



**Ohio
Community
Corrections
Association**

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OCCA AGENCY MEMBERS

- Alternatives Agency, Inc. - *Cleveland*
- Alvis House - *Columbus, Dayton, Chillicothe*
- ARCA, Inc. - *Cleveland*
- Community Assessment & Treatment Services, Inc. - *Cleveland*
- Community Corrections Association, Inc. - *Youngstown*
- Community Correctional Center, Talbert House - *Lebanon*
- Community Transition Center - *Lancaster*
- Community Treatment & Correction Center, Inc. - *Canton*
- Crossroads Center for Change - *Mansfield*
- CROSSWAEH CBCF, Oriana House, Inc. - *Tiffin*
- Diversified Community Services, Inc. - *Columbus*
- Fresh Start, Inc. - *Cleveland*
- Nova House - *Dayton*
- Ohio Link Corrections & Treatment, Inc. - *Toledo*
- Oriana House, Inc. - *Akron & Cleveland*
- Pathfinder House - *Lima*
- Salvation Army Booth House - *Dayton*
- Salvation Army Harbor Light - *Cleveland*
- Southwestern Ohio Serenity Hall - *Hamilton*
- The Sheryl L. Kraner, Esq. Youth and Family Behavioral Health Campus - *Newark*
- Summit County CBCF, Oriana House, Inc. - *Akron*
- Talbert House - *Cincinnati*
- Turtle Creek, Talbert House - *Lebanon*
- Volunteers of America, Northeast and Northcentral Ohio - *Mansfield*
- Volunteers of America, Ohio River Valley - *Cincinnati & Dayton*
- Volunteers of America of Northwest Ohio - *Toledo*

Spring 2008 Newsletter

President's Message

Crime and Corrections at an Important Crossroads

By Mary Spottswood, Talbert House



The state of corrections in Ohio is at a crossroads. Our prison population is at an all time high while we have one of the most highly respected and utilized community corrections systems in the country. This is a golden opportunity for community corrections to impact both our prison population and the needs of our offenders. The challenge is to apply evidence based practices that work in reducing recidivism while facing increasingly tight budget constraints. While this is a time of tremendous opportunity, it is also a time of challenge for our industry as we meet increasingly critical outcomes and rise to higher levels of accountability.

As you may know, the Ohio Community Corrections Association represents 23 halfway house providers and 3 Community Based Correctional Facilities who provide residential programming and services to those in Ohio's diverse communities. This past year halfway houses alone housed and provided services to 7,593 offenders at a cost of \$4,947 per offender with an average stay of 81 days. More importantly, these clients paid approximately \$73,000 in court costs and fines, \$22,000 in restitution, over \$100,000 in restitution and almost \$700,000 in taxes on the \$7 million earned while in our programs. Not only did offenders work, pay taxes, and practice positive social behaviors, they were learning to make better decisions, participating in treatment programs and gave back through community service.

As you will read in this edition of our newsletter, providers in our field are being held to increasingly high expectations from our funding partners, those who use our programs and the community at large. Although I firmly believe that this is a positive direction, it comes with inherent difficulties. Member agencies are all too aware of the struggles implied by "doing more with less." I am truly proud of our member organizations for taking on this challenge and finding new and innovative ways to meet the needs of our offender population. OCCA members are in a position to continue to grow and expand our services should additional funding become available.

OCCA is working in collaboration with other community corrections providers, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and a number of dedicated volunteers to seek solutions to address our current situation. I am confident that our current challenges will bring us a stronger and more outcome focused system that can positively impact the lives of offenders in all Ohio communities.

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- Spotlight on 2007 Cliff Skeen recipient - CCA, Youngstown
- Prediction on Ohio's Prison Population
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House Bill 130 - Ohio's Omnibus Re-entry Legislation

Submitted by Sara Andrews – Superintendent, Adult Parole Authority ODRC

In bipartisan sponsorship Representatives John J. White and Tyrone K. Yates introduced HB 130 on March 27, 2007. On April 15, 2008 the Ohio House of Representatives passed HB130. As many of you already know, HB130 is a comprehensive package proposed by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) designed to: (1) challenge present collateral sanctions for offender reentry, (2) provide an expanded, accountable criminal justice treatment and sentencing continuum for specific offenders, and (3) improve agency operations.

