

RESULTS-BASED PUBLIC
POLICY STRATEGIES FOR
Promoting Workforce
Strategies for Reintegrating
Ex-Offenders

April 2012

POLICY for **RESULTS.org**

Center
for the
Study
of
Social
Policy

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) believes that policymaking should be based on achieving concrete results; and that using reliable data for learning and accountability leads to improved outcomes for all children and families.

Results-based public policy helps policymakers:

- Establish an aspiration that directs policy, budgeting and oversight on the desired result for children and families.
- Use results to drive decisions about policies, programs, practices and the investment of taxpayer dollars.
- Measure progress and assure accountability by using powerful and commonly understood data.
- Improve cost-effectiveness because smart policies that make a difference are essential to the nation's long-term economic and civic health; and leading with results is the best way to make hard spending decisions.

CSSP helps provide state policymakers with research-informed, results-based policy strategies to support child and family well-being in their states through **PolicyForResult.org**. This web-based tool provides guidance on maximizing federal resources and highlights state examples of effective policies and financing approaches; which is critical during tough economic times. This paper is intended to be a companion piece to the [promote workforce strategies for reintegrating ex-offenders section](#) on [PolicyForResults.org](#).

Stringent criteria were used to select the indicators and recommended strategies in this paper. For example, the indicators are limited to those for which 50-state data are available and those that research or practice indicates can be improved. All indicators and strategies were chosen in consultation with issue experts and based on specific research regarding their effectiveness. Levels of evidence were identified and used to guide the selection of strategies and recommendations.

We recognize that evidence exists in different forms. PolicyForResults.org relies on three levels of evidence:

- **Rigorous statistical evidence** refers to the most scientifically defensible evidence, which comes through statistical evaluations with control groups, randomly assigned participation, and/or tests of statistical significance. Research of this sort is usually not available, particularly in the fields related to children and family policy. In addition, it is important to exercise caution when interpreting and generalizing findings from this sort of research to entire populations. True random assignment is ethically prohibited in many cases and this limitation must be recognized when interpreting the findings of quasi-experimental studies.
- **Program evaluation and emerging evidence** refers to evidence that is derived from state studies, policy analysis, the evaluations of specific programs and research or extrapolations from related fields.
- **Practice-based evidence** refers to evidence that enjoys broad consensus from practitioners. Practice-based evidence of success and experience can provide compelling evidence, as can research, provide strong, but not conclusive, statistical evidence.

PROMOTING WORKFORCE STRATEGIES FOR REINTEGRATING EX-OFFENDERS

Reducing recidivism is not the only priority of the correctional system; however, if the system is intended to deter further criminal activity, it is an important one. According to the Pew Center on the States, there has not been significant improvement in the performance of corrections systems in many states despite the massive increase in corrections spending. More than 4 out of 10 adult offenders in the United States return to prison within three years of their release.¹ This is not just significant for ex-offenders and their families but also for the communities in which they live.

When ex-offenders reintegrate into the community, they face a number of barriers to employment. By providing ex-offenders with the supports and services they need to find and maintain employment, states can reduce recidivism. Participation in comprehensive education and employment programming while incarcerated and a continued connection to education and employment services after release have been shown to reduce recidivism.² Using strategies such as progressive sanctions that hold ex-offenders accountable but that also keep them in the community connected to family and employment, can be just as effective, if not more effective, than a costly revocation.³ When ex-offenders are productively engaged in their communities, working and supporting their families, the community is safer and their families are more economically secure.

Important to Consider

A Two-Generation Approach. [One in every 28 children in America](#) has a parent behind bars, and successful or failed reintegration affects both ex-offenders and their children. Policies to support employment for reintegrating ex-offenders support the well-being and economic success of both generations.

¹ The Pew Center on the States (2011). *The State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America's Prisons*. [Available online](#).

² The Reentry Policy Council (2005). *Charting the Safe and Successful Return of Prisoners to the Community*. New York, NY

³ The Pew Center on the States (2011). *The State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America's Prisons*. [Available online](#).

Root Causes Related to Workforce Strategies for Reintegrating Ex-Offenders

The prison population is growing. At the end of 2009, state and federal correctional authorities had jurisdiction over a record high 1,613,656 prisoners.⁴ Parallel growth can be seen in the number of individuals released from prison, which has increased by 350 percent over the past 20 years.⁵ The prison population, and consequently the population of released offenders, includes a disproportionate number of black males, who were imprisoned at a rate 6.5 times higher than white males in 2008.⁶ This racial inequity should be considered when crafting criminal justice policy and supports for ex-offenders.

