



2009 Progress Report

on Community Outcomes,
Indicators and Strategies



Healthy People

Young People Succeeding

Stable Families

Positive Living for Special Populations

Safe and Supportive Neighborhoods

Economic Self-Sufficiency



**Montgomery County Family
and Children First Council**



ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Ex-Offender Reentry Task Force Roster

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Montgomery County Board of Commissioners

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U.S. District Court

Children and Families Work Group Co-Chairs

Gayle Bullard

Montgomery County Job and Family Services – Children Services Division

Rev. Robert Bishop

Dayton Christian Center

Continuum of Care Work Group Co-Chairs

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Miami Valley Career Technology Center

Christy Norvell

Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services

Employment Work Group Co-Chairs

Cheryll Bennett

Federal Public Defender

Heath MacAlpine

Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services

Housing Work Group Co-Chairs

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Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority

Chief Quincy Pope, Sr.

Trotwood Police Department

Legal Issues/Advocacy Work Group Co-Chairs

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John White

Dayton Circles Campaign

Pre/Post Release Service Work Group Co-Chairs

Brigid Slaton

Adult Parole Authority

Angela Lee

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Technical Work Group Co-Chairs

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Faith Based Caucus Chair

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Montgomery County Prosecutor

Chief John Sedlak

Miamisburg Police Department

STAFF:**Joyce Gerren**

Human Services Consultant

Gayle Ingram

Clerk of Commission – Board of County Commissioners

John Theobald

Montgomery County Commission Assistant

Montgomery County Community-Wide Ex-Offender Reentry Task Force Report

The vision of the Montgomery County Ex-Offender Reentry Task Force is to reduce recidivism in Montgomery County by 50% in five years, to remove artificial barriers to reentry and to improve the opportunities of ex-offenders to successfully reintegrate into the community.

After nearly two years, dozens of meetings and hundreds of hours of work and research – including examining numerous best practice models across the country and forging key partnerships – the work of the Task Force is almost complete. The Task Force's "Five Year Strategic Plan" is expected to be published in early 2010. One of the primary recommendations is the creation of a permanent Reentry Policy Board to direct the reentry effort in Montgomery County. The most significant goal of The Plan is to reduce recidivism by 50% in five years.

While this goal might seem lofty, it is doable. The Task Force recognizes that it needs the support of the people and businesses in the community in order for the initiative to be successful.

In December, 2008 the Ohio General Assembly passed House Bill 130 which offers a framework for long-term investment in the state's economy by addressing legal and other barriers to employment for persons released from prison. A key component of the bill is the removal of non-relevant prohibitions or collateral sanctions to employment. The legislation states that a felony conviction does not by itself constitute grounds for denying employment. Additional barriers exist and there is much work to do to remove some of the remaining collateral sanctions.

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

In mid-2009, due in large part to the efforts of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC), The Montgomery County Community-Wide Ex-Offender Reentry Task Force began an effort to set up regular communications with our counterparts in Lucas County. Although Montgomery and Lucas Counties approach reentry differently, both counties are of similar size and at similar points in their reentry efforts. Montgomery County participants found interesting Lucas County's efforts in providing legal clinics for individuals with felony records. The clinics are held in cooperation with their Legal Aid Society. Recently, Legal Aid in Ohio had experienced some merger of offices and efforts. To our great advantage, Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc., was one of the merged areas and, as a result, now serves both the Toledo and Dayton regions. This allows Montgomery County to access the experience and resources of Lucas County's successful model of legal clinics for ex-offenders. Legal Aid presented the Montgomery County Task Force with a proposal to conduct three legal clinics as a demonstration project.

The Task Force approved the request and partnered with Legal Aid to fund the initial effort. In the Fall of 2009, three Ex-Offender Reentry Legal Clinics were held at the Old Courthouse in downtown Dayton. This location was chosen in part due to its easy accessibility by public transportation and ability to provide private areas for consultations. The goal of the clinics is to provide legal guidance or assistance to returning citizens in the areas of warrant identification, expungement, child support modification, driver's license reinstatement and housing.

