

# County Reentry Coalitions

## Minimum Operating Standards

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### INTRODUCTION

County Reentry Coalitions (CRCs) are comprised of local stakeholders working to positively impact the lives of returning citizens. CRCs meet regularly to assess reentry practices and programming, identify gaps in service, and develop resources, programming, and practices to fill those gaps. CRCs are vested in finding ways to remove barriers to successful reentry, can help reduce recidivism rates, and improve upon the quality of life for returning citizens and their families while increasing community connectivity and public safety.

Since 2011, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) has supported CRCs through numerous grant opportunities focused on the development of reentry strategic plans and implementation of reentry programming. In August 2019, the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) approved an updated strategic plan with one of the major goals being “to strengthen reentry planning and implementation efforts.” As part of this goal, CJAC plans to “support the development and implementation of county reentry coalitions and strategic plans.” PCCD is fully committed to the creation, expansion, and success of CRCs in all counties across Pennsylvania.

### BACKGROUND

To assist CRCs throughout Pennsylvania and ensure consistency across coalitions, in Fall 2019, PCCD started the process to develop County Reentry Coalition Minimum Operating Standards similar to those that are established for Criminal Justice Advisory Boards (CJABs). To ensure the minimum operating standards are effective and not overly burdensome, PCCD engaged reentry coordinators from six successful CRCs across the commonwealth to inform the creation of minimum operating standards. An initial working session was held at PCCD in late October 2019 and a myriad of topics, from membership to data collection, were discussed. During the working session, there was consensus that the areas outlined in these minimum operating standards should be included. After engaging CRCs, Pennsylvania Reentry Coalition (PARC), CJAC, and the full Commission, PCCD hereby establishes the following minimum operating standards for County Reentry Coalitions in Pennsylvania. Please note, the bolded language below designates the minimum operating standards applicable to all CRCs.

### I. MEMBERSHIP

**County Reentry Coalitions must have robust and diverse membership from a wide range of partners throughout the county.** PCCD has identified three required membership categories for CRCs: 1) Reentrants, 2) Government Agencies, and 3) Community Partners. All three categories play an equally important role. Reentrants bring a unique lived experience to the coalition. They have experienced the criminal justice system firsthand and potentially received assistance when returning to the community. Government Agencies are responsible for operating all facets from the criminal justice system, from arrest to release. They bring a detailed knowledge of the system as a whole and the resources available within the county. Community Partners are the frontline for returning citizens in local communities and

are providing services to reentrants daily. They bring a detailed knowledge of the services offered to returning citizens in the county.

Active membership from the three required membership categories is crucial to the long-term, sustained success of all coalitions. **While PCCD understands that CRCs cannot force entities to be members, coalitions must, at minimum, invite the bolded entities/organizations from the list below to join the coalition, if they are available in the county:**

- **Reentrants**
  - **County Jail Reentrants**
  - State Prison Reentrants
  - Federal Prison Reentrants
  - Reentrants' Families
- **Government Agencies**
  - **Chief Local Elected Officials (Commissioners/County Executive/Mayor)**
  - **District Attorney**
  - **Chief Public Defender**
  - **Courts (including county specialty courts)**
  - **County Jail**
  - **State/Federal Prison**
  - **County Probation and Parole**
  - **State Probation and Parole**
  - **Community Corrections Centers**
  - **Single County Authorities (SCAs)**
  - **County Drug and Alcohol Agencies**
  - **County Housing Authority**
  - **Employment Services (Local Workforce Development Board; PA CareerLink®)**
  - **Mental Health Organizations**
  - **Behavioral Health Organizations**
  - **Family Services**
  - **Victims Services**
  - County Law Enforcement
  - County Assistance Offices (CAOs)
  - Social Security Office
  - Children and Youth
  - Domestic Relations
  - Area Agency on Aging
  - Veterans Services
- **Community Partners**
  - **Non-profit Organizations**
  - **Faith-based Organizations**
  - **Education Providers (Adult Basic Ed., Postsecondary Ed. [Community College; 4-year Colleges and Universities], Career & Technical Ed.)**
  - **Service Providers with a Reentry Focus**
  - County Transportation Authorities
  - Mentors and Volunteers
  - Local Private Foundations

It is also important to note that sometimes, just having the entities listed above engaged in the coalition is not enough. It also matters who is engaged. Decision makers with the authority to invest the resources and time of their organizations in the work of the CRC will have the greatest impact and help to sustain the work of the coalition for the long-term.