Communities lack needed resources. Most individuals are released from prison into the community without supervision or reentry services.⁷ The majority of prisoners return to a small number of communities with high rates of poverty, crime, unemployment, as well as minimal economic opportunity and supports such as housing.⁸

Ex-offenders face significant barriers. Well known barriers to obtaining education, vocational training, gainful employment, housing, substance abuse treatment and mental health services—confront offenders after their release. These barriers and others present challenges that contribute to recidivism.⁹ Very often, ex-offenders lack the level of education or job skills, including “soft skills” like punctuality and communication that are essential for gaining and maintaining employment. The Bureau of Justice Statistics [found](#) that about 41 percent of inmates in local jails and state and federal prisons had not completed high school or its equivalent. Additionally, many states limit, sometimes unnecessarily, the ability of ex-offenders to obtain professional licenses or receive work supports. Mental illness, addiction, and other health problems can also pose substantial barriers to securing and maintaining a job- and can lead to recidivism.

⁴ Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice. (2009). Prisoners at year end.

⁵ Harrison, P.M., Beck, A.J., & Reentry Policy Council. (2006), *The Report of the Reentry Policy Council; Prison and jail inmates at midyear 2005*. Washington, D.C: Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice.

⁶ West, H.C., Sabol, W., & Cooper. M. (2009). *Prisoners in 2008*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/po8.pdf

⁷ Petersilia, J. (2003). *When prisoners come home: Parole and prisoner reentry*. Studies in crime and public policy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁸ Lynch, J. P., Sabol, W. J., & Urban Institute, (2001). *Prisoner reentry in perspective*. Washington, D.C: Urban Institute; La Vigne, N., Kachnowski, V., Travis, J., Naser, R., & Visher, C. (2003). A portrait of prisoner reentry in Maryland. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute; La Vigne, N, Mamalian, C., Travis, J., & Visher, C. (2003). A portrait of prisoner reentry in Illinois. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute; La Vigne, N., Gillian, T., Visher, C., Kachnowski, V., & Travis, J. (2003). A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Ohio. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

⁹ Listwan, S. J., Cullen, F. T., & Latessa, E. J. (January 01, 2006). How to Prevent Prisoner Re-Entry Programs From Failing: Insights From Evidence-Based Corrections. *Federal Probation*, 70, 3, 19.

Setting Priorities: Why is it Important That Children Grow Up in Safe, Supportive and Economically Successful Homes?

Children do best when they grow up in their own families, and families thrive when they are connected to formal and informal supports and social networks. Some families also benefit from specific services that build strengths and abate risks to family stability. Research shows that when families lack adequate income and assets, they face hardships including hunger, living in substandard housing, and untreated illness. These hardships are especially harmful for children, who are more likely to experience long lasting negative outcomes in the areas of health, social and emotional development, educational attainment, and employment.

What are the Key Elements to Achieving this Result?

When [Protective Factors](#) that serve as buffers against adversity are present and robust in a family, the likelihood of child maltreatment diminishes and families flourish. Children and their families need:

- **Nurturing and safe family connections.** Research suggests that when children are allowed to safely remain within their own homes and families they have better long term outcomes than comparably maltreated children placed in foster care. For those children in foster care, the goal should be to achieve timely exits to permanence through [family reunification](#), [guardianship](#), or [adoption](#). Even when children cannot live with their own parents, they need permanent connections to family, siblings, grandparents, and other relatives, and other adults who can help nurture healthy social and emotional development.
- **Timely and equitable access to a continuum of supports and services.** Families have unique needs, so the policy response to strengthening families must include a range of supports that are available before families are in crisis. The support continuum should include strategies that promote family strengths and address adverse circumstances that heighten the risks of child maltreatment. Economic hardship is one of the key factors thought to be associated with reports of child maltreatment, and with child neglect in particular.
- **The ability to cope with stress and recover from crises.** Parental resilience is not just the capacity to rebound from sudden emergencies but also to adapt to ongoing challenges; it includes social connections and access to concrete supports in times of need.
- **Stable housing in safe neighborhoods.** Children who live in stable housing are more likely to be healthy, do better on reading and math tests and less likely to drop out of school than children who move regularly or live in substandard housing.
- **Opportunities for education, employment and assets.** Workers with the least education suffered the greatest job losses in the recent recession. Post-secondary education, [effective job training](#) and placement programs increase families' economic security and keep people competitive even in a challenging job market. Increasing household financial resources and building household assets increases net worth which provides economic stability, financial security and a cushion to weather tough economic times.