ODRC releases approximately 30,000 offenders back into their and our communities each year. Enhancing offender reentry and challenging collateral sanctions are key components of HB 130 and provide the framework for long-term investment in Ohio's economy by reducing employment and other barriers to offenders reentering society. If offenders return to their communities more prepared and with support networks in place, they are more likely to become productive members of the community. They become taxpayers rather than tax burdens. Recommendations include reducing the barriers to obtain proper identification, removing non-relevant prohibitions to employment, codified state agency partnerships and review of social service barriers.

The reentry movement today aims to achieve sensible balance in public policy – crime prevention and control. ODRC supports tougher penalties for the most serious repeat and violent offenders, especially those that prey on children. Current population in ODRC prisons exceeds 50,000 surpassing the all-time record high population in 1998. Additionally, 60 percent of ODRC commitments are serving less than one year sentences. The majority of those are property and drug offenses and over 8,500 offenders committed in 2006 were for Felony 5 offenses. Preparation to return offenders home is critical to ensuring public safety, reducing victimization, cost containment, and prison management.

The spirit of HB 130 is to provide an expanded, accountable criminal justice treatment and punishment continuum for specific offenders, i.e. judicial release, intervention in lieu of conviction, community control and authorization for reentry court. Judicial and prosecutorial release options for appropriate offenders while maximizing Ohio's sophisticated community corrections network equates to good government. Diverting low-level offenders to community punishment translates to offenders who work in the community, maintain family ties, pay child support, fines, and receive treatment – saving tax payer dollars and preserving public safety. The end result is reduced recidivism.

Strategies to enhance agency operations to manage Ohio's prison population are also part of the bill. Proposals include targeting specific offender populations, i.e. medically incapacitated, modifications to post release control and recommendations to improve operational efficiency within the Department.

HB130 is the result of years of deliberative work, representing the Department's commitment to ongoing collaboration with interested parties for sound public policy decisions and good government. While speaking about HB 130 on the House floor Representative White said, *"It is time to provide these agencies the tools they need to contain and maintain Ohio's prison population while also assisting ex-offenders in successful and fulfilling lives. We worked extensively through the committee process for over a year with prosecutors, judges, community corrections groups, DRC and DYS, the Governor's office, and several state agencies to arrive at the bill you have before you today. We can all agree Ohio needs to lead in programs that ease transition from felon to citizen and exemplify efficient management of tax dollars"*. Now is the time to support this important legislation; if not now – when?!

For more information on HB130 contact Scott Neely, ODRC Legislative Liaison, 614.752.1150 or Sara Andrews, Superintendent of the Adult Parole Authority, 614.752.1258.

2007 Clifford Skeen Recipient
Community Corrections Association, Inc
Youngstown, Ohio

By Dr. Richard Billak and Jeremy Simpson, CCA

OCCA is proud to spotlight, one of two members receiving the distinguished Clifford Skeen award for Halfway Houses for 2007. Community Corrections Association, Inc. (CCA) located in Youngstown, received this esteemed honor.



Dr. Richard Billak addresses the audience

The Clifford Skeen Award is a part of former Governor and current U.S. Senator Voinovich's commitment to enhancing the quality of community corrections programs in Ohio. The award, first presented in 1993, is given in honor of the late eight-term Ohio legislator who sponsored Ohio's Community Corrections Act. The selection process for this award is stringent, only 3 halfway house programs in the state are invited to go in front of a three judge panel to determine the year's "best" programs.

Community Corrections Association Inc. was honored in 1993 as the first recipient of this award and since that time has been nominated almost annually for both their halfway house program and day reporting program.

Community Corrections Association Inc. is a 3 facility corporation with 170 beds serving residents in northern Ohio with various residential sanctions with a focus on employment and substance abuse services.

The 15th annual award ceremony was hosted by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) and held in October of 2007 during the annual Ohio Justice Alliance for community Corrections (OJACC) conference held in Columbus.

