



# PENNSYLVANIA REENTRY COUNCIL

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Pennsylvania Reentry Council was held on July 19<sup>th</sup> at the Attorney General's Office in Harrisburg with 47 people in attendance.

The following was discussed:

- **"PARC":** The new acronym for the Pennsylvania Reentry Council is 'PARC' to differentiate the council from the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition which has used the PR acronym for years.
- **Mission Statement:** There was a detailed discussion of the draft Mission Statement and the accompanying "Purpose" section. Changes were suggested and made and an updated version, included below, of the Mission Statement will be submitted to the entire Council for final approval.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The primary mission of the Pennsylvania Reentry Coalition (PARC) is to make communities safer by reducing recidivism and victimization through the successful reintegration of returning citizens by supporting the efforts of county reentry coalitions and other federal, state, and local reentry organizations.

## PARC PURPOSE:

1. To expand education of the public, members of law enforcement and criminal justice, and policymakers about the importance of supporting prisoner reentry efforts to reduce crime and violence.
2. To promote the collaboration among county reentry coalitions and state and federal agencies.

3. To provide a forum for the sharing of best practices, including reviewing and promoting successful evidence-based reentry programs and initiatives and supporting and promoting new programs.
4. To identify barriers to successful reentry and for persons with criminal records, including but not limited to providing, facilitation, and expanding access to:
  - a. housing, employment, job training, education, and transportation;
  - b. driver's licenses, social security cards, and other Identification documents that are essential to obtaining employment, housing, and other governmental assistance;
  - c. evidence-based treatment including mental health, trauma, addiction, and treatment to address criminal thinking; and
  - d. prosocial needs, including family reunification, mentors, peer support, and faith-based services.
5. To identify strategies to overcome the barriers facing the successful reentry of returning citizens and to overcome challenges faced by county reentry coalitions to implement policies to assist returning citizens.

■ **Barriers:** There was general agreement that “Barriers” to reentry takes two forms: (1) identifying the barriers impacting reentrants all across the state was important; and (2) identifying barriers facing county reentry coalitions. Discussion of and agreement on specific barriers was postponed and may be a request in a subsequent email to the PARC.

- **Subcommittees:** First, after discussion, the PARC members in attendance voted to approve the following 13 subcommittees:
- Basic Needs (i.e. Transportation, Identification documents)
  - Data, Metrics, Information Sharing
  - Education/ Employment/ Financial Literacy
  - Physical Health & Behavioral Health (Mental Health & Substance Abuse)
  - Family Services/ Reunification/ Mentoring
  - Housing
  - Outreach & Professional Development
  - Risk/ Need/ Responsivity/ Fidelity
  - Restorative Justice
  - Special Populations
  - Substance Abuse
  - Transportation/ Identification
  - Women

The “Special Population” subcommittee includes, but is not limited to the elderly and juveniles. Although there was much discussion whether “Women” should be its own

subcommittee or part of the “Special Populations” subcommittee, the PARC voted to create a separate “Women” subcommittee.

There was a consensus that the subcommittees will be staffed as follows: \

- (1) chairpersons/ coordinators from the county coalitions would chair or co-chair the 13 subcommittees.
- (2) Each coalition chair/ coordinator would then designate a person from their respective coalition to be a representative on each subcommittee

The survey that was sent out following the inaugural meeting will be resent to the PARC to provide coalition chairs/ coordinators another opportunity to identify the committee(s) they want to co-chair and to designate representatives from their respective coalitions to participate in one or more of the subcommittees.

There was recognition that the number of subcommittees (13) might prove to be challenging to find chairs and members. After we receive responses from each of the coalitions we can discuss whether this remains an issue.

**Steering Committee:** We discussed the establishment of a PARC Steering Committee is, what its functions are, and the organizations to be included. Presently, the Steering Committee includes the following State agencies:

- The Governor’s Office
- The Attorney General’s Office
- PCCD
- PA Department of Corrections
- PA Board of Probation & Parole

There was discussion that the Steering Committee should include two county coalition Committee chairs/coordinators on a rotating basis. A number of the county chairs present (7) at the meeting volunteered that they were interested in being on the Steering Committee. To determine from this group who would be on the Steering Committee, we agreed that each chair would provide a brief 1-2 paragraph memorandum explaining why they should be on the Steering Committee. These memos would be provided to the entire PARC who would then vote. The two chairs receiving the most votes will be on the Steering Committee.

We also discussed the inclusion of returning citizens to participate in the Steering Committee dedicate their time to helping to shape the council. Charla Plaines suggested we include four returning citizens – one from each of four geographic areas across Pennsylvania.

**PARC Membership:**

The consensus on the membership of the PARC should include:

1. A Chairperson from each of the 21 county reentry coalitions;

2. Representatives from each of the State Agencies;
3. Representatives from three U.S. Attorneys' offices in the state; and
4. One returning citizen from each county coalition.

We agreed to discuss further the inclusion of service providers and legislators.

#### **Presentations:**

**Donnajean (DJ) Szukalski**, the **Creative Director with the Office of the Pennsylvania Attorney General**, gave a PowerPoint presentation about the new PARC website she created. DJ that she will be inputting all documents received from PARC members onto the website. For questions or assistance, DJ can be contacted at [dszukalski@attorneygeneral.gov](mailto:dszukalski@attorneygeneral.gov).

**Robyn Buseman** from **The Mural Arts Program** in Philadelphia gave a PowerPoint presentation about Mural Arts generally, about the work of Mural Arts in prisons and with returning citizens, and about Restorative Justice. **Russell Craig**, a reentrant, described his background including his prison experience at SCI-Graterford. He stated he is an artist, who spent most of his time in prison working on his craft. While inside Graterford, he met Robyn. Upon his release, he works with Mural Arts to reach out to the community, the victims, and the offenders to offer healing via art. He showed clips from a film created to highlight his work at Mural Arts.

**Aviva Tevah**, the chairperson of the **Philadelphia Reentry Coalition (PRC)**, gave a PowerPoint presentation about the history, structure, membership, strengths, and challenges of the PRC. She discussed how their subcommittees grew as the stakeholders grew; that they hold quarterly "think tanks" that while they are staffed by the city—they want the members to have "co-ownership" of the committees. Initially the coalition had a closed membership but as time went on they decided to open it up and bring in new stakeholders who were passionate about finding solutions.

**Jennifer McPherson**, the chairperson from the **Lycoming County Reentry** program spoke about the structure and membership of the coalition. She discussed the strengths, successes, and some challenges they have identified within their county. She stated that it has been a challenge to keep the stakeholders engaged in the process while family members are not properly represented.

**Reentry Conference 2018:** Finding funding for a statewide conference would be challenging and also finding a large enough location. Derin Myers of PCCD suggested that it could be part of the CJAB conference at State College in April, 2018.

**Next meeting: - October 4, 2017**

