



Louisiana Reentry Advisory Council Comprehensive Five Year Strategic Reentry Plan July 2021 to June 2026

Vision and Mission

The vision of the Louisiana Reentry Advisory Council (RAC) is that every offender released from prison/jail within Louisiana will have access to the pre- and post-release services, supports, and resources, judged consistent with evidence-based research as to the effectiveness he or she needs to succeed in the community, thereby reducing recidivism and increasing public safety.

The Louisiana Reentry Advisory Council (RAC) has the specialized mission of advising DPS&C as to the most effective reentry and recidivism reduction strategies for the State and providing linkages to local (Parish) government, support resources and business organizations who are essential in accomplishing the State's broader mission of enhanced public safety through the safe and secure incarceration of offenders, effective probation/parole supervision and proven rehabilitative strategies that successfully reintegrate offenders into society, as well as to assist individuals and communities in assuring safety to citizens in being victimized by crime.

Background

Enacted by ACT #106 of the 2008 Regular Session, the Reentry Advisory Council (RAC) was created to establish a more systematic approach to identifying obstacles that impede successful reentry of ex-offenders. RAC is charged with developing and implementing effective reentry strategies that improves public safety. HB 990 of the 2010 Regular Session amended the statute to clarify the Commission's name, purpose and guidelines and is cited as the Offender Rehabilitation and Workforce Development Act.

RAC was statutorily created under LA R.S. 15:1199.4 to serve as a council of 22-member agencies and organizations whose activities impact directly or indirectly the success of those releasing from incarceration and returning to Louisiana communities. Specifically, the RAC is statutorily required to:

- Identify methods to improve collaboration and coordination of offender transition services, including cross-agency training and information sharing that will help to improve outcomes for offenders.
- Establish a means to share data, research, and measurement resources in relation to reentry initiatives with relevant agencies.
- Identify funding areas that should be coordinated across agencies to maximize the delivery of state and community-based services as they relate to reentry.
- Identify areas in which improved collaboration and coordination of programs and activities will result in increased effectiveness or efficiency of service delivery.
- Promote areas of research and program evaluation that can be coordinated across agencies with an emphasis on applying evidence-based practices to support treatment and intervention programs for offenders.
- Conduct a review of existing policies and practices and make specific recommendations to the legislature for systemic improvement.
- Create and support local reentry coalitions in collaboration with community stakeholders throughout the state.
- Conduct offender reentry public education campaigns.
- Enhance the role of faith and community-based services for formerly incarcerated persons.
- Provide coordination of reentry initiatives across the state and ensure eligibility for Second Chance Act grant opportunities and other reentry grant opportunities.

The RAC has the specialized mission of advising Department of Public Safety & Corrections, Corrections Services (DPS&C) as to the most effective reentry and recidivism reduction strategies for the State and provide linkages to local (parish) government, support resources and business organizations. These stakeholders are essential in accomplishing the State's broader mission of enhanced public safety through the safe and secure incarceration of offenders, effective probation and parole supervision and proven

rehabilitative strategies that successfully reintegrate offenders into society, as well as to assist individuals and communities in assuring safety to citizens in being victimized by crime. The RAC's main focus at this time is in identifying and communicating transitional and permanent job opportunities, discovering affordable housing opportunities, and working to ensure a comprehensive continuum of services available to offenders after their release into the community.

The DPSC seeks to reduce recidivism and promote public safety by implementing a seamless plan of coordinated services and supervision developed for each offender based on individualized risks and needs. To support this effort, the RAC is committed to developing partnerships throughout our communities, including victims, relevant groups and public and private agencies. Deploying efficient Probation and Parole supervision strategies complemented by day reporting centers and other alternatives to incarceration will increase compliance with the conditions of parole supervision. Insuring all offenders discharging from incarceration receive appropriate dosages of reentry and rehabilitation interventions through state prisons or regional reentry programs based on their identified risk and needs, allowing for effective reintegration into the community, resulting in safer communities and a reduction of recidivism.

DPS&C partnered with the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency (MCCD) to engage in strategic planning and revision of the reentry case planning continuum known as the Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative (LA-PRI). The LA-PRI was formed to respond to the challenges facing citizens in Louisiana who are returning to their communities from prison. The LA-PRI goal is to cut the recidivism rate by 50% for higher risk returning prisoners beginning with the parishes that contribute the highest number of prisoners to the system. In late 2014, the initial phase of work on the LA-PRI involved the LA-PRI Implementation Steering Team (IST), a core team of DPSC managers. The implementation steering teams are focused on three main implementation phases: (1) the institutional phase "Getting Ready", (2) the transitional phase "Going Home", and (3) the community phase "Staying Home". Under the LA-PRI, the DPSC envisions every prisoner returning to their community with the tools and resources needed for success.

