

Jail Reentry Roundtable Initiative

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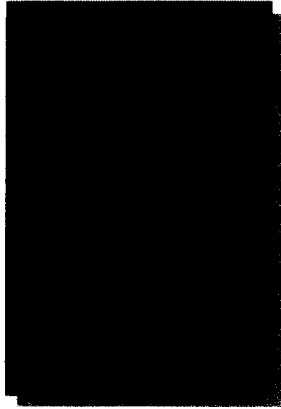
Reentry Programs and Rural Jails

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Re-entry Programs and Rural Jails



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RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS AND RURAL JAILS

Rural/Small Jails: an overview

Rural jails or small jails make up the majority of over 3,350 jails in America today. However, resources and public attention tend to focus on large urban correctional facilities and the challenges and issues that affect those operations.

There has been very little attention or research accomplished that targets the challenges and issues faced by rural/small jails. The operation of the county jail is among one of the primary duties of the sheriff.

Given that resources and funding is limited in the rural setting; some jurisdictions will house federal and immigration offenders to generate supplemental funding. This resource, if planned correctly, could be of an advantage in promoting re-entry and other programs in the jail facility to benefit the local community.

Rural/small jails are generally older jails that incorporate a “warehousing” of inmates. This is oftentimes the result of an older designed jail built with the intent of just holding people.

The ability to adequately staff the rural/small jail facility is often difficult due to a small recruitment pool. This is usually due to location and inadequate

compensation levels. Competition to staff the jail or patrol often leaves the sheriff with the decision of demand. As a result, patrol deputies will work in the jail when needed but they often bring a different philosophy between law enforcement and corrections.

Poor staffing of the jail facility leaves inmates poorly supervised and the effects of this are often seen in terms of inmate to inmate assault, suicide, and challenges relative to healthcare and health related issues.

Rural sheriff's departments are also challenged with community expectations of service while operating with a limited budget. Thus, when decisions of funding and budget prioritization are made, the jail operation is often overlooked, not out of neglect but within the limits of available resources. Even though confronted with these challenges, the sheriff's department is being held liable for the safety, welfare, and health of those incarcerated, as well as those that are employed in the jail.

While faced with the above limitations, the jail administrator must also contend with a Criminal Justice System that lacks the resources to swiftly adjudicate individuals and/or place them in appropriately needed services. Many local community resources are stretched to the limit to meet the needs within their community or simply the resources do not exist due to location, thus the criminal justice population is usually the last entity to receive services.

This is also complicated by the lack of adequate space to provide services within the jail to prepare an offender for re-entry.

Physical plant limitations often impact on the ability to provide space for programming, special population needs, and segregated housing in order to respond to security threats and special housing needs.

While the above could frustrate most people, you will also find dedicated local sheriffs and jail administrators that are committed to improving services and conditions of confinement to better serve their communities.

Why Re-entry Programs

A recent survey of jails and prisons demonstrates that more than 1000 offenders are added to our incarcerated population on a weekly basis. That translates to a 2.6 percent increase from mid-2004 to mid-2005. Also of interest was the gain of over 33,500 inmates in jails, which is the largest population increase recorded since 1997. This number reflects a 4.7 percent increase compared with the 1.6 percent increase in state and federal prisons.

Why re-entry programs? The survey additionally revealed that 62 percent of the offenders in jail have not been convicted and are awaiting trial. Re-entry programs in Corrections are essential in order to prepare offenders for their eventual release back into the community and reduce the number of offenders in jails awaiting trial. This is most critical in terms of addressing criminal behavior that is oftentimes driven by a variety of reasons:

- Substance Abuse
- Poor, Limited, or No Education
- Mental Illness
- Unemployment
- Lack of Living Skills
- Anger Management Issues
- Domestic Violence/Trauma
- Lack of Adequate or No Housing
- HIV/Health Issues
- Gangs
- Juvenile Transfers
- Women Offenders

The recognition of the need for re-entry programs must be acknowledged as a critical element of public safety and planned as part of the mission statement of any organization.