USING DATA

How are your kids?

Using data enables policymakers to examine the data trends within their state and compare these trends with other states and national averages. Considering the data in context, and by analyzing the root causes behind the data, helps in developing data projections and setting targets for improvement.

Projections

In order to achieve measurable results, it is essential to examine the direction in which a trend is likely to move. Making projections allows policymakers to determine the current and future conditions and to set realistic and appropriate targets. When making these projections consider the following questions:

- What do trends suggest about the current outcomes for children, families and communities?
- What will rates of recidivism look like in the near and distant future (for instance, after one year, three years and five years) if you continue on the current course?
- Does the projected trend suggest positive conditions for children, youth and families?
- If positive change is projected, is it significant? Is it enough?
- What is the impact on communities, public systems and state budgets?

Targets

Target-setting is an important step in achieving positive outcomes for children, youth, families and the community. In order to achieve better results, leaders can commit to setting a measurable target and a timeframe for its accomplishment. When establishing targets consider the following questions:

- Based on trend and projection data what is an achievable target?
- How will the target be used?
 - As an inspiration for mobilizing public will and action?
 - As a benchmark for measuring performance and accountability?
- Can targets be set for specific groups or regions within the state?
 - How will local targets be incorporated, if at all, into the state target?
 - What support can the state give to local entities to set and achieve targets?
- How will racial disparities, geographic differences and other variations be considered?
- What will ensure targets are appropriately set and used over time?
 - How can you prevent targets from being misused for punitive purposes or from leading to unintended consequences and poor practices?

The Data

Rate of recidivism: These data are the rates at which offenders returned to prison within three years of their release between 2004 and 2007. The data were collected by the Pew Center on the States in collaboration with the Association of State Correctional Administrators.

Recidivism Rates between 2004-2007

United States	43.3	Montana	42.1
Alabama	35.1	Nebraska	32.3
Alaska	50.4	Nevada	n/a
Arizona	39.1	New Hampshire	44.2
Arkansas	44.4	New Jersey	42.7
California	57.8	New Mexico	43.8
Colorado	n/a	New York	39.9
Connecticut	43.7	North Carolina	41.1
Delaware	n/a	North Dakota	39.6
Florida	n/a	Ohio	39.6
Georgia	34.8	Oklahoma	26.4
Hawaii	n/a	Oregon	22.8
Idaho	33.6	Pennsylvania	39.6
Illinois	51.7	Rhode Island	30.8
Indiana	37.8	South Carolina	31.8
Iowa	33.9	South Dakota	45.5
Kansas	42.9	Tennessee	n/a
Kentucky	41	Texas	31.9
Louisiana	39.3	Utah	53.7
Maine	n/a	Vermont	n/a
Maryland	n/a	Virginia	28.3
Massachusetts	42.2	Washington	42.9
Michigan	31	West Virginia	26.8
Minnesota	61.2	Wisconsin	46
Mississippi	33.3	Wyoming	24.8
Missouri	54.4		

For additional information on trends, as well as for additional comparative state and national data please see our PolicyforResults.org [data section](#) on promoting workforce strategies for reintegrating ex-offenders.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION FOR REINTEGRATING EX-OFFENDERS

What works?

Strategy #1 - Enhance workforce preparation during incarceration.

In an increasingly competitive labor force, all individuals need marketable skills in order to secure a job and to maintain employment. Policymakers can promote education and training for incarcerated individuals so that when they are released from prison, they enter the workforce with the training and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency. It is important that training includes credentials such as a high school diploma or GED and soft-skill development, such as effective communication skills and the appreciation of professional norms, which will assist ex-offenders in finding and maintaining work. Some strategies that can be used to enhance workforce preparation during incarceration include:

- ***Support educational programs for inmates*** including; general education (high school diplomas and GEDs) as well as secondary educational opportunities. Education, particularly higher education has proven to significantly reduce recidivism rates. Before public funding was eliminated in 1995, prison colleges made higher education available to the most isolated communities and were the most cost-effective form of public correctional spending.¹⁰ The **North Carolina** Department of Corrections has partnered with both North Carolina Community Colleges and the University of North Carolina to provide higher education to inmates as well as to create a pipeline to college for inmates who are released.
- ***Support the development of a pre- and post-release curriculum.*** States can commit increased resources to coordinated employment services (education, job and soft skills training, and transitional employment) before and after release from prison or jail.¹¹ The State of **New Jersey's** [Another Chance Program](#) coordinates initiatives that begin while an offender is in prison and continue after release, including intensive diagnostic assessments and expanded educational, vocational and job-coaching programs.

