

North Carolina's  
Serious & Violent Offender  
ReEntry Initiative:

*Going Home*



## ***National Perspective***

**The Problem:** In 2000, 571,000 State prisoners were released into the community after serving time in prison. These offenders were part of a total of 652,199 adults who were under State parole supervision at the end of 2000. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that nearly 33% of State prisoners released in 1999 were drug offenders and nearly 25% were violent offenders. In addition, nearly 300,000 prisoners released in 15 States in 1994, 67.5% were re-arrested within 3 years, and 61.7% of those originally sentenced for a violent crime were re-arrested for a new offense. Further, 70.2% of those in prison for robbery and 70.2% of those in prison for possessing, using, or selling illegal weapons were re-arrested.

**The Issues:** The key is to prevent offenders from re-engaging in criminal behavior after their release from prison by assisting them in making a successful transition into the community. Getting a job and achieving educational goals, finding a stable place to live, staying off drugs, addressing mental health and family issues, and establishing a positive support network are all integral parts of the successful transition from prison to home.

- Many prisoners cannot read or write;
- Most have a history of substance abuse and many have problems with a co-occurring mental illness;
- Few would be considered competitive in the current job market or have ever held a job;
- Few will have a home to go to when they return to their neighborhoods due to restrictions established by public and private housing providers against adult and juvenile offenders;
- Few will be welcomed home by their nuclear or extended family, friends or neighbors since they were often victimized by the offender;
- Few offenders will receive an assessment of their physical, emotional or intellectual abilities or an assessment of their problems with substance abuse, child or spousal abuse, employability, educational achievement or special education needs or housing – either in the correctional institution or in the community;
- Very few law enforcement systems will track the return of the offender, monitor their involvement in local criminal activity or consistently inform parole or related systems of criminal activity;

- Most public and private service systems (i.e., welfare, mental health, employment and special education services) often choose not to serve the offender because of fear, concern that offender demands may exceed their capacity, and/or that staff are not trained to serve the population.

**The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative: Going Home** is an unprecedented collaboration among the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, and Veterans Affairs. "This initiative helps provide individuals who have been released from prison the opportunity to become productive citizens and members of society," said Attorney General John Ashcroft. "The reentry programs aid in making sure these individuals will not return to a life of crime."

The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative will build on innovative reentry efforts in states for both juveniles and adults with the goal that these efforts serve as nationwide prototypes. Communities will utilize existing federal, state, and local resources, while grant funds will be used to address additional specific needs. Local efforts will require close coordination among institutional and community corrections, law enforcement, education, job training and placement, and other service providers, including faith- and community-based organizations.

Reentry efforts will begin while offenders are still in correctional facilities, continue through offenders' transition back into the community, and help sustain ex-offenders through services such as employment training and substance abuse and mental health treatment.

**The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative: Going Home** is designed to address the stages an offender goes through when returning to the community. The process involves education, parenting instruction, vocational training, treatment and life skills programs while offenders are in institutions, services and supervision as they reenter the community, and networks of agencies and individuals to support offenders as they become productive and law-abiding members of their communities.

The federal partners joined together to help state and local agencies navigate the complex field of existing grant programs and to assist them in accessing, redeploying,

and leveraging those resources to support all components of a comprehensive reentry program.

### Three Phases of Reentry

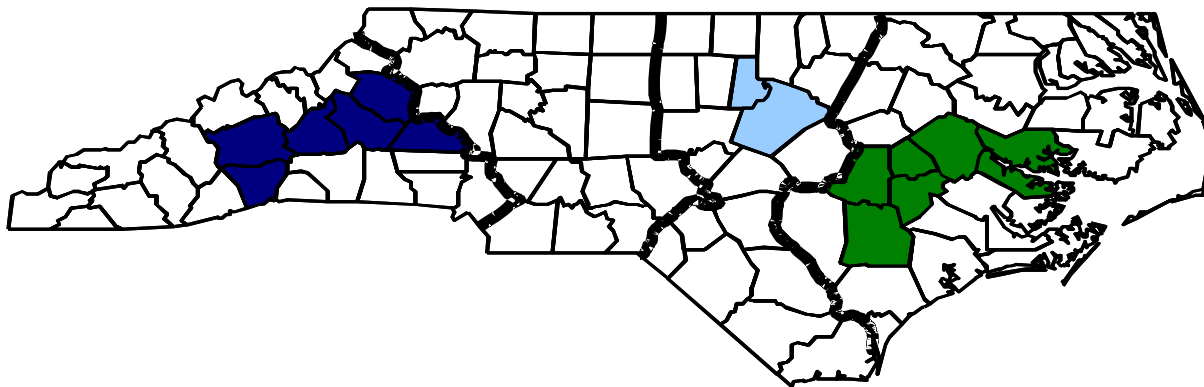
The Reentry Initiative envisions the development of model reentry programs that begin in correctional institutions and continue throughout an offender's transition to and stabilization in the community. These programs will provide for individual reentry plans that address issues confronting offenders as they return to the community. The Initiative will encompass three phases and be implemented through appropriate programs:

**Phase 1-Protect and Prepare:** Institution-Based Programs. These programs are designed to prepare offenders to reenter society. Services provided in this phase will include education, mental health and substance

abuse treatment, job training, mentoring, and full diagnostic and risk assessment.