A great deal of research has been conducted in the area of re-entry programs and prison populations; however, very little has been conducted for rural/small jails.

The benefits of planning a re-entry program spread into a variety of areas:

- The Corrections Facility
 - Reduced incarceration costs
 - Reduced liability due to overcrowding
 - Greater inmate supervision
 - Limiting the ‘warehousing’ mentality
- The Community
 - Greater accountability of the offender
 - Positive approach to offender adjudication
 - Less victimization/greater public safety
- The Corrections Staff
 - Safer working environment
 - Reduced jail incidents
 - Reduced job stress
- The Offenders Family
 - Opportunity for intervention
 - Focus towards positive options
 - Break in criminal cycle

Re-entry programs prepare individuals for the challenges of life upon release from jail. Preparing the offender for release prior to the actual release is as critical as the release itself. Subsequently, as we look at program development we must look at programs that incorporate pre-release support and education, as well as post release.

Re-entry programs must consist of a system-wide approach and involvement. This should include:

- Law Enforcement
- Probation
- Jail
- Courts
- Prosecutor
- Defense Counsel
- Community Providers
- Family/Significant Others

The involvement of the many entities noted above reduces the potential for conflict and assists in the successful adjudication of the offender. It also ensures that there is an effective reintegration into the community that provides for public safety, as well as assisting the offender and their family.

Without proper planning, education, and involvement of key individuals, release is often met with failure.

Types of Re-entry Programs

There are many types of re-entry programs that are offered to the offender population. The type of program or combination of programs that best fits a given jurisdiction should be based upon:

- Local Resources
- Community Values/Support
- Criminal Justice System Priorities
- Local Community Issues
- Jail Crowding/Operational Challenges
- Funding
- Offender Population/Characteristics

A review of re-entry programs found that many differing approaches and types of programs exist. The following are a sampling of the types of programs offered and the many approaches that could meet your challenges and needs to provide you with alternatives to incarceration and re-entry program design:

Work Release

Work Release programs have been part of the county jail system for a long time. It often was the only program offered as a re-entry program by the county jail and was frequently a condition of probation. In addition, the Work Release program was operated in coordination with the local Adult Probation Department and the Courts.

Work Release programs were also implemented to address overcrowding in local jails, sometimes in response to crowding lawsuits, lack of jail resources to properly manage offenders, staffing shortages, and funding shortages to operate the county jail.

A component of a Work Release program may also be a Treatment Release. This component affords the offender the opportunity to participate in court ordered treatment and is sometimes used in conjunction with the Work Release.

Another component of the Work Release program is that of a Job Developer. This individual assists the offender in preparing for and obtaining employment by working closely with the offender and matching their skills and education with local employers.

The Work Release program allows the offender to maintain their employment status and therefore support their family and/or meet their financial commitments.

Lastly, no Work/Treatment Release program can be successful in meeting public safety and keeping the offender accountable without a field monitoring component. Utilizing monitoring verifies that an offender is at an assigned location as scheduled.

Day Reporting Centers

Day Reporting Centers have been used by local criminal justice systems for over 25 years, but are still relatively new in terms of use. Day Reporting Centers can be operated by a local county jail, probation department, court or under contract of a local provider. The Day Reporting Center can be a component of the Work/Treatment Release, a Pre-Release Program, an alternative to incarceration, or a condition of probation. They can also be designed to meet the needs of both pre-trial offenders, as well as those that have been adjudicated.

Day Reporting Centers have a great deal of flexibility in their mission and design, which can meet a variety of needs. The Day Reporting Center should offer a high level of supervision and treatment options that can include:

- Literacy/GED
- Family Preservation
- Parenting

- Substance Abuse
- Anger Management
- Employment Preparation
- Mental Health Counseling/Medication Management
- Healthcare and Education
- HIV Counseling
- Personal Counseling
- Drug Testing

Day Reporting Centers offer many levels of treatment from basic life skills to more intensive substance abuse treatment. The availability to offenders, probation, court personnel, as well as family members, results in reporting centers being available from early morning hours to late in the evening hours.

