



Winter 2008 Newsletter

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- Toledo

President's Message

Ohio Can Change Prison Projections

By Anne Connell-Freund

As we move towards record high prison populations, members of the Ohio Community Corrections Association (OCCA) are striving to address the reasons that people are locked up and find solutions to allow them to return to our community safely, in a cost effective way and most importantly; as productive citizens.

As a veteran in the community corrections field, I am amazed that currently, well more than half the offenders in Ohio's prisons are serving a sentence of less than one year and are unable to access any rehabilitative services while incarcerated. These are not the hardened long timers that are often portrayed in the media.

If we examine the reality of corrections in Ohio, we would find that this state is one of the national leaders in offering alternative sanctions and attempting to address offenders with special needs. At the same time, limited resources, a "tough on crime" orientation, and increasingly higher numbers of people with medical, mental health and substance abuse needs lead us to utilize prisons as a catch all for everyone.

Imprisonment affects families. A parent in prison is a sentence also inflicted on their children. The child is punished even though he or she had no responsibility for the crimes committed. 3.2 million have a parent incarcerated and the projected future for children of inmates is grim. These youngsters are five times more likely to go to prison themselves.

Ohio spent \$1.5 billion on prisons in 2006.

In September, prison populations were reaching an all time high and estimates for 2015 were at 55,000 inmates in Ohio. Those projections are rising. It is unfortunate that so much of the discussion around criminal justice issues remains focused on punishment rather than rehabilitation and reentry services. Consider that 95% of our inmates are returning to communities all across the US and will return to all of your communities as well. Reentry is not just a corrections issue – it's a societal issue. It is proven that when those with higher needs are mandated into programs like halfway houses and community based correctional facilities; places that teach new skills, offer rehabilitative services and focus successful community living, the rate of returning to prison is significantly lower.

This means that serving ex-offenders in our communities makes our neighborhoods safer and makes more families whole. How does this work? When offenders are released there are enormous challenges. Often ex-offenders are without a job, a home, education, positive life skills or any support system. Add to that, many employers refuse to hire anyone with a criminal record. If no interventions are offered, as many as two thirds of offenders will return to prison within 3 years of release.

Our society clearly knows how to build secure institutions to lock people up. But in the end, it's not enough to improve public safety. We've got to do a better job of helping people to make better choices, which means research-based reentry programs, drug treatment and mental health services. OCCA members know that it is possible to change the way offenders think, how they address problems and who they associate with. These efforts can impact our growing prison numbers while improving the quality of life for all of Ohio's citizenry. If we give people the ability to positively contribute to our society, we are doing much to strengthen the fabric of that society. Ohio's lawmakers have made many efforts to make for safer neighborhoods and healthier communities. They can do even more by utilizing proven programs that work like those in Ohio's community corrections network. In doing so we can make for safer and healthier communities and reduce the skyrocketing rate of short term prison stays in Ohio.

Anne Connell-Freund is past president of OCCA as of 12-31-07 and executive vice president of operations at Oriana House, a nonprofit agency providing research-based reentry programs.

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Organizational Background: The Ohio Community Corrections Association (OCCA) is a professional organization that advocates for and assists community corrections providers to function more effectively. OCCA was incorporated in 1973 to represent community corrections facilities throughout the state of Ohio, the needs of the courts, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, the offenders, and their communities. OCCA membership includes twenty-five member agencies that operate halfway houses and four Community Based Corrections Facilities (CBCF).

"Making a difference in Community Corrections"

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction's

2007 Clifford Skeen Awards

By Alicia Handwerk, Chief of the Bureau of Community Sanctions,
Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction held the 15th annual Clifford Skeen Awards Ceremony on October 25, 2007 during the annual Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections (OJACC) conference held at the Crowne Plaza in Columbus.



Director Terry J. Collins addresses the audience

This award is given in honor of the late, eight-term Ohio Representative, Clifford Skeen, who sponsored the Community Correction Act passed by the Ohio Legislature in 1979. The purpose of this act was to reduce the number of non-dangerous offenders being sent to state prisons.

Representative Skeen was instrumental in obtaining increased funding for many community corrections initiatives.

The Clifford Skeen Award was initiated in 1993 to demonstrate commitment to community corrections as a viable alternative to incarceration.

