



State of Washington
Department of Corrections

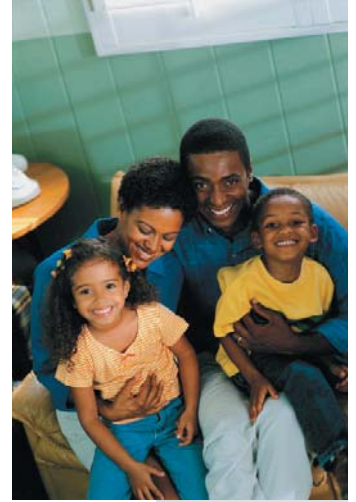
The DOC Re-entry Initiative

Smart on Crime



Executive Summary

Protecting the public from crime is one of government's most important responsibilities. As a major component of Washington's criminal justice system, the Department of Corrections (DOC) contributes to that effort in two important ways. First, it provides a humane way to sanction wrongdoers by confining them in safe and secure prisons, and by supervising them in the community. Second, it provides rehabilitative programs that reduce the likelihood offenders will repeat their past mistakes. DOC's mission statement reflects these basic objectives: "The Department of Corrections, in collaboration with its criminal justice partners, will contribute to staff and community safety and hold offenders accountable through administration of criminal sanctions and effective re-entry programs."



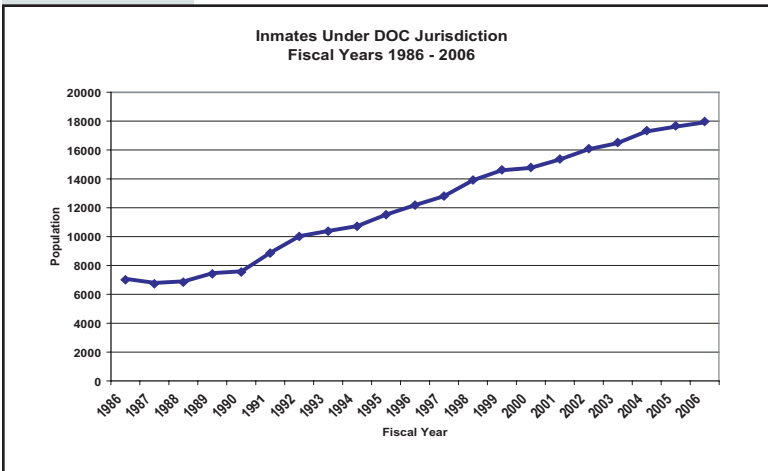
Those who work in the field of corrections understand that neither punishment nor correctional programs will end crime. The causes of crime are complex and woven into the fabric of society. A comprehensive approach to the problem addresses the underlying causes of crime before a child or young adult faces the criminal justice system for the first time.

Providing convicted criminals with needed education, job training, chemical dependency treatment and other services is one way to make the public safer, because these investments reduce the offender's potential to commit new crimes after release from custody. However, the state can also enhance public safety by improving educational and employment opportunities for the entire community, thus giving more people the ability to earn a legal living for themselves and their families.

No one agency can bear the burden of addressing all the underlying causes of crime, or providing a single effective response once it occurs. Success really depends on the combined efforts of many stakeholders, including community leaders, employers, educators, health-care providers and DOC's other criminal-justice partners.

Like other states, Washington has experienced steady offender population growth. Reasons include the state's expanding population and enactment of tougher sentencing laws for some crimes. The growing number of incarcerated men and women requires the state to provide expensive new prison space in order to maintain a correctional environment that is safe and humane for staff, offenders and the public.

Smart on Crime



Incarcerating more people inevitably means more offenders will be released to the community. Their experiences while incarcerated—including loss of personal liberty, interaction with staff and fellow inmates, and participation in programs that address offender deficits—will have profound effects on their behavior for the rest of their lives.