Increasing Education

The [Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#) rigorously [analyzed data](#) on hundreds of programs aimed at reducing crime. It found that education programs in prison reduce crime by 4 to 9 percent and produce a net benefit to taxpayers of \$2,000 to \$6,000 per participant.¹

¹⁰ Bard College (2010) Bard Prison Initiative. <http://www.bard.edu/bpi/>

¹¹ CLASP (2008) Every Door Closed. Barred from Jobs: Ex-Offenders Thwarted in Attempts to Earn a Living. [Available online.](#)

- **Enhance job skills development.** Research shows the importance of education and training for reducing recidivism, and marketable skills are essential to employment prospects for ex-offenders.¹² To promote these skills, policymakers can ensure that (a) education and training programs are focused on the specific skills that provide opportunities for achieving meaningful credentials, and (b) education and training are related to industries experiencing job growth. **Maryland's** Department of Workforce and Training has established the [Maryland Energy Sector Partnership](#), which includes education and training for ex-offenders in emerging green jobs.
- **Support soft skills development.** In addition to job-specific skills, more general workforce preparation is essential to employment. This preparation focuses on "soft skills" such as communication, conflict resolution, and professional norms. With sites in **California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina** and **Pennsylvania**, [Project Strive's](#) three-to-four-week training program for the hard-to-employ, such as former prisoners, includes structured training on personal responsibility, attitude, communication skills and workplace norms. Participants build an understanding of the work environment and the strong work ethic necessary for obtaining and maintaining employment.

Providing Opportunities in New York

The [Bard Prison Initiative](#) (BPI) is restoring opportunities for higher education in **New York** prisons. Bard provides secondary education inside three long-term, maximum-security prisons and two transitional medium-security prisons.

¹² Steurer, S. J., Smith, L. G., Correctional Education Association (U.S.), & Management & Training Corporation. (2003). *Education reduces crime: Three-state recidivism study: executive summary*. Lanham, MD: Correctional Education Association.

Strategy #2 - Improve placement services.

Even with marketable skills, people who are released from prison often need information and guidance to navigate the job market. To serve the needs of businesses and ex-offenders and their families, policymakers can promote effective placement services for reintegrating ex-offenders by expanding the states partnerships with employers, expanding incentives for employers who hire ex-offenders and improving the range of placements. Some of the strategies that can be used to improve placement services include:

- ***Expand partnerships with employers.*** To prove effective, job training for ex-offenders must align with industries in which jobs are available and employers are willing to hire individuals with criminal records. States can promote partnerships with such employers by supporting job training that is tailored to the needs of those employers. For example, the state of **Illinois** contracts with the [Safer Foundation](#) to improve training for ex-offenders and to partner with relevant industries for job placement.
- ***Promote a range of placement options.*** In order to ensure that ex-offenders are able to successfully contribute to their community through work, policymakers should promote a range of job placement options. A range of options is necessary because not all individuals will demonstrate the same level of work-readiness. **Illinois'** Department of Employment Security, as an effort of their [re-entry services](#) initiative, created the Illinois' [Winning Job Opportunities Guide](#), which provides ex-offenders with a range of job opportunities tailored to their needs and skill levels. The jobs featured include opportunities for individuals who need long-term on-the-job training, short-term on-the-job training, and jobs for individuals who have already had vocational training and those with associate's degrees.
- ***Leverage employment agencies.*** Policymakers can ensure that One-Stop Career Centers and other employment agencies are accessible to those in areas where the need is greatest and that they coordinate with each other to provide a continuity of services. In **Massachusetts**, each region has [multiple One-Stop locations](#); one-stops in Boston, where 40 percent of ex-offenders from state prisons and nearly all ex-offenders from the Suffolk House of Corrections return annually,¹³ are centrally located and accessible by one if not all subway lines. **Maryland** [locates One-Stops](#) in several neighborhoods in Baltimore, to which an estimated 10,000 ex-offenders from Maryland correctional facilities return annually and 100 ex-offenders from Baltimore jails return daily.¹⁴

Using Technology

In addition to more than 30 physical One-Stop Career Centers statewide, **New Jersey** offers [a virtual One-Stop](#) with online services for workers and employers.