Aiming to reduce the prison population and recalibrate or redress the state's correctional investments to ensure the best possible public safety returns, the Louisiana State Legislature in 2015 passed House Concurrent Resolution 82, establishing the Louisiana Justice Reinvestment Task Force (JRI). The JRI Taskforce identified areas of cost savings related to proposed recommendations of cost benefit analysis and areas in need of reinvestment of those funds to increase efficiency and further decrease recidivism. In 2017, the JRI Task Force submitted its final report and recommendations and the Louisiana Legislature successfully passed most of the task force's recommended legislation. The findings of the JRI Task Force and resulting legislation provides a historic opportunity in Louisiana to quantify cost savings generated by legislative and criminal justice policy reforms and reinvest a portion of this savings in areas that are likely to generate further cost savings and reductions in recidivism. As such, the RAC is interested in supporting and informing the implementation of the JRI Task Force recommendations.

Goals

The following eight goals reflect RAC's commitment to developing and implementing effective reentry strategies that improves public safety resulting in safer communities and a reduction of recidivism.

1. Work to improve and increase the use of alternatives to incarceration and remove legal barriers to reentry.
2. Support and encourage the development of employment opportunities for returning citizens.
3. Reinforce current and work to increase programming available to incarcerated and returning citizens.
4. Continued support of the LA-PRI Implementation Steering Team (IST).
5. Promote State statutory, policy and practice changes focusing on reducing crime and improving the well-being of formerly incarcerated persons, their families and communities.
6. Support the development and sustainability of Regional Reentry Coalitions.
7. Use validated objective assessment tools and individualized case plans to identify evidence-based practices, policies and programs that advance the Reentry Advisory Council's mission around prisoner reentry and community safety.
8. Identify and deploy methods to improve offender transition services

Each identified goal is linked to specific strategies with accompanying measures by methodically addressing these critical issues.

Goal 1

Improve and increase the use of alternatives to incarceration and remove legal barriers to reentry.

The following strategies will be used to assist RAC in achieving this goal:

- Identify jurisdictions where pre-trial diversion, intensive incarceration, and transitional work programs can be better utilized and/or implemented.
- Develop a fully integrated web-based case management system which includes geo-mapping. The returning citizen will be assessed by a licensed professional to develop a case plan, which would be uploaded to an app on an offender's smartphone with a calendar of events and service locations
- Assist in the clearing of warrants and other minor legal matters for returning citizens.

Goal 2

Support and encourage the development of employment opportunities for returning citizens.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- Increase the number of apprenticeship programs available to incarcerated and returning citizens.
- Increase the number of industry based certification programs available to incarcerated and returning citizens.
- Increase the number of vocational programs available to incarcerated and returning citizens.
- Ensure that training and employment opportunities are available to incarcerated and returning citizens.
- Advocate for increased employment opportunities for returning citizens.

Goal 3

Reinforce current and work to increase programming available to incarcerated and returning citizens.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- Advocate for funding and development of new program opportunities.
- Ensure programs being offered are effective and efficient.
- Advocate for increased employment opportunities for returning citizens.

Goal 4

Continued support of the LA-PRI Implementation Steering Team (IST).

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- Expand reentry readiness programs, especially regional reentry programs and day reporting centers.
- Provide intensive, phased community supervision for all eligible state offenders meeting defined risk and service need requirements.
- Provide assessment tools to identify criminogenic needs for highest risk offenders.
- Assess service quality and outcomes of these extended services.
- Establish a continuum of assessment and case planning that begins at intake in state institutions, local jails, and Probation and Parole for all offenders.
- Developing mechanisms for continuation training on periodic assessment through the establishment of a group within state institutions for developing P&P training coaches to ensure follow-up training is completed to maintain certification and measure effectiveness.

Goal 5

Promote State statutory, policy and practice changes focusing on reducing crime and improving the well-being of formerly incarcerated persons, their families and communities.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- Identify State policies, laws, and practices that present opportunities and barriers to improve outcomes for the reentry population.
- Implementation of proven effective statewide reentry policy changes, legislation, or other reforms to the Department of Public Safety & Corrections, Louisiana Sentencing Commission, and/or the Legislature to address barriers to reentry identified.
- Identify policies and practices that identify barriers to reentry and work to overcome those barriers.