In recent years, the growing number of offenders releasing to the community has led many criminal justice experts to focus on the concept of offender “re-entry.” Re-entry has been defined as “all activities and programming conducted to prepare ex-convicts to return safely to the community and to live as law abiding citizens.”¹

Everyone has an interest in successful re-entry. Offenders who do not have adequate skills and preparation for life outside prison or community supervision are more likely to commit new crimes. Washington statistics show that about 37 percent of released offenders return to prison within five years. Programs that reduce re-offense also reduce the need for more prison space and make the public safer.

Investment in Washington’s correctional system has failed to keep pace with growth in the offender population. That means DOC must lease beds in out-of-state prisons—a need that is projected to grow in future years. Meanwhile, offenders who are releasing to communities across the state are unable to participate in effective offender programs because of resource shortages.

To enhance public safety and reduce demand for more prison space, DOC has launched the Re-entry Initiative. Working with communities, this broad-based effort addresses the attitudes, behaviors and personal deficits that increase the likelihood offenders will commit new crimes after release from DOC custody or supervision.

The Re-entry Initiative will impact virtually all DOC staff and many current programs and operations. Far more than a short-term program for offenders in the waning days of their prison sentences, the Re-entry Initiative begins on the day an offender enters prison or reports to community supervision following a jail sentence. Programs aimed at achieving successful re-entry will continue for as long as the offender remains under DOC supervision.

The success of the Re-entry Initiative depends not only on state government, but on the active support of community leaders and volunteers. Progress will be measured by the number of offenders engaged in provably effective re-entry programs, and eventually on reductions in the recidivism rate itself.

The remainder of this paper provides background on the Re-entry Initiative and includes a general description of the Initiative’s main components.

1 Petersilia, Joan. *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Re-entry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Punishment versus Treatment

Transforming criminals into law-abiding citizens has long been the goal of correctional programs. However, the desire to punish lawbreakers has sometimes been a higher priority than treating the wrongdoers. During the 1980s and 1990s, public anger over crime prompted harsher sentences for criminals, especially for many violent crimes and drug offenses. As a result, Washington's prison population grew from 7,009 in 1986 to 17,973 in 2006.

While legislative changes earlier in this decade helped reduce the growth rate in the offender population, other sentencing changes have tended to have an opposite effect. For example, in 2006 the Washington Legislature passed bills increasing penalties for sex offenders and creating a new felony crime of Driving While Under the Influence. These laws will add over 1,400 offenders to the prison system through June 2017. The Legislature responded with construction funding for 692 more prison beds.

Incarcerating more criminals for longer sentences requires increased spending on new prisons. Nationwide, state prison costs per U.S. resident more than doubled between 1986 and 2001.² States spent \$29.5 billion for prisons in 2001, a \$5.5 billion increase from 1996, adjusted for inflation.³ Prison operations accounted for about 77 percent of the overall corrections budget in 2001.⁴ In Washington, prison operations, mandatory inmate health care and training account for approximately 74 percent of the overall DOC budget.

Washington has taken steps to increase prison capacity. The state's newest prison, the 1,936-bed Stafford Creek Corrections Center near Aberdeen, opened in the spring of 2000.

Major expansions also are under way at two existing prisons. At the Washington State Penitentiary, additional bed space for 892 offenders will be completed by mid-2007 at a cost of \$140.7 million. Meanwhile, expansion at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center north of the Tri-Cities is scheduled for completion in 2009 and will provide 1,792 additional beds at a cost of \$231.6 million.

Even so, construction is not keeping pace with demand for new prison space. With a current operational capacity of 15,014, DOC must turn to out-of-state prison operators to house its excess of incarcerated offenders. As of June 30, 2006, 964 Washington inmates were housed in out-of-state facilities.

