

# STAR White Paper *2011*

## Offender Basic Essentials for Reentry in Missouri

---

*Prepared by:*

- Cora Haynes, Missouri Board of Probation and Parole
- Pari Smith-Paudel, Missouri Board of Probation & Parole
- Benjamin M. Williams, MSW, MERS/Missouri Goodwill Industries

*Cite as a: White Paper on Offender Basic Essentials for Reentry in Missouri Prepared by the St. Louis Alliance for Reentry (STAR) 2011*

Research/Media Contact: [info@stltreentry.org](mailto:info@stltreentry.org) or 314-534-0022

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



This paper is one of a series completed by STAR. Other papers on a variety of ex-offender topics may be accessed at [www.stlreentry.org](http://www.stlreentry.org).

## **OFFENDER BASIC ESSENTIALS FOR REENTRY**

### **Definition**

*Basic needs for offenders are defined as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and personal identification. When these needs go unmet, ex-offenders are more likely to return to a criminal lifestyle<sup>1</sup>.*

*The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that approximately 650,000 offenders are released from state and federal institutions to the community, which does not include those offenders released from area jails.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, approximately 7,225,800 in 2009 were on either on probation, parole and either in jail and/or prison.<sup>2</sup> The Missouri Department of Corrections currently supervises approximately 74,277 offenders on community based supervision and houses over 30,000 offenders in institutions across the state. An overview of specific regions indicates that approximately 17,375 offenders are supervised in the St Louis area. Specifically, 11,916 probation cases, 4,627 parole cases, 471 interstate cases and 356 deferred prosecution cases.<sup>3</sup> Re-entry challenges faced by offenders, either returning from area institutions and/or offenders attempting to re-enter communities as productive community members, range from housing, employment, transportation, health care, substance abuse, education, mental health and basic essentials. A study conducted by the Urban Institute revealed that offenders who successfully re-enter the community must have transportation, clothing, food, amenities, financial resources, documentation, housing, employment, education, health care and support systems.<sup>4</sup> Successful re-integration requires pre-release planning, community partnerships and resource development.*

*Research indicates employment is associated with lower recidivism rates, however, obtaining and maintaining employment relies on offenders providing identification.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, offenders typically do not have financial resources to pay or are unclear as to the process by which to obtain proper identification. A review of the incarcerated population in the Missouri Department of Corrections in June of 2009 revealed that offenders, 25 to 29 years of age, represented the largest population in Missouri institutions. Further, offenders, 20 to 29 years of age, represented the largest population on community based supervision.<sup>6</sup> Due to offender age and lack of education/vocational readiness, accessing proper identification is paramount to successful re-entry. Initiating the process of obtaining birth certificates*

---

<sup>1</sup> La Vigne, N., Davies, E., Palmer, T., & Halberstadt, R. (2008). *Release Planning for Successful Reentry: A Guide for Corrections, Service Providers, and Community Groups*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

*and social security cards prior to release or on the first day of community based supervision can eliminate future employment/educational barriers.*

***Pre-release Activities and Readiness programs increase job placement/retention upon release and re-entry into the community.*** Addressing essential needs through assessment and basic skills training prior to release and placement increases attainment/retention of employment and decreases overall recidivism. Approximately two thirds of offenders who are released from institutions are re-arrested within three years.<sup>7</sup> Chicago's Safer Foundation assisted 1,102 offenders to find employment and over 60 percent retained employment after 30 days when they received case management services including budgeting, clothing, transportation and skill training.<sup>8</sup> Research has revealed that offenders who participate in prison industries are 24 percent less likely to recidivate; offenders who participate in vocational or occupational training are 33 percent less likely to recidivate; offenders who participate in education programs are 16 percent less likely to recidivate; and offenders who complete the residential drug abuse treatment programs are 16 percent less likely to recidivate.<sup>9</sup>

***Life Skills literature indicates a large percentage of offenders lack basic life skills*** necessary for successful community re-entry. Life skills include time management, appropriate clothing related to interviewing and daily employment retention, financial planning and implementation, parenting, transportation and day to day household management skills. Case-management and life skills classes focusing on day to day activities, parenting and financial resources are essential to the overall success to offender re-entry.<sup>10</sup>

