



The United States Conference of Mayors

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Saturday, June 13, 2009

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CITIES MOBILIZE DEPARTMENTS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES TO EASE REENTRY OF PRISONERS

79 City-Survey Identifies Collaborative Efforts to Secure Jobs, Housing, Services Needed by Ex-Offenders

Providence, RI -- The U.S. Conference of Mayors reported today that "The pressure to provide effective programs in America's cities to ease the reentry of ex-offenders has grown along with the nation's prisoner population, but the current economic recession is forcing local governments and public and private organizations and agencies to reduce spending on programs and services, and is limiting the employment and other opportunities essential to ex-offenders' successful reentry to their communities."

The mayors' report, produced by the Conference's Ex-Offender Task Force, presents the results of a survey of the nation's cities on the status of their prisoner reentry efforts. Information on approaches being taken to ease reentry was provided by 79 cities of all sizes in all regions of the country. Among the survey's findings:

- Thirty-six percent of the cities have made changes in ordinances or policies that prevented ex-offenders from successfully reentering the community. Among these, 77 percent changed ordinances or policies relating to employment, and 58 percent changed those relating to access to housing.
- Fifty-nine percent of the cities target special efforts to particular populations to ease their reentry into the community. Most (68 percent) target young people; nearly as many target substance abusers and persons with mental health problems;
- Seventy-two percent of the survey cities partner with private organizations to ease the reentry of ex-offenders. Almost all of these (96 percent) partner with local nonprofits; four of five partner with faith-based organizations.
- Employment services are most often provided through the cities' partnerships: 93 percent focus on employment. Case management is provided by 85 percent of the cities, substance abuse treatment by 84 percent, and housing by 80 percent.
- In two-thirds of the survey cities, various agencies within city government are working together to ease the reentry of ex-offenders into the community. Agencies most often involved are police departments, in 84 percent of these cities; social services departments, in 75 percent; and workforce development agencies, in 73 percent.
- Just over two-thirds of the cities are working with correctional agencies to plan for and ease the reentry of ex-offenders. Work is being done with probation departments, in 92 percent of these cities; parole departments, also in 92 percent; area jails and detention centers, in 84 percent; and prisons, in 71 percent.
- Two-thirds of the survey cities are partnering with their state to ease reentry. Of these, partnerships most often exist with workforce development agencies, in 63 percent of the cities; state mental health departments, in 61 percent; court systems, also in 61 percent; and social services departments, in 59 percent.

"The reentry challenges most frequently cited as the most serious involve finding jobs and suitable housing for prisoners returning to their communities, and a general lack of funding for reentry services," said Baltimore Mayor

Sheila Dixon, Co-Chair of the Conference's Task Force. "A job and a place to live are the most essential elements of a stable life for any person returning from prison. Unfortunately, they are the elements most seriously compromised by the current economic crisis."

"In addition to survey results, our report includes descriptions of prisoner reentry initiatives in many of the survey cities," said Irvington Mayor Wayne Smith, the other Co-chair. "This is a time when we need to identify reentry models that work, and we need to share them with mayors across the nation who are struggling through this recession to find the jobs, housing, and support services that keep people from returning to prison."

The Task Force released its report when it met during the 77th Annual Conference of Mayors being held in Providence. The report will be available on the Conference of Mayors Web site, www.usmayors.org.

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