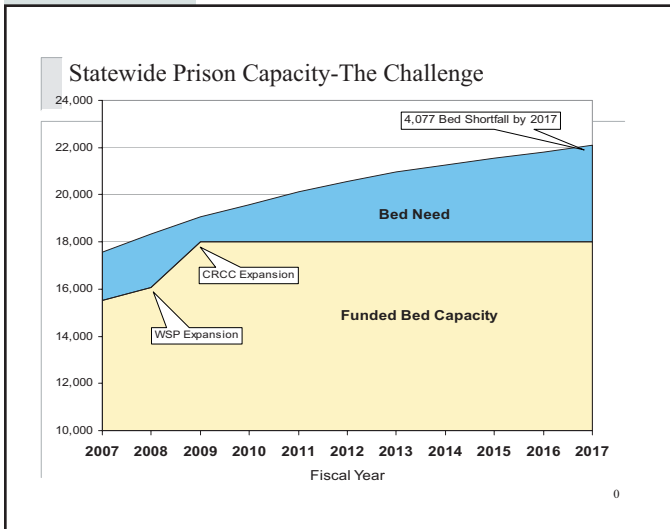


Stafford Creek Corrections Center opened in 2000.

2 Bureau of Justice Statistics, "State Prison Expenditures, 2001." <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/spe01.pdf>, p. 1.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.



Even with expansion at the Penitentiary and Coyote Ridge, Washington is forecasted to have a prison-bed shortfall of 4,077 beds by 2017. That means the state will need at least two new Stafford Creek-sized prisons by 2020, at a cost of approximately \$250 million each to build, and \$45 million per year to operate.

The alternative to building more prison space is reducing demand for prison cells. Sentencing laws can be changed so fewer people go to prison or spend less time there. Offender programs that are proven to reduce recidivism can also be expanded so fewer people return to prison a second or subsequent time.

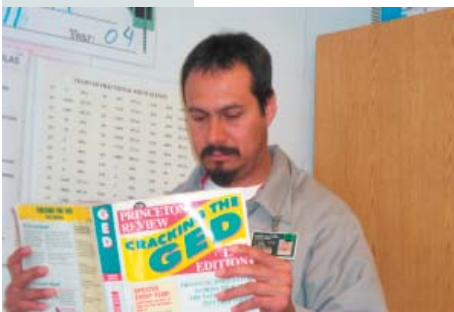
Recidivism Programs Work

DOC records show that 2,220 offenders released from Washington prisons in Fiscal Year 2000 returned to prison within five years because of recidivism. In other words, 37 percent were incarcerated for new crimes or parole violations.

In October 2006, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) released a report⁵ that systematically reviewed 571 studies examining the effectiveness of various correctional programs and policies in reducing recidivism. The study also analyzed the cost benefits of making effective programming available to more offenders.

The review found that some programs for adult offenders do reduce recidivism, while others have no effect. Programs that WSIPP concluded are effective include adult basic education, correctional industries, vocational education, drug treatment, sex-offender treatment and mental health programs that address the attitudes and beliefs that make an offender unable to function normally in society.

WSIPP concluded that if the number of juveniles and adults exposed to such “evidence-based” programs were increased by 20 to 40 percent, the state might avoid a substantial amount of new prison construction. The following evidence-based programs currently are provided by DOC, but it lacks sufficient resources to make them available to all offenders who might benefit from them.



Adult Basic Education. As of October 31, 2005, only 18 percent of offenders had verified high school diplomas and 47 percent had General Education Development (GED) certificates. About 71 percent of male offenders and 83 percent of female offenders score at less than the 9th grade level.

5 Steve Aos, Marna Miller, and Elizabeth Drake. “Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates Adult Corrections Programs: What Works and What Does Not.” Washington State Institute for Public Policy, January 2006. <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/pub.asp?docid=06-10-1201>

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While the number of offenders who obtain a GED while incarcerated has increased from 1,210 in Fiscal Year 2004 to 1,449 in Fiscal Year 2005, this falls well short of the need. On average, 4,100 offenders require Adult Basic Education or English as a Second Language instruction, but DOC resources only allow 2,400, or 59 percent, to receive the instruction.

DOC also offers three life skills programs focusing on parenting, job seeking and living responsibly. Department resources currently are sufficient to provide these programs to only about 50 percent of offenders who require the training.



Vocational Education. A University of Washington report found 50 percent of offenders were unemployed prior to incarceration, and Department data shows that about 85 percent of offenders need job skills, vocational education or job-finding assistance. With an offender waiting list of approximately 3,000, the Department currently meets only about 40 percent of the vocational-training need in the incarcerated population.

