three concerns of returning offenders. Given all of this, the DOC has chosen to focus on offenders incarcerated in the Maryland Transition Center who are planning to return to three targeted Baltimore neighborhoods (Sandtown/Winchester, Historic East Baltimore, and Druid Heights). In order to address the needs of returning offenders, the DOC is partnering with a number of private and government organizations. Major partners include: Enterprise Foundation, Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice, Parole and Probation, Baltimore Police Department, and the neighborhood-based Community Development Corporations in the target neighborhoods.

Eligible offenders will be screened in the Metropolitan Transition Center (MTC). Based on the anticipated length of stay, offenders will be enrolled in pre-release programming that can include: life skills, education/vocational training, parenting, substance abuse treatment. MTC is a male only inner city short-term facility with few inmates serving more than 18 months, and the majority serving substantially less time. Services will be delivered by existing DOC employees.

Prior to release, the offender will meet with his assigned case manager. The case managers will be employees of the respective Community Development Corporations. The case managers will meet with the offenders in the facility to conduct assessments and create a release/"home" plan. The home plan will be incorporated into the offenders release conditions. Immediately prior to release, the offender will participate in an exit orientation that will include representatives of the parole and police departments. On the outside, the case manager will provide the offender with referrals for appropriate services and will provide the parole department with information about the offender's compliance with his home plan. It is anticipated that the Baltimore Police Department will provide increased surveillance and will work closely with parole officers to improve public safety.

The RPI is currently seeking funding from a variety of sources (BJA Open Solicitation, private foundations, Byrne Grant). When funding is secured, the project will begin.

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Prisoner Reentry Partnership includes the Department of Corrections (DOC), the City of Lowell Police Department, and Community Resources for Justice (CRJ). The partnership will work with Lowell's Safety First Group that represents the broader community - business, criminal justice, social service providers, community representatives.

The target population will begin with those inmates returning to Lowell who are nearing discharge and who will have completed their sentence when released. This group, then, will not be under traditional parole supervision (their participation would be voluntary); parolees will be added later. A review of records identified 77 inmates scheduled for release in 2000 in this category. Parolees returning to Lowell also will be added to the target population as they are

approved; it is anticipated that approximately 25 parolees will be eligible in 2000.

The Safety First (SF) advisory group and task forces will coordinate with DOC transition planning staff in the correctional facilities 30-90 days prior to an offender's discharge. SF and DOC staff will review the risk/needs assessment, most recent classification report, transition plan and other pertinent information to develop a reentry plan tailored to the individual offender and specific to Lowell and the resources available in that community.

Prior to discharge, staff from DOC and SF (team may include representatives from the Lowell Police Department where needed) will meet with the offender to review the plan and obtain offender's input to the plan. The offender will be provided an orientation to resources available for successful reentry and civic responsibilities of those residing in Lowell. Reentry preparation may also include reaching out to family members or other supportive individuals in Lowell.

On the day of release, the offender will be scheduled to meet with SF staff in Lowell who will again review the plan and expectations, and direct the offender to available resources. The attendees will be representative of the component identified in the reentry plan (reflecting the offender's legal status, identified community resource needs, and support network (family, employer, police, other community members). For the community, the purpose of the session is to acknowledge to the offender that he/she is not anonymous, to present the impact of the crime on the community, to inform him/her of civic responsibilities, and to introduce the resources and opportunities for success. For the offender, the purpose of the session is to give assurance that offending will not happen again, and to present how he/she intends to add value to the community.

The project is expected to begin in July, 2000. Currently under discussion are the development of an offender tracking system, and specification of an organizational entity to perform the case management function. It is hoped that a contract will be let with the local Community Resource Center to perform the function of case management and resource referral.

Missouri

The Reentry Partnership Initiative Task Force in Kansas City, Missouri includes: Department of Corrections (DOC), DOC's Division of Probation and Parole, Kansas City Police Department, Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, Division of Family Services (DFS), Division of Workforce Development, U.S. Department of Labor's Full Employment Council, Project Neighborhood, Citizen's Advisory Board, Local Investment Commission /Community Partnership (school-based neighborhood support services funded by seven State departments, Catholic Charities, University of Missouri (Kansas City). The partnership has selected as the target site a five Zip Code area that is also targeted by the Kids Safe Program and the Kansas City Police Department Weed and Seed effort. The area has a high crime rate and a high rate of child abuse and neglect. The DFS, Jackson County Family Court, police department, and prosecutor's office are already dedicating resources to this area.

The target population will be those released from two specific facilities (one for males and one for females) who have completed a program in a therapeutic community, have children under 18, and say that they will be residing in one of the five zip codes. Initially, the pilot program will not exceed 50 participants at any one time. For the institution-based phase of the program, selected offenders will transfer to a community release center 14 months before their parole release date. A tailored, assessment-based reentry plan will be created six months prior to release by a treatment team consisting of the reentry caseworker, parole officer, police officer, and DFS staff person. Appropriate referrals will be coordinated with substance abuse service providers, Division of Workforce Development's jobs skills workshop, DFS family services, and a range of other service providers. When appropriate, plans will be made for the offender to pay restitution, attend victim impact classes, and perform community service. This plan will be submitted to the reentry community board, consisting of members appointed from various reentry partnership agencies by the parole board, for approval or modification.

The community-based phase of the program will include intensive supervision by parole with close coordination with police. An offender completes the program based on successful completion of reentry plan rather than a specified length of participation. The reentry community board will monitor and modify the reentry plan based on parole officer reports and regular appearances by the offender before the board.

The Kansas City Reentry Partnership includes a professor from the University of Missouri (Kansas City) who has agreed to conduct a pilot program evaluation. NIJ has already begun providing her with research reports to assist in her literature review, and is in discussions with her regarding the possibility of incorporating crime mapping into the reentry program as a surveillance and service referral tool. The reentry task force plans to implement the pilot reentry program in July, 2000.