***The lack of resources to address offender health issues, mental health and/or physical disabilities, is a significant barrier to re-entry thus increasing overall recidivism.***<sup>11</sup> A review of the prison population reveals that approximately eight to sixteen percent of offenders had one identified serious mental disorder.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, mental illnesses of schizophrenia, major depression, bi-polar disorder and post traumatic stress disorder within the prisons are two to four times higher than the general population.<sup>13</sup> Offenders, especially older offenders, have a multitude of health problems, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, and cancer.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 48.6 percent of the offenders incarcerated in the Missouri Department of Corrections, as of June 30, 2010 had health problems, ranging from routine to residential, and approximately 50 percent of offenders had mental health problems, ranging from minimal impairment to residential unit.<sup>15</sup>

*Addressing offender basic essentials requires a collaborative effort with community-based agencies. The following describes collaborative efforts between the Missouri Department of Corrections and area agencies to address offender essential needs:*

- *Missouri Department of Corrections and the Missouri Department of Revenue formed a partnership to assist offenders in obtaining state identification cards prior to release from the institution. In 2010, 2250 offenders received an identification card prior to their release from the institution.*
- *Missouri Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Senior services formed a partnership to assist offenders with applying and obtaining birth certificates. In 2010, 5,380 offenders obtained their Missouri Birth Certificate and 2,250 offenders applied for out of state certificate.*
- *Missouri Department of Corrections and the Social Security Administration has permitted institutions to assist offenders with applying and obtaining social security cards prior to and/or shortly after release.*
- *Missouri Department of Corrections, Missouri Veterans Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs partnered to assist offenders incarcerated and on community based supervision with benefits, case management, housing, health care and life skills.*
- *The Inner change Freedom Initiative at Algoa Correctional Center and the Women's Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center enable a faith based program to provide pre and post release case management including mentoring and re-entry services.*
- *Missouri Department of Corrections and the Department of Mental Health partnered to assist mentally ill offenders with re-entry by linking offenders*

*with mental health agencies within the community. Case management, medication and counseling were provided to 1,023 offenders in 2010.*

- *Missouri Department of Corrections, Department of Social Services and the Department of Mental Health partnered to enable offenders to apply for Medicaid 90 days prior to their release. Approximately nine institutions have been trained to assist offenders with the application process since 2007.*
- *Missouri Department of Corrections and the Family and Community Trust partnered to develop the resource of Parenting from Prison.*
- *Missouri Department of Corrections and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri partnered to provide mentoring services to children of incarcerated parents.*
- *Contracts award money to community based agencies for re-entry services including identification cards, birth certificates, bus tickets, substance abuse/mental health treatment, wrap around case management, housing and education/employment assistance.*

---

<sup>1</sup> *U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2002).*

<sup>2</sup> *U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2009).*

<sup>3</sup> *Missouri Department of Corrections, (2010).*

<sup>4</sup> *Corrections Corporation of America, Research Institute. (2010).*

<sup>5</sup> *Urban Institute. (2006).*

<sup>6</sup> *Missouri Department of Corrections. (2010).*

<sup>7</sup> *McDonald, George T., "Testimony of George T. McDonald before the House CJS Subcommittee." (March,2009).*

<sup>8</sup> *National Institute of Justice. (1998).*

---

<sup>9</sup> Lappin, Harley G., "Statement of Harley G. Lappin, Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons, before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies," Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, March. (2009).

<sup>10</sup> National Institute of Justice. (1998).

<sup>11</sup> Urban Institute. (2006).

<sup>12</sup> Arthur J. Lurigio, "Effective Services for Parolees with Mental Illnesses," *Crime and Delinquency* 47, no. 3 (2001): 446–461.

<sup>13</sup> Theodore M. Hammett, Cheryl Roberts, and Sofia Kennedy, "HealthRelated Issues in Prisoner Reentry," *Crime & Delinquency* 47, no. 3 (2002): 390–409.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. (2002)

<sup>15</sup> Missouri Department of Corrections. (2010).