Community Corrections Association Inc.'s Chief Operating Officer, Jeremy Simpson stated "We were elated to know we were nominated and words cannot describe the emotion we felt to know we were awarded the 2007 Clifford Skeen Award". Jeremy further goes on to say, " We are always excited to receive nominations and awards, but nothing can compare to the joy we receive when a former client lets you know how well they are doing."

CCA is known for its stellar achievements, boasting an 82% successful completion rate so far this fiscal year, using an assessment tool to determine what type of programming offenders receive at the halfway house and an ODRC audit score of 96% last fiscal year and doing this while maintaining one of the lowest per diems statewide.

OCCA congratulates CCA for their fine work and will feature the 2nd recipient of this prestigious award in our next newsletter.

Prediction: 64,970 Ohioans in State Prison By 2016

By: Phillip P. Nunes, Oriana House

In 2007, the Pew Charitable Trust, released a report predicting future prison population growth for the nation. Ohio's prediction for the future is sobering: Ohio's prisons will grow from our all time high today of 50,099 offenders to an even higher number of 64,970 by the year 2016.

In addition to these staggering statistics, I received a press release from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) that makes it clear to me that we can not afford to continue to conduct business as in the past. On April 8, 2008 ODRC Director Terry Collins made public the stark reality of where we have arrived in the prison business by stating, "On Monday (April 7, 2008), the department reached an all time high with an inmate population of 50,099". However the most troubling aspect of this press release was what it was about... "701 Jobs (at ODRC) will be eliminated due to budget constraints". How can this be that 24 hours after announcing our highest prison population that the next day DRC is put in the untenable position of having to announce that they are going to manage this population with 701 less employees?

As previously stated, we are "predicted" to have another 14,871 more offenders in our prison system than we have today. There are many who would dispute the validity of these predictions. Consider 50 years ago, our citizens would not have believed that by the year 2008 we would have 50,099 incarcerated Ohioans - yet that is our reality. One thing holds true about predictions, it is known that by tweaking policies, laws and practices we can change the tide and thus change the reality of our future for the good or bad.

Is Crime on the Increase?

When the topic of prison populations comes up, many people instinctively believe that crime has increased. However, when you look into this issue is this really a valid assumption? According to the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, since 1994 violent crime rates have steadily declined reaching the lowest level in 2005 (the last year such statistics were available).

Intuitively, this must mean that if violent crime rates have decreased there must have been an explosion of other crimes. Since 1973, theft rates have steadily dropped, reaching their lowest level ever recorded in 2005. Nonfatal firearm-related crime has plummeted since 1993, before increasing slightly in 2005. The only category where crime has increased dramatically is drug crimes.

Even in the wake of declining crime statistics, 1 out of every 100 Americans is incarcerated. In 1980, 125 of every 100,000 Ohioans were in prison. According to the 2000 census, Ohio had 415 of every 100,000 citizens in prison. From 1982 to 2004, the United States has experienced a 619% increase in spending for corrections nationwide.

The Ohio Experience

In 1989, Ohio's prisons held 28,076 inmates. To get a sense of how we arrived at our current point, we have to look back to the 1980s and 1990s where Ohio set out on a path to build more and more prisons, spending \$800 million dollars to construct 23 new facilities. To put things into perspective, between 1980 and 2000 we saw statewide an 80% increase in educational spending while we saw a 491% increase in correctional spending.

In 1979, the Ohio General Assembly enacted perhaps one of the most insightful pieces of legislation in correctional history, the Community Corrections Act. This act was designed to divert felony offenders from the prison system. The original legislation created Community-Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs) and prison subsidy programs, and in 1990, the Act was amended to allow for jail diversion programs as well. **In the past six years alone (Ohio State FY 2002 – 2007), there have been 257,564 community correctional participants.**

[Continued on next page](#)

Prediction...continued.