Goal 6

Support the development and sustainability of Regional Reentry Coalitions.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- Create at least one viable and recognized regional reentry coalitions in each of the nine reentry regions within the State.
- Extend Reentry Advisory Council model to support Regional Reentry Coalitions committed to evidence-based approach to guide reentry in the state using materials and assessment tools consistent with best research guiding reentry.
- Insure DPSC representation, especially Probation and Parole, on local coalition steering teams, as well as the local Sheriff's Office(s).
- Expand Regional Reentry Programs and Day Reporting Centers services statewide based upon available resources and focusing on areas with the greatest number of offenders first.

Goal 7

Use validated objective assessment tools and individualized case plans to identify evidence-based practices, policies and programs that advance the Reentry Advisory Council's mission around prisoner reentry and community safety.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- Assessments of offenders achieve reentry status administered a validated objective risk and needs assessment tool to inform a Reentry Accountability Plan identifying appropriate programs that meet identified needs.

- Coordinate with service providers to use and share validated assessment tool results to measure service program success, as well individual offender response to program.
- Ensure direct service programs use appropriate dosages of interventions based on identified risk level.

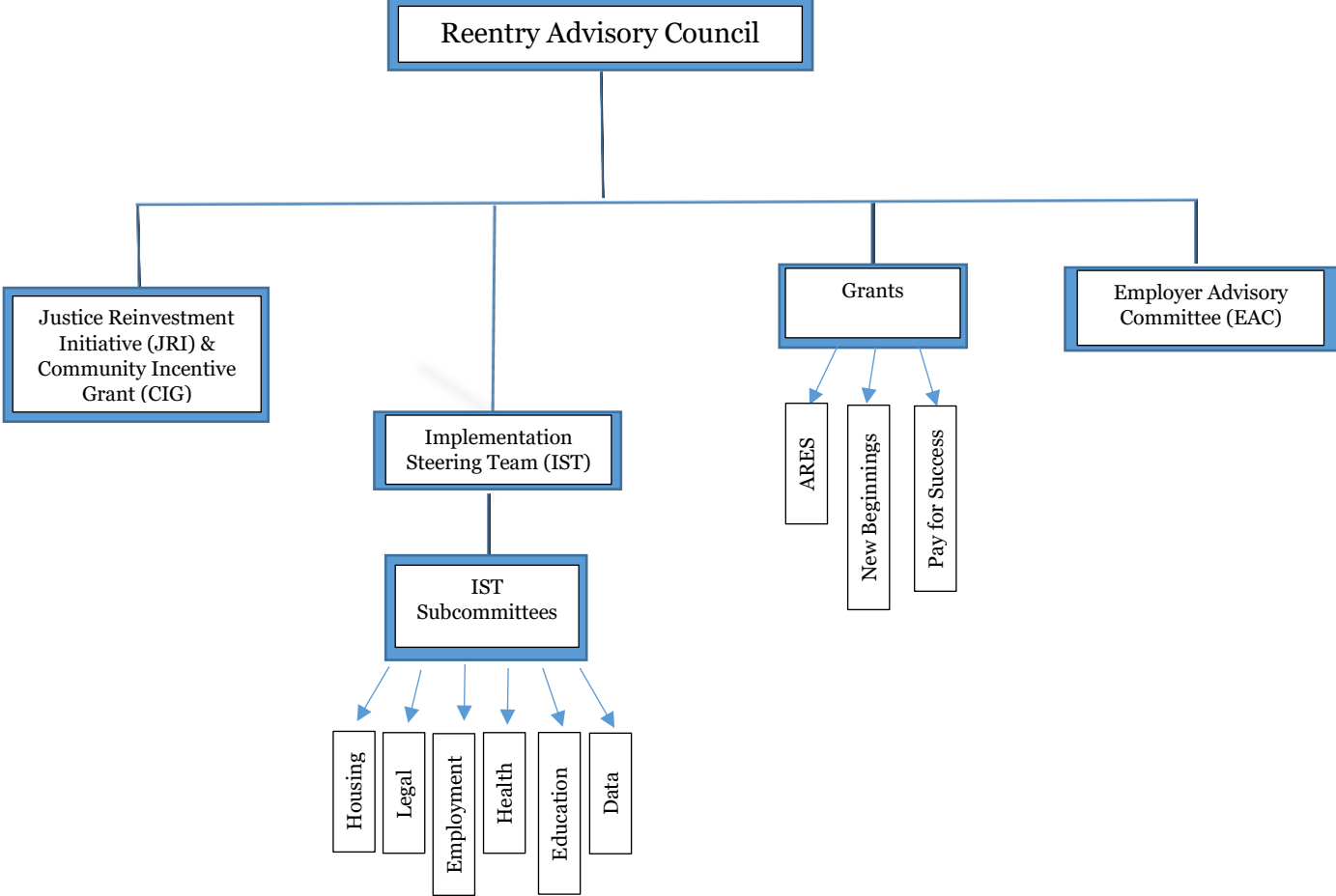
Goal 8

Identify and deploy methods to improve offender transition services.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- Deploy Regional Reentry Programs which use evidence based interventions to prepare state offenders for discharge from local jails.
- Deploy Day Reporting Centers as an alternative to revocation for offenders with technical violations of supervision or for high risk offenders exiting an RRP.
- Deploy Reception and Diagnostic Centers to ensure all incarcerated offenders receive initial screening, assessment, and placement in appropriate housing with programming to meet identified needs.
- Coordinate with other agencies and service providers to insure continuity of care for offenders from pre-release to post-release for those with medical, mental health, substance abuse or veterans' needs.
- Insure offenders are provided with documentable occupations or trades are routed into employment opportunities that apply their skills.
- Identify and promote transitional and supportive post-release housing options for returning citizens.

RAC Organizational Chart



RAC Sub-Committees

State Implementation Steering Team

The Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative (LA-PRI) is a partnership comprised of the DPSC, the Board of Parole, the member organizations of the RAC, the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations, Center for Justice Innovation, Louisiana State University, the business community, the philanthropic community, and parish reentry coalitions and implementation teams whose missions are critical to prisoner reentry reform. LA-PRI focuses on demonstrating reduced recidivism through improved case planning and case management for each offender built on comprehensive data of the offender's risk of recidivism, criminogenic needs, and responsivity issues. The LA-PRI focuses on eight criminogenic needs: 1) anti-social identity and decision making; 2) anti-social peers and associates; 3) past criminal history; 4) family/marital dysfunction; 5) substance abuse history; 6) lack of educational achievement; 7) lack of employment history; and 8) lack of pro-social leisure activities. Another output of LA-PRI is providing pipeline data to local stake holders regarding demographics characteristics and the criminogenic needs of offenders returning to a region in order for them to better prepare for addressing those needs within their communities.

IST Subcommittees

Given the magnitude and wide-ranging needs of the reentry population, it is essential to coordinate and concentrate community efforts through the State Implementation Steering Team (IST) and their Subcommittees so that progress can be maximized and achieved in an efficient manner. The following six subcommittees were put in place:

- Housing
- Education
- Behavioral Health and Health
- Legal
- Employment
- Data Research

Housing:

According to the 2010 Council of State Governments' "Reentry Housing Options: The Policy Makers Guide", "When individuals are released from prison or jail, the ability to access safe and secure housing within the community is crucial to their successful reentry. Studies have shown that the first month after release is a vulnerable period during which the risk of becoming homeless and/or returning to criminal justice involvement is high." It is widely recognized that the emergency shelter system is not an acceptable

housing option for individuals returning from prison, despite its frequent use over the years due to the challenges in obtaining adequate private and federally assisted housing. With Implementation of the following strategies, appropriate immediate and permanent housing will become available to those reentering the community.

Strategy

Advocate for permanent/affordable housing by:

- Identify particular programs or housing opportunities to aid in placing women and sex offenders within their organization.
- Increase the use of permanent supportive housing for returning citizens.
- Assist offenders in obtaining benefits such as D-SNAP when appropriate;
- Advocate with local housing authorities related to the HEARTH Act of 2009 to reduce and eliminate barriers to returning citizens access to public housing.

Goals

- Identify and promote transitional and supportive post-release housing options for returning citizens.

Education:

Since approximately 50% of incarcerated offenders do not have a high school diploma or equivalent at intake, it is important to make educational programming available to incarcerated offenders, as well as to offenders released to community supervision or placed on probation. Correctional education programs help offenders break the cycle of criminal behavior by providing the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. Effective programs focus on helping offenders develop problem solving and decision-making skills.