Earlier in 2009, Montgomery and Lucas Counties partnered with ODRC on a Federal Second Chance Act mentoring grant application, which was not funded. However, ODRC so believed in this demonstration model, which would evaluate one-on-one mentoring as practiced in Lucas County and group mentoring as utilized in Montgomery County, that it funded the demonstration project with their Alien Assistance Grant Program.

Montgomery County Mentoring Demonstration Project

Montgomery County chose The National Circles Campaign (Circles) and Think Tank, Inc., to carry out the demonstration project. The Circles Campaign is a community engagement, high-impact strategy for building relationships across class, race and cultural lines. A Circle consists of a person who is voluntarily participating in a long-term mentoring relationship with persons from a different economic class, race and/or culture.

Once the returning citizen elects to participate in Circles, leadership training inside the prison will begin within 90 days of the date of release, consisting of a curriculum named "Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World." The 15-module curriculum assesses individual resources, connects the individuals to available resources in the community, and assists him or her in developing a long-term plan for successful reentry which will be implemented upon returning home.



For the last 45 days before release, the returning citizen will be attending leadership training twice a week and meeting weekly with his or her primary Ally, a member of the mentoring team, who develops the relationships, facilitates the relationship building with other Allies, and coordinates the efforts of the Circle. This intensive schedule will equip the inmate with the necessary relationships, resources and objective reasoning skills so vital for successful integration in the community.

Upon release, the returning citizen will begin working with the Primary Ally and 2-4 additional Allies to build relationships with the community and implement the reentry plan. The returning citizen will also be working with a Circles Coach and a probation officer, as well as attending weekly community meetings. The Allies will be challenging stereotypes and biases, regarding ex-offenders, as well as becoming advocates for ex-offenders in the community.

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Progress of Task Force

By the end of July 2009, all seven work groups completed recommendations and presented them to the full Task Force for input. The seven work groups are as follows:

- Children & Families Work Group
 - Continuum of Care Work Group
 - Employment Work Group
 - Housing Work Group
 - Legal Issues/Advocacy Work Group
 - Pre/Post Release Services Work Group
 - Technical Work Group
- The Writing Team is currently drafting a comprehensive plan that sets achievable goals and recommendations for successfully rehabilitating and reintegrating ex-offenders within Montgomery County.
 - A Reentry Marketing and Education campaign is being developed, with videos and written materials produced for later presentations to the community, in order to achieve community acceptance of the necessity of successful reentry.
 - An Implementation Team is designing the Montgomery County Office of Reentry to take the recommendations in the Plan and turn them into reality.
 - The Task Force partnered with its Reentry Faith Based Caucus to support a Faith Based Reentry Conference in October, 2009.
 - The Task Force made a volunteer site visit to the Clark County, Nevada, Office of Reentry in October, 2009.
- The Task Force submitted three grant applications in 2009 to assist in funding:
 - Department of Justice- Prisoner Reentry Demonstration Grant – **Second Chance Act.** Collaborated with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) and Lucas County Reentry Task Force for an offender reentry mentoring program.
 - **Edward Byrne Memorial JAG** Program. Collaborated with Goodwill/Easter Seals to develop and implement a model ex-offender Specialized Employment Center (SEC) to increase the employment rate and decrease the recidivism rate of ex-offenders within Montgomery County.
 - Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) **Climate Showcase Communities** grant. Montgomery County proposed to incorporate a unique approach to ex-offender employment and entrepreneurship through locally grown and distributed food in its TransPlant Project.
 - The Task Force is currently preparing two additional grant applications to fund the implementation of this initiative:
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): to initiate mental health and drug and alcohol abuse treatment for ex-offenders in Montgomery County. Wright State University is the lead agency in the grant application.
 - The Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS): to implement a program to support the recommendations of the reentry strategic plan. The application will assist the startup of the Montgomery County reentry effort.

During 2009, the Task Force was busy forging relationships with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, the U.S. Departments of Labor, Justice and Commerce, Legal Aid of Southwest Ohio, and many others, to support the goals and objectives of the reentry initiative and to secure public and business buy-in of the Task Force recommendations.

In 2010, the Reentry Task Force will publish its final report, create a permanent policy board, hire staff, and begin the task of implementing the report's recommendations, with the goal of reducing recidivism in Montgomery County by 50% within five years.