**Phase 2-Control and Restore:** Community-Based Transition Programs. These programs will work with offenders prior to and immediately following their release from correctional institutions. Services provided in this phase will include education, housing, monitoring, mentoring, life skills training, assessment, job skills development, and mental health and substance abuse treatment.

**Phase 3-Sustain and Support:** Community-Based Long-term Support Programs. These programs will connect individuals who have left the supervision of the justice system with a network of social services agencies and community-based organizations to provide ongoing services and positive mentoring relationships.



### North Carolina Perspective

**The Problem:** During FY 00-01, there were 22,806 releases from North Carolina prisons. The majority (75%) of releases was due to the expiration of an inmate's sentence; 13% were released on parole supervision and 5% were released on post-release supervision. In the most recent recidivism study conducted by the NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission (April 2002), the re-arrest rate for all inmates released in FY 98-99 was 42%.

Through the **Going Home Initiative**, the state of North Carolina will create a systemic pre-release, community transition and reentry infrastructure. Many services necessary to successful transition and reentry are available, however they are not systemically coordinated as a seamless system among state and local government agencies, community-based organizations including faith-based initiatives, community-based treatment providers, the offender, the offender's family, victim advocates, or the community at large. In fact, successful transition and reentry into any community by offenders, especially serious

and violent offenders, requires a commitment by all these stakeholders to a common set of goals and objectives.

Creating a seamless system is a theme of the **Going Home Initiative**. Another is building and strengthening the capacity of local partners committed to successful transition and reentry to ensure long-term success for offenders. This network must include community-based organizations, faith-based initiatives and grassroots outreach workers, mentors and sponsors who need training, resources, and support to continue working with ex-offenders in the community. Consequently, the focus of the **Going Home Initiative** will be to develop a sustainable infrastructure of shared decision-making, responsibility and accountability for providing offenders an opportunity to become law-abiding citizens, productive members of their communities, and responsible members of their families. State agency partners include the Departments of Commerce (Commission on Workforce Development), Health and Human Services (Mental Health and TASC), and the North Carolina Community College System.

The North Carolina Department of Correction is moving towards a systemic process that integrates shared decision-making in the control and treatment of offenders. The Department has adopted the **Offender Management Model (OMM)** to engage agencies, organizations, and volunteers at all levels to restructure interventions and services into a seamless continuum of interventions. OMM, beginning at the state and moving to the local level, delineates the roles of partner agencies and organizations, develops formal agreements of responsibility for interventions and services, creates shared decision-making and increases accountability for successful management of offenders in prison and in the community. In short, OMM represents a framework for doing business, where offenders are assessed, case plans are developed, services are rendered, and progress is monitored interdependently. ***The overall motto is "transition success equals public safety in the community."***

The target population consists of offenders released from prison under community supervision (e.g., parole or post-release) with at least a 90-day term. They must be between the ages of 18 and 35 at the time of release and returning to one of the following reentry cluster counties: Henderson, Buncombe, McDowell, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Durham, Wake, Duplin, Wayne, Lenoir, Greene, Pitt or Beaufort (see map). The Initiative targets serious and violent offenders; and by virtue of the Structured Sentencing Act, North Carolina's most chronic, serious and violent offenders are those sentenced to prison. No specific criminal offenses are required for eligibility.

In the **Phase I**, which constitutes the Institutional phase of the project, the Transition team including prison case managers will hold at minimum three planning sessions with the offender over the final 12 months of incarceration to develop a reentry case plan. During this planning phase, the inmate will be assessed for additional program, service and/or treatment needs that can be addressed while incarcerated. In addition, the transition team will make advance preparations for the offender's return to the community. At the time of release, responsibility for the offender's continued case management will be transferred to the supervising probation officer to enforce the terms and conditions of release and supervision as set by the Post-Release Supervision and Parole Commission.

The Community component begins in **Phase II** on the day of release. The offender is transported to his/her pre-approved housing arrangement, and the supervising officer in collaboration with local law enforcement initiates the appropriate level of mandated supervision. The Transition team will expand to include other community partners, and a regular schedule of meetings with the offender is established to monitor and reassess the offender's performance. The offender is referred to community partners for service and treatment, as required to fulfill the reentry case plan. The Transition team and the offender will plan for long-term stability as the period of supervision and case plan activities near completion.

In **Phase III**, the focus is on long-term sustainability as the offender concentrates on aftercare services and relapse prevention activities. The Transition Aftercare Network (TAN), other faith-based initiatives and community-based organizations will provide mentoring. Likewise, community-based treatment providers will offer relapse prevention services. Additionally, local partners will continue their participation in forums and training to identify resources to build and strengthen local capacity for maintaining and expanding programming for ex-offenders. The core state agency partners must play a significant role in this area to achieve long-term stability for the system, and ultimately the offender and communities.

**Grant Award:** The Department of Correction has been awarded \$1.3 million to be spent over 3 years for this Initiative. Approximately 70% of the budget is dedicated to direct service and support for offenders in the 14 reentry cluster communities. Forty-eight percent of grant funds are allocated to mental health and substance abuse treatment, housing, transportation, childcare, and other support services and 21% of grant funds are allocated for intensive case management services for offenders in the JobLink Career Center. These services will include offender-specific career counseling, job readiness and preparation, employability and case planning.

**For more information contact:**  
ReEntry Coordinator  
Dept. of Correction – R&P  
2020 Yonkers Road  
4221 MSC  
Raleigh, NC 27699-4221  
(919) 716-3080

<http://www.doc.state.nc.us/rap/index.htm>