Director Terry J. Collins spoke at the event and acknowledged the efforts that Ohio's Community Corrections programs have made in implementing evidenced based practices, which have resulted in Ohio being recognized as a national leader in community corrections.

The selection committee was comprised of Sharon Schnelle of the Office of Criminal Justice Services and Jennie Long of the Ohio Judicial Conference who recommended the award recipients after conducting individualized interviews of the top scoring programs in each category. The panel selected the following programs as the 2007 Clifford Skeen Award recipients:

Community-Based Correctional Facilities: CROSSWAEH CBCF, Seneca County;

Halfway House: Community Corrections Association, Youngstown;

Prison Diversion Program: Franklin County Adult Probation Department;

Jail Diversion Program: Licking County Municipal Court Intensive Supervision Probation Program

The Department's vision for community corrections is that of a collaborative and cooperative partnership between state and local agencies. The Clifford Skeen Awards highlight our successes in this vitally important area. The award ceremony is just one opportunity for the Department to recognize local programs for the outstanding work they do on a daily basis to provide alternatives to prison and jails and ensure safe communities.

OJACC also presented their annual awards during the conference.

ODRC Director Terry Collins received the Doctor Bennett J. Cooper Award for his significant contribution and advancement of community corrections.

Judge Ken Spicer from Delaware County received the James Wichtman Award for his contribution to the OJACC Board.

Judge Charles E. Brown of the Stark County Common Pleas Court received the Representative C.J. McLin Award given annually to an elected official in Ohio who has worked towards the improvement of community corrections in Ohio.



CROSSWAEH CBCF

Back Row (l-r) Scott Williams, Mark Boedeker, Christine Lechman, James Lawrence, Jason Varney, Terry Collins, Linda Janes, Judge James DeWeese

Front Row (l-r) Pamela Moyer, Carrie Benham-Daniel, Trischa Roberts, Brandy Tiell, Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, Anne Connell-Freund

Christopher Lowenkamp received the Doctor Simon Dinitz Award for his contributions to the improvement of community corrections in Ohio.

If you would like additional information about the Clifford Skeen Awards or community correction programs, please contact Alicia Handwerk, Chief of the Bureau of Community Sanctions, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction at 614-752-0605 or Alicia.Handwerk@odrc.state.oh.us



CCA (l-r) Shonie Velez, ODRC Director Terry J. Collins, Dr. Richard Billak, Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Stratton Community Corrections Association Halfway House Executive Director Rick Billak, Jeremy Simpson and DPCS Chief Linda Janes.



Community Service Partnerships Improve Our Neighborhoods

By Jane Benner, Salvation Army Booth House

On Friday, October 26, students from the University of Dayton and Wright State partnered with The Salvation Army Booth House, an OCCA member halfway house, and The Other Place for a neighborhood cleanup that took them into the streets of downtown Dayton in an effort to clean up the trash that littered the streets. The project was one of many across the Dayton area that took place as part of The United Way's "Make a Difference Day." In all, the cleanup sent out more than 40 volunteers and collected almost 15 full bags of trash and recyclables covering 4 miles of roads. During the dinner provided by Dewey's and Flying Pizza that followed the cleanup, the volunteers reflected on the project, saying it was very eye opening and a positive experience. Everyone agreed that the area looked much better, and that the experience was worthwhile.



News We Can Use

By Jennifer Stohr, Alvis House

As members of the Ohio Community Corrections Association (OCCA), we have the unique opportunity to share valuable information, problem-solve, and celebrate successes together. On a larger scale, as part of the American Correctional Association (ACA), you have this opportunity as well. I am sure you have heard it said at some point that Ohio is one of the leader's in the field of corrections, and one of the reasons this is true is because of the state's involvement and support for the accreditation process and the work of ACA. Within OCCA, there are some individuals who have the opportunity to travel throughout the country representing ACA, their agency, and community corrections within the state of Ohio, by conducting accreditation or re-accreditation audits for facilities just like ours. By participating as an auditor, we are given the opportunity to see what agencies from across the country are doing that can be adapted and brought back to our facilities. We also want to share information with those agencies about what great and exciting things we are doing here in Ohio that may help their programs be more successful. We would like to make this space available to all of you to share anything new and exciting you have seen out there in the world of community corrections, either within the state of Ohio, or across the country. This will be about sharing information, looking beyond the way we have always done business, and changing with the field of community corrections as it changes and our clients change. So, if you have some "News We Can Use," please forward it to me at jennifer.stohr@alvishouse.org and we will get the word out on what is going on in the world of community corrections outside of Ohio.