¹³http://www.cityofboston.gov/Images_Documents/City%20of%20Boston%20Legislative%20Package%20FINAL%20011609_tcm3-2407.pdf.

¹⁴<http://www.examiner.com/headlines-in-baltimore/ex-offenders-find-opportunity-and-outlet-at-employment-center>.

- **Expand outreach around hiring incentives for employers.** Policymakers can use available financial incentives to encourage employers to consider qualified ex-offenders. A number of federal, state and local financial incentives are available to employers who hire ex-offenders. These include the [Federal Bonding Program](#), [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#), [Welfare-to-Work programs](#) and first-source agreements, agreements that provide preferences for government contracts to employers who hire local residents and/or ex-offenders. The **Nevada** Department of Corrections has focused on increasing employment opportunities for ex-offenders. In order to achieve this goal, the Department of Corrections has created a program that provides Nevada business owners tax incentives if they hire individuals leaving the Casa Grande Transitional Housing Authority.¹⁵

Consider a Job Fair

The majority of felons leaving prison in **Indiana** (about 5000 per year) return to Indianapolis. In an attempt to support ex-offenders in successfully returning to the city, Indianapolis held a two-day job fair for reintegrating ex-offenders. The first day included workshops on resume and skill development, the second day was an employment fair with businesses from all over the city. The city's public transportation system offered free passes for attendants.

¹⁵ Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce (08/04/2010). Tax benefits available for those who hire from Nevada Department of Corrections Reentry Program.

Strategy #3 - Remove barriers to employment for ex-offenders.

States can reduce statutory prohibitions that may unnecessarily prevent ex-offenders from obtaining professional licenses or serving in certain industries. By lifting unnecessary restrictions and/or providing certificates of rehabilitation, policymakers can improve the placement options for ex-offenders and remove central barriers to reentering the workforce. Some of the strategies for removing barriers to employment for ex-offenders include:

- ***Prohibit blanket employment bans.*** In many circumstances, criminal records are not relevant to hiring decisions and should not be considered. Ten states—**California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Utah** and **Wisconsin**—prevent occupational licensing agencies and employers from considering arrests that did not lead to convictions in hiring decisions. An additional three states—**Arkansas, New Hampshire** and **New Mexico**—prohibit this consideration for selected employers only.¹⁶
- ***Lift bars on occupational licensure.*** Some states prohibit the denial of occupational licenses based on criminal records in selected circumstances, as well as providing documented means for individuals with past convictions to demonstrate rehabilitation. Half of all states specify that there must be a "direct," "rational," or "reasonable" relationship between the criminal conviction and the license sought in order for a denial of licensure. Nine states—**Alabama, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Illinois, New Jersey** and **New York**—offer restoration of civil rights and/or certificates of rehabilitation for the purposes of employment and/or occupational licensure.¹⁷

Provide Greater Clarity

The American Bar Association's *Standards for Criminal Justice* suggests that all states require the collection and cataloguing of all collateral sanctions in one section or chapter of the state's criminal code with clear references to the offenses to which each sanction applies.

¹⁶ Legal Action Center (2008). A report on state legal barriers facing people with criminal records. *After Prison: Roadblocks to Reentry*. [Available online](#); CLASP (2003). Barred from jobs: Ex-offenders thwarted in attempts to earn a living. *Every Door Closed Fact Sheet Series*, No. 2 of 8.

¹⁷ Legal Action Center (2008). A report on state legal barriers facing people with criminal records. *After Prison: Roadblocks to Reentry*.; CLASP (2003). Barred from jobs: Ex-offenders thwarted in attempts to earn a living. *Every Door Closed Fact Sheet Series*, No. 2 of 8.

Strategy #4 - Improve access to work supports.