Correctional Industries. Correctional Industries operates 34 businesses in 13 institutions, creating 1,570 offender jobs. The program's intent is to reduce recidivism by providing offenders with job skills, job training and an improved work ethic. Class II industries are designed to reduce the cost of goods and services for tax-supported agencies and nonprofit organizations. Industries include school and office furniture manufacturing, food products, eye glass manufacturing, and garment making.

To meet legislatively mandated job targets and keep pace with growth in the offender population, an additional 1,500 Class II jobs will need to be created by Fiscal Year 2010.

Mental Health Treatment. Whether in the community or in prison, the criminal justice system manages more mentally ill offenders today than in past years. As community funding for treatment of the mentally ill has decreased, the population of mentally ill offenders has increased. DOC estimates that approximately half of incarcerated offenders will require mental health treatment while in prison.

Current DOC resources only provide treatment for Seriously Mentally Ill Offenders (SMIO). Of the approximately 7,800 offenders believed to need mental health treatment, about 5,300 do not fall into the SMIO category.

Chemical Dependency. The Department of Corrections is often the institution of last resort for addicted men and women. More inmates are convicted of drug offenses than any other crime category.

Failing to respond to chemical addictions leads to continued cycling of offenders through halfway houses, community mental health agencies, emergency rooms, and eventually back to DOC. In the absence of treatment, 75 percent of untreated offenders return to crime within 30 days of release to the community.

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Of prison offenders screened for chemical dependency (CD) upon entry to DOC, about 54 percent would benefit from CD treatment. However, only about half of those receive CD treatment in prison.

Sex Offender Treatment. The current Sex Offender Treatment Program (SOTP) is located at Monroe Correctional Complex and has a 200-bed treatment capacity. Due to capacity limitation, DOC currently provides treatment to about 16 percent of the total sex offender population that could benefit from treatment. There currently are over 500 offenders wanting to enter this 14-month program.

Because demand for SOTP beds exceeds supply, a substantial number of sex offenders leave prison and return to the community without having completed sexual deviancy treatment. Of the 594 sex offenders released in Fiscal Year 2005, only 109 completed the Department's Sex Offender Treatment Program while incarcerated.

Creating additional capacity in these evidence-based programs will be a major DOC priority as the agency strives to effectively implement the new Re-entry Initiative.

The Re-entry Initiative

Although the death penalty, "three-strikes" and other life-without-parole sentencing options prevent some offenders from ever returning to society, the vast majority of Washington offenders are eventually released. Washington's average prison sentence is about 21 months, and only about three percent of state inmates are serving sentences that will prevent them from ever being released.

A DOC pilot program that examined effective re-entry strategies was the Going Home Project. Offenders selected for Going Home participated in institution- and community-based curricula to meet their transitional needs. A transition plan was developed for each offender in collaboration with family, education, treatment and community-resource providers. Finally, a Neighborhood Readiness Team of community volunteers began working with offenders while they were still in prison and continued after their release into the community.

The Department's new Re-entry Initiative will require active community involvement and a transformation of correctional culture to be successful.

The Department's new Re-entry Initiative incorporates elements of the Going Home Project. It will require active community involvement and a transformation of correctional culture to be successful.

The process will begin when an offender is admitted to a state Reception Diagnostic Center (RDC) or enters a county jail to serve a sentence preceding state supervision in the community. Two prison facilities—Washington Corrections Center and Washington Corrections Center for Women—have been designated as RDCs. While at the RDC or in jail, a Personalized Plan will be developed for each offender. The Personalized Plan will be based on various medical, mental-health, social and risk assessments performed on the offender to determine appropriate programs during incarceration or community supervision. The plan will accompany the offender no matter where he or she is incarcerated or supervised in the community.

Smart on Crime

In the past, the Diagnostic Assessment Center for incoming male inmates at Washington Corrections Center (WCC) has performed similar assessments. However, because of lack of resources, only about 56 percent of the 7,525 incoming offenders in Fiscal Year 2006 completed full evaluation.