Finally, with many entities engaged, CRCs can be difficult to effectively manage. It is essential for each coalition to have a designated coordinator or coordinating team. The coordinator(s) provides backbone support and serves as first responders for the coalition. The coordinator(s) is responsible for keeping the coalition on track day-to-day while keeping an eye towards accomplishing the established, long-term strategic goals of the coalition. The coordinator(s) should have credibility with the coalition's members,

the ability to devote staff time to the effort, and be able to neutrally facilitate the coalition's process by leaving their own organizational agenda behind.

## II. BYLAWS

**County Reentry Coalitions must have formally approved bylaws that outline how the coalition will operate.** PCCD has included sample bylaws for coalitions to use as a guide as Addendum I.

**At minimum, coalition bylaws must include the following:**

1. **Name** – Provide the official name of the coalition.
2. **Mission and Vision** – The mission statement should define the coalition's objectives and approach to achieve them. The vision statement should be the ultimate goal of what the coalition hopes to achieve.
3. **Membership** – Outline the members of the coalition and any eligibility requirements.
4. **Leadership Structure** – Outline the leadership structure of the coalition including chair, vice chair, executive committee, subcommittee chairs, etc.
5. **Leadership Responsibilities** – Outline the responsibilities of the coalition's leadership.
6. **Coordinator Responsibilities** – Outline the responsibilities of the coalition's coordinator.
7. **Meeting Logistics** – Outline the frequency, location, and method of notice for coalition meetings. **CRCs should meet quarterly, at minimum.**
8. **Decision Making/Voting** – Outline the process the coalition will use for making decisions, what issues members will vote on, quorum, etc.

## III. REENTRY STRATEGIC PLANNING

**County Reentry Coalitions must have an active reentry strategic plan or be engaged in the strategic planning process.** Reentry strategic plans identify persistent/emerging trends in the criminal justice system; promote systemwide thinking, planning, and action; emphasize a more effective use of limited resources; enable the prioritization of county-wide goals; and allow for the focused pursuit of various funding sources.

Reentry strategic plans are the guiding light for CRCs and essential to their long-term, sustained success and impact. Across the commonwealth, the most successful CRCs access multiple funding sources at the county, state, federal, and philanthropic levels to support the coalition. For many funding sources, an active reentry strategic plan is a requirement. While the process takes time, working collaboratively as a coalition to develop a reentry strategic plan will position coalitions for success.

For all CRCs, the development of a reentry strategic plan should, at minimum, include the following steps:

- Conduct an environmental scan of county practices by identifying trends, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and barriers;

- Identify the major problems areas (housing, employment, transportation, etc.) and gaps in reentry services in the county;
- Determine a strategic direction for the coalition through the development of goals and objectives related to the major problem areas and gaps in reentry services;
- Develop tasks and actions steps to achieve the identified goals and objectives; and
- Develop performance measures to track the coalition's success in addressing the identified goals and objectives.

Any reentry services identified in reentry strategic plans and implemented by CRCs should be designed around evidence-based practices. Reentry strategic plans should span a four to five-year period and be assessed/updated on an annual basis. Active reentry strategic plans should be provided to PCCD.

#### **IV. RECIDIVISM DATA COLLECTION**

**County Reentry Coalitions must collect data elements that can be used to calculate recidivism rates for the county.** PCCD acknowledges that each county may define recidivism differently. PCCD will not establish a common statewide definition for recidivism, but instead wants to ensure counties are collecting the relevant data elements necessary for calculating recidivism.

**At minimum, each county must collect the following data elements for all county jail inmates:**

- **Offender Name**
- **Date of Birth**
- **State Identification Number (SID)**
- **Offender Tracking Number (OTN)**
- **Release Date**

The data elements above will allow for the calculation of the recidivism rate and time to recidivate for all county jail offenders. With additional data, more in-depth analysis can be conducted, and additional information can be provided to counties. Coalitions are encouraged, but not required, to collect the following data points in addition to those above:

- Race
- Gender
- Age
- Services Received (Drug & Alcohol, Mental Health, etc.)

PCCD has the ability to process this information and calculate recidivism rates and is working to develop the best method for collecting the raw data from counties. Additional information on how PCCD will collect the required data elements from counties will be provided in the future.

#### **COALITION COMPLIANCE & RECOGNITION**

In order to be a formally recognized County Reentry Coalition by PCCD, coalitions must comply with all requirements outlined in these minimum operating standards no later than six months after approval and establishment by the Commission on March 11, 2020.