To get things started off, I would like to share briefly with you an interesting program recently implemented at a facility in Texas. We all know how difficult it is for our clients to find employment, especially in this challenging job market. Many of the facilities represented by OCCA are located outside a metropolitan area, so what if job seeking activities could be brought into the facility. The Volunteers of America facility in Hutchins, Texas, located in a rural area outside of Dallas, has partnered with the *Dallas Morning News*, the State Job and Family Services office of Dallas, the Office of Workforce Development, and the Federal Probation Office of Dallas. The *Dallas Morning News* has provided an employment kiosk (a computer monitor, keyboard, and small printer), which provides a listing by category of the employment opportunities within the Dallas/Fort Worth Area. Clients are able to browse job openings and submit an application right in the facility over the computer. They can also choose to print out the employment opportunity to go submit an application in person. This computer has no internet access and is located in an area where staff are performing client monitoring duties so it is being supervised by staff at all times, but does not take additional staffing resources. The kiosk located in the corrections center is similar to the ones located in the employment assistance offices within Dallas as a part of their Department of Jobs and Family Services. In addition, the Jobs and Family Services department has provided an employment services counselor on-site at various times throughout the week to provide additional assistance to the facility clients in looking for employment.

I challenge you to begin to think about how you can bring a program into your facility which will assist clients in obtaining employment. Research has shown that if our clients can find employment with a decent wage and even benefits, it will greatly reduce their chances of recidivism. So, who can you partner with? What grants are out there that you can apply for and use to improve your employment program? May be your local Department of Jobs and Family Services office can partner with you, many of our clients are already using their services. Some times it just takes thinking outside of the box, asking the right questions, and being persistent. Also, it is important to share those successes and innovative solutions to our common problems with others, so what have you seen or are you doing that you want to share? Let us know!

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NATIONAL KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: **Carol Shapiro- Family Justice, NY**

Otis Williams - Limitless Inc.

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Or visit our WEBSITE: www.occaonline.org

Reentry Legislation – An Uphill Battle

Gloria Nielsen Iannucci, Alvis House

According to 2006 US census statistics, there are nearly 2.1 million adults in correctional institutions - roughly seven times the figure of the early 1970s - and the Pew Charitable Trusts released a report earlier this year projecting that the nation's inmate population will rise by 200,000 in the next five years.

We know how to build safe, secure institutions and lock people up. The jury is out, so to speak, on whether or not we can do a better job of helping the more than 95% of all prisoners who will be released to successfully return to the community.

The current picture is bleak - about 700,000 ex-offenders will leave prison this year and statistics show that two-thirds of them are likely to be rearrested within three years.

There are efforts at the national, state and local levels to improve reentry services. At the national level, there is the Second Chance Act of 2007 (HR 1593 and S 1060), which was crafted to provide tools to help to ensure the transition individuals make from prison or jail to the community is safe and successful.

The Second Chance Act reflects an enormous body of research showing that returning prisoners who have access to key supports and services on release commit fewer crimes, maintain employment, and show improved outcomes for health, income, and a broad range of other indicators. Conversely, former prisoners with few supports and services are more likely to continue to commit crimes.

The bill contains two grant programs. The first reauthorizes and expands the existing Reentry Demonstration Program. States and local governments can apply for funds through the Department of Justice. Second, the bill provides a small grant program for Mentoring Prisoners to be administered by the Department of Justice. The total cost of the bill is a little over \$190 million over a two-year period.

The Second Chance Act passed by a roll call vote during an evening session of the House on November 13, 2007. The vote was 347 YEA and 62 NAY. It has also been passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee and awaits a floor vote in the Senate. It has broad, bipartisan support as well as the support of more than 200 criminal justice, service provider, faith based, housing, governmental, disability and civil rights organizations. The Second Chance Act, which has been introduced each year since 2004 but didn't get to a floor vote in either House of Congress until this year, seems to have a real chance this year.