Ex-offenders often struggle to obtain housing, transportation and healthcare, which are critical to their ability to gain and maintain employment. By improving access to work supports, policymakers enable ex-offenders to better maintain employment and thereby contribute more productively to their communities. Some of the strategies for improving access to work supports include:

- ***Promote access to transportation by amending driving restrictions.*** Driving privileges are often essential to finding and maintaining work, yet many states ban ex-offenders' access to driver's licenses. Policymakers can (a) amend driver's license restrictions to minimize barriers to access for ex-offenders as appropriate and (b) ensure exit procedures assist individuals with obtaining driver's licenses or other identification upon release. [Legislation](#) in Missouri provides restricted licenses to ex-offenders when they are required to operate a motor vehicle for work, to receive medical treatment, to attend an institution of higher education or an alcohol or drug treatment program, and any other circumstance the court finds may create an undue hardship.
- ***Promote access to health care.*** Medical care is essential to work preparation and has been shown to reduce recidivism. Many ex-offenders are eligible for Medicaid but face expiring eligibility due to time limits that continue during their incarceration. States can preserve this eligibility by suspending Medicaid during incarceration so that individuals are covered immediately after release. New York's [Medicaid Suspension Legislation](#) suspends Medicaid for people entering prisons and jails with prior Medicaid enrollment and permits immediate reinstatement upon release.
- ***Support opportunities for affordable housing.*** Access to affordable housing presents perhaps the greatest challenge to reentering the workforce. To promote access, policymakers can require that applicants are considered without undue attention to criminal records and can eliminate "one strike and you're out" rules that ban ex-offenders from public housing.¹⁸ The District of Columbia handles denials of public housing on a case-by-case basis in order to discourage policies of blanket discrimination, which automatically deny an ex-offender housing.¹⁹
- ***Lift or minimize bans on income subsidies.*** Federal law prohibits Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) subsidies and food stamps for individuals convicted of state or federal felony drug offenses. However, states have the options of limiting or eliminating this ban through legislation. The benefits provided through TANF and food stamps can be essential in enhancing the likelihood that ex-offenders successfully reenter the workforce. Because of the level of support they provide ex-offenders in maintaining work, a majority of states have eliminated or limited the federal ban.²⁰ A Maine [law](#) eliminated the ban on receiving TANF and food stamp benefits for ex-offenders with drug-related felonies.

¹⁸ CLASP (2003). Barred from jobs: Ex-offenders thwarted in attempts to earn a living. *Every Door Closed Fact Sheet Series*, No. 2 of 8.

¹⁹ Stanley Jones. [The Clean Slate Project](#).

²⁰ CLASP (2003). Barred from jobs: Ex-offenders thwarted in attempts to earn a living. *Every Door Closed Fact Sheet Series*, No. 2 of 8.

Success Story: Connecticut

Over the last ten years, Connecticut has distinguished itself with its data-driven policies, fiscal responsibility and comprehensive strategies for promoting the reintegration of ex-offenders. Within two years of the development and implementation of the state's justice reinvestment initiatives, Connecticut's prison population went from being one of the nation's fastest-growing to one experiencing a more rapid decline than almost any other state. Crime rates in Connecticut also dropped during this period, faster than they were falling in the nation overall.²¹

- **Data-driven analyses.** State leaders engaged the Council of State Governments to examine prison admissions and releases, determine explanations for the growth of the state's prison population and generate policy options. Data indicated a high recidivism rate, driven in part by large numbers of parole and probation violators, and that a majority of ex-offenders were returning to a handful of communities upon their release. Analyses showed that these neighborhoods also received a disproportionate share of the state's unemployment insurance, TANF and food stamps.²² Additionally, as a member of the Reentry Mapping Network, the city of Hartford, with the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council, analyzed the challenges ex-offenders face in securing employment. This research was used to promote the coordination of services to address ex-offenders' multiple needs.²³
- **Justice reinvestment.** In 2004, policymakers cancelled the state's contract with the Virginia Department of Corrections, yielding \$30 million in annual savings. The state reinvested \$13 million of those savings in community-based strategies to reduce recidivism. Two innovative programs—the [Technical Violations Unit and the Probation Transition Program](#)—were established to provide intensive services, including employment and housing assistance, to reintegrating ex-offenders.²⁴ Funds were also reinvested to hire 96 new probation officers, which led to a reduction in caseloads from approximately 160 in January 2004 to approximately 100 in June 2005.²⁵
- **State reentry plan.** The state's reinvestment effort was paired with legislative requirement for the state to development a comprehensive reentry plan. See [Connecticut's 2010 state reentry strategy](#).