These Community Corrections programs have been proven by the University of Cincinnati to serve the dual purpose of diverting offenders from prison while reducing recidivism. On average this equates to 42,927 offenders who are either diverted from or released from prison annually, which far surpasses the 29,609 inmates that ODRC admitted in FY 2007. If it were not for community corrections, one can only imagine how many more offenders we would have in prisons today.

Today ODRC has 32 prisons designed to incapacitate 38,770 offenders. As of April 7, 2008, ODRC had 11,329 more offenders than our prison system was designed to hold. Two questions must be confronted: (1) Do we continue to downsize the correctional budget in the face of a continued projected prison population growth; and/or (2) What price are we willing to pay when we go over the tipping point?

In responding to the 10th anniversary of the Lucasville riots in an article in *The Cincinnati Enquirer* on April 6, 2003, former Senator Mark Mallory stated in response to budget cuts, "We were ahead of the curve and now we're sliding back...and...we're following a formula that could lead us down the path to another Lucasville." With today's announced cuts and the loss of 701 jobs, I believe we are sliding once again. Although it may be uncomfortable to say, we are approaching similar conditions that existed prior to the 1993 Lucasville prison riots.

How Did We Get Here?

As many are aware, in July 1996, Ohio enacted Senate Bill 2 (SB 2), which created a presumption for a community sanction for non-violent and low level felony offenders - Ohio's version of truth in sentencing.

Despite SB 2, today approximately 60% of the ODRC prison population serves 12 months or less. Additionally, more laws carrying longer sentences for offenses result in offenders spending time occupying a prison bed that in the past may have been vacated sooner.

Another factor in the prison population increase is that most urban jails in Ohio are over capacity and though capital funds were invested in expanding CBCF beds, many of those beds lack operating funds. These conditions severely limit the ability of judges to divert offenders from prison to jail or to a local community corrections program.

Potential Next Steps

We know that investing in community corrections has saved the State of Ohio from being in a more wide spread crisis than exists today. Furthermore, whether in a state prison or community correctional program we know that by addressing the factors that lead to crime such as substance abuse, mental health problems, lack of housing and employment, poor education, peer associates, and family issues, we can begin to treat offenders based upon their needs.

To truly affect change in our "predicted" growth to our prison system, we sometimes must look through the eyes of an outsider. In that vein, the Governor has been in discussions with the House, Senate and Supreme Court regarding the possibility of the Council of State Governments (CSG) conducting an assessment of our prison situation to potentially make recommendations to turn the tide of the PEW Charitable Trust's prediction for our state's prison population.

Whether these proposed steps are taken or not, one thing is for certain...we will be taking steps regardless. Hopefully they are toward less growth in prison populations and rather, focus on addressing other issues such as education, jobs and continued public safety for the citizens of Ohio.

Embracing Excellence: People are the Key

By Cathy Jo Veroni, Conference Committee Chair, Talbert House

OCCA hosted its seventh annual conference on April 2-4 in Worthington, Ohio. This year's conference concentrated on 2 major areas: providing evidence-based practices for client care and how to effectively manage and supervise staff in a changing environment. It was a great success with 3 national keynote speakers:

- Otis Williams on Embracing and Modeling Professional Excellence
- Carol Shapiro on Family Justice
- Scott Warrick on Emotional Intelligence



l-r OCCA President Mary Spottswood, ODYS Director Tom Stickrath, ODMH Director Sandra Stephenson, ODADAS Director Angela Cornelius, ODRC Director Terry J. Collins and Alvis House CEO Denise Robinson

The conference was preceded with an "invitation only" Roundtable Discussion with four cabinet members: Director Terry Collins, Department of Rehabilitation and Correction; Director Sandra Stephenson, Department of Mental Health; Director Tom Stickrath, Department of Youth Services; and Director Angela Cornelius, Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services. Topics focused on what the departments are doing to impact recidivism, treatment of difficult populations, and pooled funding options to work together collaboratively.