Because Day Reporting Centers require a high level of accountability of the offender, their schedule must be clear and concise and closely monitored. Because of this important requirement, as well as the level of treatment options offered, the design and schedule of programs must be ensured. This usually requires a high level of staffing that can be a mix of probation personnel, local providers, and on-site program staff and managers.

In some jurisdictions, the Day Reporting Center is also referred to as a local Resource Center. Although differing in name, the overall program design and operational function is the same as a Day Reporting Center.

The Day Reporting Center offers many uses to local jurisdictions but the key component of its mission must be public safety first, without that key component support and success will not be ensured.

Pretrial Services Program

Although by its title alone, a Pretrial Release Program has entry in the front end of prosecution upon arrest, it also has by design and function re-entry services conditions for the pretrial offender.

Pretrial Services gathers information about new arrestees, assess their risk to public safety, and reports that information to the courts who then decide on any conditions of release and the offender's suitability to be assigned to this program.

The responsibility for the pretrial offender may be similar to that of probation and its conditions relative to treatment, strict monitoring, accountability, and positive interaction within the community. Pretrial Services has been in existence since the early 1960's and has roots in what was then the Manhattan Bail Project.

Pretrial Services Programs number in the hundreds across the United States today with close to half being created after 1990.

The Pretrial Services Program is a collaborative effort with the:

- Courts
- Prosecutor
- Defense Counsel
- Law Enforcement
- Corrections

It also brings into the operation community providers that offer services in:

- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Education
- Employment/Job Development
- Vocational

The operation of the Pretrial Services Program can fall under the jurisdiction of a variety of authority, such as the local probation department or the jail or the courts.

The key component of the Pretrial Services Program is the monitoring of offenders released to its custody. This can include a variety of approaches

from utilizing a Day Reporting Center, electronic monitoring, daily reporting via phone, or field surveillance.

In smaller jurisdictions, a staff of 1 or 2 can manage the program and monitor offenders. There is usually minimal field supervision instead having the offender report on a daily or weekly basis. The phone is used to check in with the offender and to remind the offender of important dates for court or to verify attendance at court ordered programs. Electronic monitoring is also utilized on offenders who may be identified as a “special population” offender requiring closer supervision. Electronic monitoring is also another means of supervising an offender when personnel resources are limited and the offender could benefit from release without compromising public safety.

Design Components

Many other types of re-entry programs exist and are based on the previously described programs, as well as having design features that meet the offender population needs and community needs. To select the right program for the community involves many components of development.

The following areas are noted as “critical” for the development of community re-entry programs as it relates to the “Partnership” that the jail must develop and foster in order to promote the program:

- Community Advisory Group
 - This would consist of a group of individuals from social services, CJS, civic groups and concerned citizens
- Jail Liaison
 - This person is critical to the process as they must be that vital link to facilitate communication between the jail and the re-entry program. This assists in transitioning the offender from jail to the program.
- Program Costs
 - The type of program design has a direct effect on costs. It is important to consider the jail support costs as part of the overall budget. When determining costs consider:
 - Program Design/Intensity
 - Personnel (contract vs. non-contract)
 - Number of Participants
 - Space
 - Equipment/Supplies

- Planning
 - Take time to plan, know the major steps in planning, identify key officials and personnel, identify roles, commit necessary resources, gather data on offenders and program options, and develop an achievable Mission Statement and Policy and Procedures.
- Program Evaluation
 - No program will have continued support without understanding if it is meeting its intended purpose. This is also an important tool to measure success/failure and to adjust the program as needed.
- Funding
 - Funding in rural communities for re-entry programs can be very challenging. It is for this reason that in order to start a re-entry program, a partnership with the community, CJS, Social Service agencies, and other county agencies is critical. Funding availability can be explored through various grant opportunities, state funding, university grants/partnerships, and Weed and Seed communities to mention just a few.