To reduce the occurrence of high-risk offenders releasing directly to the community after “maxing out” their prison sentences, the Re-entry Initiative will utilize a “step-down” approach that focuses on the offender’s successful progression to increasingly lower security levels.

Offender programs will vary, depending upon the security level of the facility where the offender is housed:

- Maximum-security and close facilities will focus on violence reduction in order to reintroduce the offender back into the general population.
- Medium-security facilities will focus on education, jobs, correctional industries, mental health, sex offender treatment, long term chemical dependency treatment and family-based programs.
- Minimum security facilities will focus on short term chemical dependency, chemical dependency outpatient program, education, jobs, vocational training, cognitive behavioral-change programs and family-based re-entry programs.

While programming will occur throughout an offender’s incarceration, concentrated efforts will be offered in the final stages of incarceration. Offenders nearing the end of their sentences will be transferred to designated Re-entry Centers for these more intensive activities. Re-entry Centers will be established at minimum-security facilities and at three major facilities—Washington Corrections Center for Women, McNeil Island Corrections Center and Airway Heights Corrections Center.

The Re-entry Initiative also includes efforts to build stronger ties between offenders and their families. Studies suggest that inmates who maintain family ties while incarcerated have significantly greater success when they return to the community. In addition, studies have found that children of incarcerated parents are at higher risk of becoming offenders themselves, thus perpetuating the cycle of crime and ensuring a new generation of incarcerated adults.

Several Washington prisons currently offer a variety of family-centered programs, including the nationally recognized Long Distance Dads program, which began at McNeil Island Corrections Center and was later expanded to other prisons, including Stafford Creek and Coyote Ridge corrections centers. The 12-week program teaches inmate fathers how to be better parents.

The Department also is expanding a program begun at McNeil Island that enables parents in prison or under community supervision to participate in student-parent-teacher conferences. Prison and community corrections staff will work with state and local educators to implement the program.



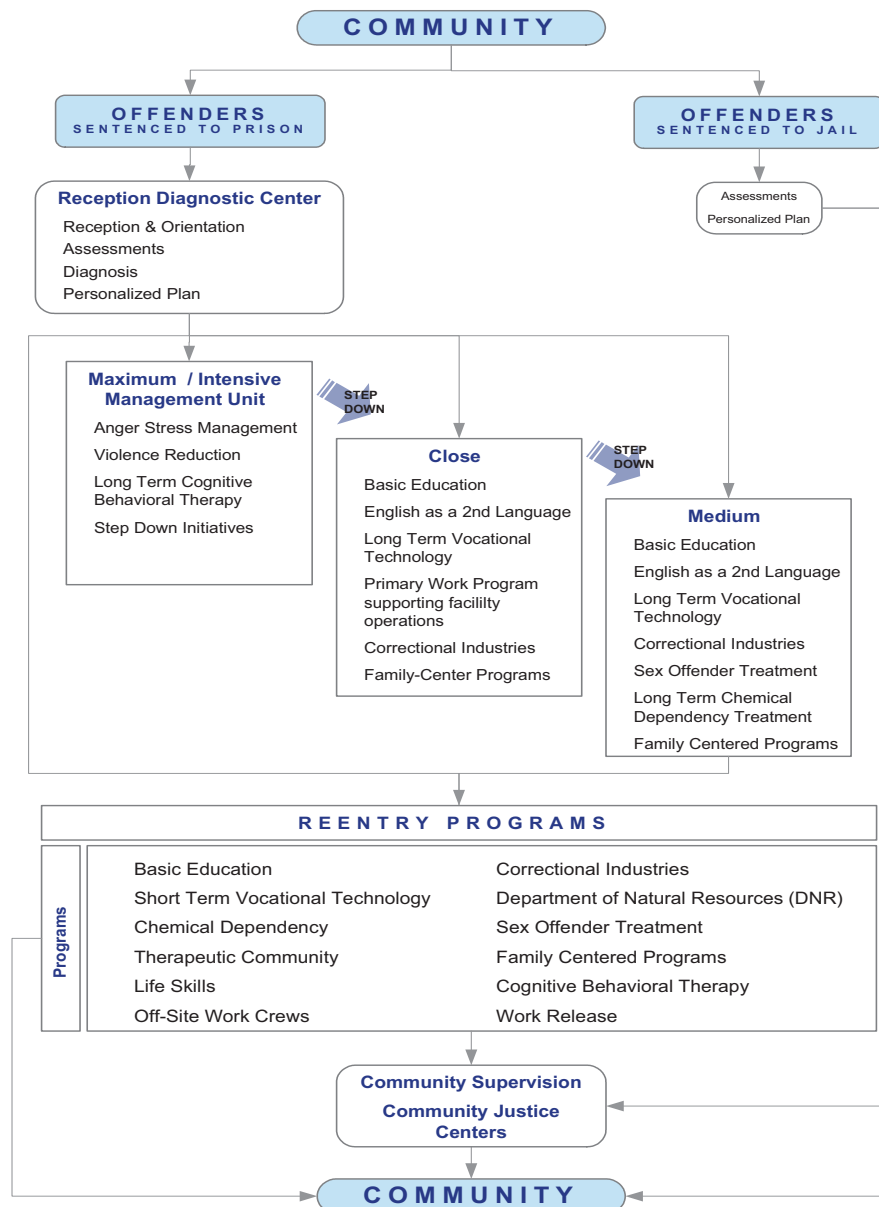
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Smart on Crime