There were 257 professionals who attended the conference. The Awards Luncheon honored Kris Long, Deputy Legislative Director in the Office of Ohio Governor Ted Strickland for working with both the legislature and Governor's office to affirm that community corrections is the right option for many offenders who have previously been sentenced to prison. Kris has also echoed the message that we have all heard from Director Collins on placing appropriate offenders in

prison, but placing the right offenders in community corrections - it is cheaper and more effective. She has carried this message to the halls of the state house and to both sides of the aisle. Kris has been a strong advocate of community corrections and has worked with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction as well as OCCA to keep this message strong in policy decisions that impact us now and in the future. She is and will continue to be one of our strongest advocates, both in the Governor's office and at the State House.

The OCCA Membership Award was given to Anne Connell-Freund for exceptional service to the association. We are proud to say that many attendees found this year's conference to be the most successful in quality of presentations ever.



l-r Mary Spottswood, Kris Long, Anne Connell-Freund and Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton

REFLECTIONS ON THE BUREAU OF COMMUNITY SANCTIONS

By Alicia Handwerk, Chief of the Bureau of Community Sanctions, ODRC

When I joined the Bureau of Community Sanctions as a community corrections specialist in 1999, the Bureau oversaw CBCF and CCA grants; halfway house contracts and a little (very little) electronic monitoring for sanctioning parole and PRC violators. We audited large numbers of standards and those standards focused almost solely on facility operations. Programs were underutilized and turning in large amounts of funding each fiscal year. We thought we were a pretty good deal, but did not have the data or the independent evaluation to prove it. Local programs were focused almost solely on their perception of local needs and didn't care too much what the department's needs were. As my predecessor, Deputy Director Linda Janes says, "We were shopping for blue couches and we were being told we needed red ones."

Less than a year into being chief of the Bureau, I look around and see huge changes. We have expanded the scope of our operations significantly. The Bureau now oversees Residential Placement, Transitional Control and a large electronic monitoring/GPS program. In addition, we implemented Independent Housing, a transitional housing program aimed at lower risk and need offenders who might otherwise be homeless. In 2007, we piloted a Permanent Supportive Housing program targeting special needs offenders at risk of being homeless, and partnered with the City of Cleveland to open the Cleveland Transition Center, a reentry center aimed at transitioning prison releasees returning to Cleveland. Careful attention is paid to contract and grant utilization, and money is moved from programs that are under quota to those that are over quota. As a result, much less money is being returned to the general fund each year. This is due, in large part, to the implementation of CCIS-Web, a web-based data collection system which allows the Bureau to not only monitor utilization, but also review offender demographics, successful completion rates, programming offered and fees collected. In addition to data the Bureau analyzes and publishes in-house, the CBCF, halfway house and CCA programs have been evaluated by the University of Cincinnati for program effectiveness. The initial evaluation of our programs led to a major revision of Bureau auditing standards. Now, instead of focusing on operations, we audit agencies to insure that they are providing evidence-based programming that will change offender behavior and reduce recidivism. We also deepened our partnerships with local agencies to ensure that we are balancing the Department's needs with the local community's needs. As a result, we have increased the number of community placements for females to stem the increase of female offenders committed to prison. The Bureau also worked with community partners to establish specialized programs to divert non-support offenders from prison and more programming options for offenders in non-residential offenders.

While I am immensely proud of all of the Bureau's accomplishments in recent years, I certainly can't take credit myself, it has been a true team effort and we had remarkable leadership through our recent period of growth. With all that we have achieved, I don't believe that now is the time for the Bureau and its community partners to rest on their laurels—we must continue to stress balance, accountability and best practices. We are also committed to providing services where there is currently a lack, such as a CBCF in Cuyahoga County and a reentry center in southern Ohio. As our prison population grows larger, it is crucial that we not only expand our capacity to provide services in the community, but that the community and local criminal justice system feel comfortable that we are providing an option that is effective, efficient and contributes to public safety.



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Ohio
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Members of the Ohio General Assembly

SAVE THE DATE

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

Statehouse Atrium

5:30 - 7:30pm

OCCA 35th Anniversary & Legislative Reception

COMMENTS PROVIDED BY HOUSE SPEAKER JON A. HUSTED

*Please join us for food, drinks
and information on programs that serve your districts*

Contact Lusanne Green or

Jene' Turner at

614-252-8417 for more information