Nevada

The Las Vegas, Nevada Reentry Project initiative proposes to bring together corrections, parole, local law enforcement, county social services, and community-based organizations to coordinate supervision and service delivery to at-risk offenders returning to communities. These offenders are often ill-prepared for living a crime free productive lifestyle. A coordinated and comprehensive service delivery system to address the complex needs of this population will reduce the likelihood of their return to a life of crime and reduce the number of new victims, thus creating a much safer community for all residents. Utilizing a case management approach the offender becomes engaged as a co-author of the established release and aftercare plan. These plans include a system of services that begin prior to release and the progress is monitored by the case manager for continued services, employment, and no further criminal involvement of the offender upon release.

The Reentry Project governing body includes officials from State, City, and County offices that include:

- Governor's Office

- State of Nevada Legislature
- United States Attorney's Office
- Federal Bureau of Investigations
- Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
- City of Las Vegas Mayors Office
- Nevada Department of Prisons
- Division of Parole and Probation
- County Division of Child and Family Services
- Clark County Social Services
- Nevada Business Services
- Nevada Partners
- Community-based service delivery network.

The Las Vegas Reentry Project will be directed and managed by an oversight board, that will be responsible for reviewing and approving all aspects of the project operations. They will have authority to review and approve budgets, make hiring decisions related to project operations, and determine program operating procedures.

The Nevada Department of Prisons staff will inform offenders of the program and provide the prison case manager names of offenders paroled to a specific zip code. Interested offenders, 18 years of age and above, must have a demonstrated need determined through a comprehensive assessment for programming that is available through the reentry project. Offenders with a severe psychiatric disorder or severe mental health issue, a history of sexual or violent offenses and convictions will be precluded from program participation. The anticipated implementation date is June 1; however, this will be contingent on fully addressing various logistical issues.

South Carolina

The focus of the reentry partnership is to provide collaborative supervision of offenders to ensure compliance of the conditions of release, hold offenders accountable, and increase public awareness of crime and public safety issues. Specific areas of emphasis will be in education and vocational improvement as well as substance abuse treatment.

The targeted population will be men and women who are convicted of crimes released to supervision and those who "max out" but agree to get services in return for their participation. Their needs will be assessed prior to release and an aftercare plan will be developed to assist in a successful transition from the institution into society. The targeted population includes those offenders with a home address, at the time of arrest, within a specific zip code in Columbia. The targeted individuals will be assigned to the institution best equipped to address their most critical need at the time of incarceration and they will be tracked through case management to individualized treatment plans. These plans will include job assignments to develop work skills, educational programs for both academic development and vocational training, cognitive skill and life skill programs, substance abuse education and treatment, specialized treatment, as well as

work release programs and pre-release planning. This site does not have an implementation date.

Vermont

The partnership includes community members, the Burlington Police Department, the Department of Corrections, the University of Vermont and other local agencies to create a safer community and enhance the quality of life for the members of the community. The proposed project (The Old North End Neighborhood Justice Program: ONE – NJP) will be empowered to receive information on offenders within the North End. Each offender will be assigned a team of citizen volunteers who will follow the progress of the case from admission to release. There will be opportunities for offenders to meet with community members regarding their situation and their plans to reenter and restore and fulfill the social contract. The community assisted by the agency staff will “get to know” the offenders and as a group create strategies to engage in supervision of offenders. Victims will be included if they choose. Restorative strategies including group conferencing, circles, offender responsibility planning, family involvement, family conferencing, mediation, financial responsibility contracts will be utilized.

The target population will be all offenders from the Old North End who are released from prison and placed on furlough in the Old North End. The secondary population will be offenders living in the Old North End who are under supervision, on probation, parole, or intermediate sanctions. Offenders will be required to fulfill the obligations of release and restoration of community and victim as a condition of release.

The next six months will be devoted to conducting focus groups, finding necessary resources, and locating a site for the program. Vermont does not have an implementation date.

Washington

The Washington State Department of Corrections has developed an inclusive approach to the offender transition aimed at safely reintegrating offenders back into neighborhoods, while reducing victimization and enhancing public safety. The reentry model will be tested in Spokane, and is viewed as being a pilot that will be implemented statewide as soon as possible. Development of such a model has particular salience in Washington, because of the passage of the Offender Accountability Act in 1999. This act takes effect in July 2000, and assigns responsibility for planning and managing offender reentry to the Washington State Department of Corrections. Specifically, they are charged with establishing and modifying offender community custody conditions based on risk to community safety; establishing a systematic means of assessing offender risk to community safety; and monitoring transition into the community. The Department of Corrections hopes to learn as much as they can from the pilot in Spokane, so that statewide implementation can proceed smoothly and effectively.

The approach directly involves local citizens, law enforcement and corrections in a partnership called the Community Offender Accountability Team (COAT). The project will target high risk offenders released to a specific zip code from the following facilities: Airway Heights, Pine Lodge Pre-Release, Brownstone Work Release, and the Eleanor Chase Training

Release. These offenders will be identified 180 days prior to release and told about COAT, and those interested will be enrolled.

After enrollment a risk assessment/life mapping will be conducted 150 days prior to release. The first meeting of the offender and the COAT team will be held 130 days prior to release and should be held in the community whenever possible. They will review the life mapping and the risk assessment needs and develop an action plan. Based upon the action plan resources will be identified and a team member will be assigned the role and responsibilities for each plan once the offender is released. All meetings between the offender and the COAT team members will address targeted interventions, including restoration, treatment, sanctions, and strategies. The anticipated implementation date is July, 2000.