The Department has created a new family unit within the Prisons Division to focus on improving relationships between incarcerated offenders and their families. A similar position has been created in the Community Corrections Division to evaluate, develop and implement family friendly programs for offenders under community supervision. The goal is to build positive and supportive relationships, whether the offender is in prison or in the community.

Work release is another program aimed at enhancing this smooth transition. Managed by the Department's Community Corrections Division, work release is a form of partial confinement intended for offenders with good behavior who have less than six months of their sentences remaining. Offenders in work release remain confined in community-based facilities for substantial portions of each day but are allowed to leave the facility to attend school, treatment programs or work.

OFFENDER REENTRY



DOC plans to expand work release to provide offenders with a controlled return to freedom as they continue to participate in programming, work on building positive relationships, and establish a means to legally support themselves.

After release from prison or work release, many offenders will continue working on their personalized plans at existing or expanded Community Justice Centers (CJCs) across the state. Offenders will report to the CJCs for community supervision, to participate in offender programs and to access additional employment, treatment, education and assistance resources in the community. As alternatives to incarceration, offenders who violate conditions of their community supervision may also receive sanctions requiring them to participate in appropriate programs at the CJCs or in work release.

DOC will work with communities to identify resources and link offenders with community service providers. For example, the Going Home Project included teams of community volunteers who provided support to individual offenders through Neighborhood Readiness Teams. Communities may utilize volunteers in other ways to assist offenders in locating resources and holding them accountable.

Measuring Results

The success of the Department's Re-entry Initiative will be measured with hard data—including changes in the number of offenders enrolled in evidence-based programs that are proven to reduce recidivism. The Department will also track the number of ex-offenders who return to Reception Diagnostic Centers after being convicted and sentenced for new crimes. However, because many factors beyond the Department's control influence offender behavior, impacts of the Re-entry Initiative on the recidivism rate may not be immediately apparent in recidivism statistics.

Conclusion

The primary mission of the Department of Corrections is public safety. DOC carries out this mission by incarcerating convicted criminals and by supervising them in the community. In addition, the Department provides programs to rehabilitate offenders and reduce the likelihood they will re-offend.

As the state's offender population has continued to grow, the Department has focused on reducing recidivism as a principal means of enhancing public safety and easing demand for costly new prison space. The key to reducing recidivism is offering programs that prepare offenders to live in society as law-abiding citizens. Successful re-entry also helps break the cycle of criminal behavior that often continues from one generation to the next.

The Department will pursue new resources, implement evidence-based programs, seek advice and support from communities, and reshape its culture to accomplish these ends.



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