What has taken so long?

Despite decades of research, there are still people who argue that nothing about rehabilitation works. There are also legislators that feel the federal government should not have such a prominent role in guiding state policies. And there is the fact that it hasn't been very politically savvy to be in favor of legislation that could be perceived as giving a handout to criminals over legislation that establishes longer sentences and harsher sanctions.

For example, at the same time federal legislators are talking about second chances, Hon. Tim Grendell of the Ohio Senate has introduced a "three strikes" bill that would give judges the authority to imprison three-time felons for twice as long as current law allows, saying, "We've had a lot of complaints from constituents about repeat criminals and a feeling they are not getting a severe enough penalty to deter them." The bill would be the most significant change to sentencing guidelines in Ohio in a decade and Analysis by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction estimates it could add 11,000 inmates in three years beyond the current record high of nearly 50,000.

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If you are a corrections practitioner, it can be pretty discouraging to try to have a rational discussion with individuals who believe so strongly in the logic of punishment alone as the key to public safety. But we have to continue trying, using all the experience and research we can to encourage policymakers and the public to give our clients a

Ohio Judicial Forum on Community Corrections

By: Phillip Nunes, OJACC President and staff at Oriana House

On November 14th and 15th the Ohio Judicial Conference, Ohio Judicial College, Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections (OJACC), Ohio Community Corrections Association (OCCA), and Ohio Chief Probation Officers Association (OCPOA) jointly sponsored a forum on community corrections for Common Pleas Court judges across the state. Specifically, we invited the common pleas court general division judges who serve on the Ohio Judicial Conference's community corrections, criminal law, and specialized dockets committees. Twenty-eight judges accepted. The focus of the forum included educating the judiciary in research and evidence based practices in the area of community corrections. Our goal is for the judges in attendance at the forum to provide information to their colleagues in future Ohio Judicial Conference and Ohio Judicial College trainings and conferences.

The Honorable James DeWeese of Richland County co-facilitated this forum along with Phyllis Modley from the National Institute of Corrections. In addition, Phyllis Modley was joined by Judge Ron Reinstein and Sarah Schmoll from the Arizona Supreme Court who assisted in the facilitation of "What Works in Community Corrections".

The forum began on the first day with a sentencing exercise using mock case scenarios which proved rather helpful as those judges in attendance overwhelmingly chose sanctions that would favor sentencing with best practices in mind. The remainder of the first day focused primarily on research - that included the principles of evidenced-based practice, risk and needs and matching levels of programming needs, the impacts intensive treatment and sanctions have on low risk populations, as well as strategies for dealing with high and low risk levels.

During the second day of the forum, the judges continued discussing goals of sentencing, balancing risk and needs in determining appropriate sanctions, and how effective programming can assist in reducing recidivism. Throughout this last day of training the judges in attendance were able to also view a group of residents from Alvis House, Inc. demonstrate a cognitive skills game that highlighted the practicing of positive skill sets. In addition, Dr. Randy Shively gave an overview of programming and motivational interviewing, Linda Janes and Cynthia Ali of ODRC gave an overview of sentencing practices in each attendee's county as well as an overview of programming in prison and the potential of early release programs that would allow for enhanced programmatic services. Also, Gayle Dittmer and Gary Yates discussed community correctional alternatives available statewide and Anne Connell-Freund discussed the realities of implementing best practices from an agency view. The day wrapped up with Judge DeWeese facilitating a discussion on how to deal with community resource limitations when considering sentencing options.

Throughout the forum, the judges in attendance discussed several recommendations for the furthering the knowledge of evidenced based practices. The first recommendation was to address this topic at new judges' orientation and to even further explore the issue of goals of sentencing in general. Additionally, the judges who attended recommended that this training next be taken to the prosecutors, defense attorneys, and probation staff as well.

All in all it was a very successful forum, and I would like to thank everyone involved in the development of the curriculum. Thanks to our excellent presenters, to Judge DeWeese and Phyllis Modley for their outstanding facilitation, and a special thank you to each judge who took time out of his or her busy schedule to lend their expertise about and passion for community corrections.