Strategy

- Increase the number of apprenticeship programs available to incarcerated and returning citizens.
- Increase the number of industry based certification programs available to incarcerated and returning citizens.
- Increase the number of vocational programs available to incarcerated and returning citizens.

Goals

- Increase access to Industry Based Certifications for both incarcerated and returned citizens.
- Increase access to Vocational Certifications for both incarcerated and returned citizens.
- Work on the expansion of the Pell Grant Program in local jails
- Develop Provisional and CDL license programs for returning citizens

Behavioral Health & Health:

Behavioral health and health has the potential negative effect on successful reentry if not addressed. Advocacy will be pursued as needed in each of the strategic priority areas where subject matter experts

have the knowledge and expertise to identify the issues, key decision makers, and approaches designed to result in desired changes.

Strategy

- Assist in the funding and implementation of new treatment.
- Assist in strengthening Continuity of Care and Access to Care for returning citizens.

Goals

- Coordinate with other agencies and service providers to insure continuity of care for offenders from pre-release to post-release for those with medical, mental health, substance abuse or veterans' needs.

Legal:

It is recognized that reentry is one component of the larger criminal and juvenile justice systems and as such is affected by the laws, services, policies, and procedures of those systems. It is therefore important for reentry practitioners and advocates to participate in activities that help to eliminate unnecessary removal of individuals from their communities and to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of those systems.

Strategy

- Identify State policies, laws, and practices that present opportunities and barriers to improve outcomes for the reentry population.
- Implementation of proven effective statewide reentry policy changes, legislation, or other reforms to the Department of Public Safety & Corrections, Louisiana Sentencing Commission, and/or the Legislature to address barriers to reentry identified.

Goals

- Advocate for and identify funding for the expansion of specialty-problem solving courts.

Employment:

According to "Reentry Facts" provided by the National Reentry Resource Center "Employment rates and earnings histories of people in prisons and jails are often low before incarceration as a result of limited education experiences, low skill levels, and the prevalence of physical and mental health problems; incarceration only exacerbates these challenges". Further, "A large three-state recidivism study found that less than half of released prisoners had secured a job upon their return to the community."

Strategy

- Increase the number and percentage of returning citizens employed.
- Engage Louisiana Workforce Commission and temporary employment agencies
- Aid in creating resumes, identifying employers, finding applicable jobs, and eliminating obstacles to employment.
- Increase collaboration between DPSC transition work programs and employers to identify skilled professional vacancies and route returning citizens into vacancies.

- Job fairs for incarcerated and released offenders.

Goals

- Advocate for increased employment opportunities for returning citizens.
- Ensure that training and employment opportunities are available to incarcerated and returning citizens

Data:

A strong system of data collection, program evaluation, and research is necessary to ensure effective use of limited resources and services are truly promoting successful reentry.

Strategy

- Understand and optimize data already collected
- Identify stakeholders
- Determine current and desired evaluation capacity based on projected resources
- Develop and implement a common sharing of information form/capacities/protocols so that all relevant information can be gathered across domains
- Present data on the reentry population

Goals

- Coordinate with service providers to use and share validated assessment tool results to measure service program success, as well individual offender response to program.

Grants

The Reentry Advisory Council serves as the executive-level steering committee for Bureau of Justice Assistance funded initiatives. The role of the RAC is to champion an integrated cross-systems approach and hold agencies accountable for establishing policies and procedures that will accomplish shared goals. Identifying and assembling a group of committed executive leadership is critical to successful information gathering, planning, and implementation of grant initiatives. Executive leaders are also able to influence funding allocation and the removal of the statutory regulatory policies.

Strategy

- Provide oversight of BJA funded grant initiatives.
- Provide support for BJA funded grant initiatives.
- Identify and address issues related to the implementation of BJA funded grant initiatives.

Goals

- Successful implementation of BJA funded grant initiatives.

Employers Advisory Committee

Employer Advisory Committee is to advise Reentry Advisory Council and the Department of Public Safety & Corrections (DPS&C) regarding the continuum of factors that support the overall goal of developing in its population skills that will result in gainful employment and successful reentry, in order that they may support themselves and their families in a meaningful way, thus making it less likely they will re-offend, thereby improving public safety. Broad in scope, the mission includes improving the way offenders make informed career choices, and ensuring the DPS&C provides high quality training programs, tied to demand occupations, using appropriate and relevant resources to deliver Career & Technical Education that meets employer needs.