²¹ "Public Safety, Public Spending: Forecasting America's Prison Population 2007-2011." The Pew Public Safety Performance Project. 2007. [Available online](#).

²² "Connecticut Case Study." Pew Center on the States. 2007. [Available online](#).

²³ G. Thomas Kingsley and Nancy G. La Vigne. "Information and the Challenge of Prisoner Reentry." Urban Institute. 2004. [Available online](#).

²⁴ "Connecticut Implements Justice Reinvestment Strategy to Manage Prison Growth and Generate Savings." Reentry Policy Council. 2006. [Available online](#).

²⁵ "Public Safety, Public Spending: Forecasting America's Prison Population 2007-2011." The Pew Public Safety Performance Project. 2007. [Available online](#).

Success Story: Connecticut continued...

- **Workforce development.**²⁶ Connecticut's STRIDE Program is a state-funded transitional workforce development program that serves men and women in two state correctional institutes both before and after their release. The curriculum and post-release services are collaboratively designed by state legislators, the state's Departments of Correction and Labor and the Department of Social Services' Welfare to Work Initiative and Support Enforcement Services to focus on employment while considering the other challenges facing reintegrating ex-offenders. On average, 7 percent of STRIDE participants re-offend, compared to 39 percent of ex-offenders statewide.
- **Lifting bars to employment.** In 2006, [Connecticut HB 5846](#) created "provisional pardons" to remove bars to licensing and other discrimination against ex-offenders by private employers.²⁷
- **Infoline for ex-offenders.** Ex-offenders can call 2-1-1 from any phone in Connecticut to obtain information about e-offender programs and support, employment assistance, education and literacy training, transitional housing and health and mental health care.²⁸

²⁶ Quinebaug Valley Community College STRIDE Program. [Benefits and Program Costs](#).

²⁷ Nathan Newman. "Ex-Prisoner Reentry and Reintegration." Progressive States Network. 2007. [Available online](#).

²⁸ United Way of Connecticut: Community Re-entry Services for Ex-Offenders. [Available online](#).

IMPLEMENTATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND FINANCING

How can you ensure and sustain success?

Implementation

Because of the variety in proven interventions, states and communities have leeway to find programs that suit local values, opportunities and budgets. The key is to select strategies that have documented effectiveness, assure that they are implemented well and recognize the critical importance of a strong commitment to continuous program improvement.

- **Match expectations with sufficient resources.** Be clear about the goals, purpose and target audience for specific programs. Provide sufficient resources to ensure fidelity to the evidence-based model or modify expectations to accommodate variances.
- **Identifying barriers.** Effective policy development requires the identification of factors that may impede effective implementation.
- **Make provisions for broad-based input.** When involvement will increase the likelihood that the needs of children and families are being met by the policy, engage community stakeholders (children and youth, parents, schools, service providers, faith leaders and community groups) in implementation.
- **Support local capacity and communication.** Provide technical assistance, monitoring and oversight to local programs and agencies. Create opportunities for local-to-local communication, best practice sharing and local input on state policy decisions.
- **Support ongoing evaluation** and continuous program improvement.

Program Guidance

The United States Department of Labor provides several resources to assist in the implementation of programs and policy to support reintegration efforts, including: [Mentoring Ex-Prisoners: A Guide for Prisoner Reentry Programs](#).

Accountability

Evaluation is essential for successful policy implementation and to ensure intended outcomes.

Accountability requires determining whether programs are implemented correctly, the right programs and strategies are used, progress is measured appropriately and children and families are benefiting. This is established through both monitoring results (what we are trying to accomplish) and monitoring performance (how we tried to accomplish it).

- **Monitoring Results.** Through data, other information and consultation, it is possible to determine if the results we set out to achieve for children and families have been attained. By reexamining the selected indicators we can measure our progress toward the desired result.
- **Monitoring Performance.** Oversight requires policy-makers to determine if policy objectives have been achieved by focusing attention on the performance of specific programs or agencies. This involves reviewing individual programs and their impact on the lives of the people the program is designed to serve.
- **Assign responsibility for realistic outcomes.** Responsibility for outcomes should be designated based on the appropriate roles, resources and capacity of public and private stakeholders.
- **Establish oversight bodies** that consistently review key actions by state agencies.
- **Measure and report progress** to stakeholders and the community. Require public availability of data to allow administrators, policymakers and the public to measure the state's progress on key outcomes.