- **Regional Jails**
 - The concept of regional jails provides a valuable consideration for housing offenders. It offers jurisdiction an opportunity to “pool” funds to effectively operate a jail while maximizing resources for alternatives to incarceration.

- **Regional Re-entry Programs**
 - This concept is also based upon the regional jail concept, however, places a regional program in a location that can be accessed by many jurisdictions. It also provides for the “pooling” of funds from various counties for its operation.

Indian Country Jails

In September 2004, the United States Department of Interior, Office of Inspector General, published its findings titled “Neither Safe Nor Secure” An Assessment of Indian Detention Facilities. The findings were a stark assessment of the difficult conditions that face Jail Administrators and tribes across America. Inspectors determined that the Bureau of Indian Affairs had been remiss in meeting their responsibilities in providing safe and secure detention services.

The majority of jails in Indian Country are located in rural and vastly rural locations; the distinction is that “vastly rural” is almost isolated with great travel distances to any services. The majority of the facilities is 20-30 years old and has a history of neglect, under funding, or no funding for detention services by the BIA.

It was this history along with reports of suicide and poor care and inmate supervision that lead to the survey and report. As a result of the report, many changes have and continue to take place to address the issues.

There are approximately 69 facilities that currently operate in Indian Country. Some facilities are operated by the BIA; others are operated solely by the tribe, while some are under contract by the tribe from the BIA, also known as PL-638. These facilities are a combination of adult and/or juvenile.

While reviewing Re-entry Programs it is obvious that Indian Country Jails are a part of the Rural/Small Jail network and share many of the same challenges that face Rural/Small Jails across America.

While looking at Indian Country Jails, it was discovered that many tribal courts utilize the “restorative justice” model as a means to bring the offender back into the community. However, for the most part, Indian Country Jails simply lack the resources and funding as well as support to look at alternatives to incarceration.

Based upon the Inspectors General's report, many issues have been addressed and continue to be addressed in Indian Country Detention. However, tribal communities would also be best served by looking at alternatives to incarceration and Re-entry Programs. To that end, as the BIA continues to address crowding and conditions of the detention centers, emphasis and support should also be placed upon systemic and philosophical changes both at the tribal level as well as within the BIA to support Re-entry Programs.

Recommendations

What became obvious during the development of this paper was the lack of information available on Re-entry Programs in Rural/Small jails. While discussing this topic with jail administrators and/or county sheriffs, they indicated that not much thought or emphasis has been placed in this area. I also determined that Re-entry Programs vary from region to region. While some states that have regional jails seem to also have more programs, states that do not incorporate this concept or have jails that are more isolated, don't look at Re-entry Programs as part of their responsibility. In fact, some are struggling to just deal with the day-to-day operational challenges.

However, there is a need to accomplish several tasks to further address this issue:

- Conduct Research and Surveys of Existing Programs & Issues.
 - Utilize the American Jail Association, National Sheriff's Association, American Corrections Association and others to survey the field for additional and specific data relative to Rural/Small Jails, Re-entry Programs, and other related services.

- Educate
 - County Sheriff's and Jail Administrators need to be informed of the benefits of Re-entry Programs and the dynamics of development. Approaches could include:
 - Publication of Research/Survey Results
 - Association Conferences
 - State Judiciary Meetings
 - DOJ/NIC Publications
 - Association Publications

- Regionalization
 - Promoting Regional Resource Centers/Day Reporting Centers can be a valuable asset to promoting Re-entry Programs.

Conclusion

Re-entry Programs lend themselves to multiple design options which can meet the differing needs of jails and communities. Partnerships and relationships within the Criminal Justice System and community providers can assist a more effective transition of the offender back into the community while promoting accountability and public safety. To merely “warehouse” offenders will incur increased costs for incarceration and does little in serving the community.

Re-entry Programs do work and must be promoted in an effort to address the social and economical challenges that face our communities and offender populations today.