Considering Co-Investment

Are we consulting with appropriate experts, advocates and constituents?

Are we ensuring that families being consulted and that their views and experiences are being considered?

Considering Racial Equity:

Does this policy take into account differences in cultures and community norms?

Will/Is this policy improving racial equity?

Financing Options

In order to ensure that state policies are sustainable it is important to consider ways to both maximize federal resources and to utilize public-private partnerships. To that end, there are several opportunities to support state efforts to promote workforce strategies for reintegrating ex-offenders. For example:

Maximize Federal Funds.

The [Federal Bonding Program](#) provides Fidelity Bonds that guarantee honesty for “at-risk,” hard-to-place job seekers as an incentive to employers. The bonds cover the first six months of employment. There is no cost to the job applicant or the employer. In most states the bonds are made available through the state agency responsible for workforce matters. **New York** State’s Department of Labor has participated in the program for several years and uses their [program](#) to help secure employment for reintegrating ex-offenders.

The [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#) (WOTC) is a federal tax credit incentive provided to private-sector businesses for hiring individuals who have consistently faced barriers to employment. The main objective is to enable the employees to gradually move from economic dependency into self-sufficiency, while the participating employers are compensated by being able to reduce their federal income tax liability. **California’s** [Employment Development Department](#) uses the Work Opportunity Tax Credit to assist in employment for ex-offenders who are looking for jobs within one-year of their release from prison.

Utilize Public-Private Partnerships.

One of the largest public-private partnerships is the [Justice Reinvestment Initiative](#). The Justice Reinvestment Initiative is a data-driven strategy for policymakers to reduce spending on corrections, increase public safety and improve the conditions in the neighborhoods to which most recently-released offenders return. The strategy includes steps to: analyze the prison population and spending in the communities to which people in prison often return; provide policymakers with options to generate savings and increase public safety; quantify savings and reinvest in select high-stakes communities and measure the impact and enhance accountability. The initiative is in the process of identifying other states to add to the select number of jurisdictions currently receiving technical assistance. For example, state policymakers in [Texas](#) recently shifted \$241 million from prison construction to treatment and diversion programs that would reduce the prison population.

The Department of Justice has prioritized supporting public/private partnerships. One example of that commitment is the [Weed and Seed](#) initiative sponsored by the [Community Capacity Development Office](#). Weed and Seed is a comprehensive multiagency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention and community revitalization. Weed and Seed sites have large numbers of returning offenders, and Weed and Seed initiatives include competitive federal grant dollars, private funding and community level participation. Law enforcement agencies and prosecutors cooperate in addressing violent crime while partnering with public agencies and community-based private organizations that collaborate to provide human services (including prevention, intervention, treatment and neighborhood restoration programs) to the community. There is also community member involvement through community policing. **Florida** is administering 21 Weed and Seed sites in communities including South Miami, Fort Meyers and Homestead.

FINANCING PRINCIPLES: What Does It Take to Invest in Results?

While the above are financing options to specifically promote workforce strategies for reintegrating ex-offenders there are some universal guidelines around funding that should be considered with any results-based public policy initiative.

A compelling vision. Powerful visions – such as clear and compelling goals for improving children’s lives – are magnets for resources.

Aligning financing with results. The goal is to invest in policies, programs and practices that research and experience indicate will contribute to better results for children. Policymakers can act to ensure that desired results drive financing, instead of available funding driving policy and programs.

Effective use of existing resources. The number one financing priority is to use resources that you already have to pay for better results. Fiscally responsible approaches that are accountable to taxpayers focus on spending existing funds in more effective ways.

Packaging financing. No single financing approach will support the change required to achieve ambitious targets for improving children’s lives. The best results are accomplished with financing packages that draw from a wide array of resources, instead of getting stuck on a single funding stream or financing approach.

Leveraging resources. Even small amounts of money can be leveraged to have positive impact. For example, grants from foundations or the federal government can provide seed money for shifting investments.

Local-state-federal-private financing partnerships. Federal policies, funding streams and regulations have an enormous impact on the well-being of state residents. Likewise, communities are dramatically affected by both state and federal financing. While cost shifting across levels of government can have dire consequences, carefully crafted agreements developed in partnership can provide powerful incentives for change.