2015 was a very important year for the Montgomery County Office of Ex-Offender Reentry as it completed its first 5-year strategic plan. As the review below indicates, 11 of the 17 recommendations were completed and the remaining recommendations are ongoing activities.

2010 Reentry Task Force Recommendations and Status Update:

1. Develop a One Stop Center as a single point of entry, assessment, and linkage to comprehensive services for all ex-offenders in Montgomery County.

   Complete: The Welcome One-Stop Reentry Center was established in May 2010 to provide comprehensive services for all ex-offenders in Montgomery County. The program was primarily funded via Second Chance Act grant funding (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds). As a result of successful outcomes and the elimination Second Chance Act grant funding, program funding has been secured by Montgomery County to support the Center on an ongoing basis.

2. Conduct a community-wide outreach, engagement and advocacy campaign to create awareness of the community-wide benefits of successful reentry, generate acceptance of ex-offenders, inspire community action, and advocate for necessary legislation and legislative changes.

   Ongoing: Community-wide presentations and meetings have been conducted monthly to promote reentry awareness, education, and engagement among internal and external stakeholders to generate support for individuals with criminal histories and to promote positive change. A Speaker’s Bureau is currently in development.

3. Through the Montgomery County Commissioners, establish a Reentry Policy Board and a Montgomery County Office of Ex-Offender Reentry (MCOER).

   Complete: The Montgomery County Reentry Policy Board was established in October 2010. It provides oversight to the Office of Reentry and promotes plans and policies to reduce recidivism by 50% in Montgomery County which is consistent with the “Blueprint for Reducing Recidivism in Montgomery County,” the MCOER strategic plan.

4. Create a county-wide collaborative that includes government and private sector service providers as well as other community stakeholders in order to serve effectively the ex-offender population.

   Complete: The Montgomery County Reentry Collaborative was established in 2011, and has evolved from 23 to over 90 organizational representatives and community stakeholders. The Collaborative promotes reentry partner networking, provides organizational support via resource building, and fosters long-term sustainability through leveraged partnerships. Collaborative partners work with the MCOER to provide programs and services that minimize barriers to successful reentry, promote a reduction in recidivism, and share evidence-based strategies to enhance program standards.
5. Establish a Memorandum of Understanding with the Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services/Child Support Enforcement Agency to develop consistent policies applicable to incarcerated individuals and ex-offenders with active support orders.

Complete: MCOER and Job and Family Services Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) are working collaboratively to provide educational alternatives and options promoting child support accountability. A CSEA representative is assigned as a point of contact to manage the returning reentry client caseload. The person is routinely contacted to connect with MCOER services and programs. In addition, CSEA representatives actively engage in Reentry Career Alliance Academy workshops to foster acceptance, educate clients regarding child support, and assist those with child support orders who are willing to take steps toward personal responsibility, accountability, and support.

6. Engage with the Homeless Solutions Policy Board, Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority, and private local property owners to partner in the development of additional transitional and supportive housing options in Montgomery County.

Complete / Ongoing: Montgomery County Human Services Planning & Development’s Assistant Director serves as co-chair of the Housing Sub-Committee, ensuring strong coordination with other housing programs. With an active committee, a housing strategy has been developed, community housing education events have been a success, and a MCOER housing resource list has been published. Access to transitional housing, especially for women, remains a challenge but there has been significant progress engaging public and private housing organizations in an effort to remove barriers to housing.

7. Create a variety of opportunities for each Montgomery County offender sentenced to an Ohio prison to work with reentry professionals and staff from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC).

Ongoing: MCOER staff routinely participate in opportunities to engage with inmates, ex-offenders, and ODRC reentry professionals. Ohio prison invitations to Reentry/Provider Fairs, Job Forums, and Family Focus Forums have afforded staff the opportunity to meet with returning citizens in preparation for their return to Montgomery County.

8. Publish a comprehensive resource guide so that incarcerated offenders and ex-offenders can access up-to-date reentry information and resources.

Complete / Ongoing: The MCOER has published an online resource guide via support of the Reentry Collaborative. In addition, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction maintains a Making Use of Services Can Lead to Empowerment - MUSCLE resource guide. Both guides are available on the Montgomery County website. www.mcohio.org/departments/ex-offender_reentry


Complete: Through the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS), along with a Reentry/Supervision Accountability Plan, every returning citizen in Ohio is assigned a pre-release plan. Upon release and intake with the MCOER, the plan is reviewed for updates or, if necessary, completed at the local level.
10. Partner with education and training resources within the community to provide comprehensive skill building and educational opportunities for the reentering population.

Complete / Ongoing: MCOER’s “Reentry Career Alliance Academy” (RCAA) is Montgomery County’s primary reentry training and education resource. Participants receive 54 hours of core training and educational resources. Partners in the academy include OhioMeansJobs workforce training division and members of the Reentry Collaborative. A dedicated Reentry Training Center opened in 2014.

11. Clearly define relationships between service providers, county agencies, state partners, and the Office of Reentry through the utilization of Memoranda of Understanding.

Complete: Strong relationships have been formed and defined among the various departments and agencies, largely through the Reentry Collaborative (service providers and county agencies), the Ohio Association of Local Reentry Coalitions (OALRC), and the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition (OERS). Formal agreements are not needed at this time.

12. Identify and utilize transitional jobs so ex-offenders can re-establish their work history.

Complete / Ongoing: As the job market has improved and relationships with traditional employers have been formed and increased, the use of transitional jobs has diminished. The Office of Reentry staff has determined that preparing clients directly to enter the workforce with the skills and training needed to be successful is a better model for Montgomery County.

13. Remove barriers to the Ohio Driver’s License reinstatement for ex-offenders.

Complete / Ongoing: While Ex-Offenders still struggle to pay accumulated fines and fees, access to acceptable identification through ODRC and cooperation with the Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) have removed many barriers to license reinstatement. In addition, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles License Reinstatement Fee Payment Plan was instituted in 2013, and provides eligible reentry participants with the opportunity to restore license privileges contingent upon monthly payments.

14. Provide access to legal services for ex-offenders.

Ongoing: Returning citizens currently have adequate access to legal services through the Dayton Bar Association, Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project, Wesley Community Services Legal Clinic, ABLE/LAWO, and other community-based programs and initiatives. Legal education is also part of the RCAA through a partnership with the Thurgood Marshall Law Society. It is the ultimate goal for the Legal Sub-Committee to develop a legal clinic for reentry participants to increase and enhance their access to legal tools that may minimize barriers to reentry.

15. Conduct appropriate lobbying that will advance and support successful reentry for ex-offenders.

Ongoing: Consistent and ongoing lobbying on the local, state and national level will be a requirement of the Reentry program for the duration of its existence.
16. Remove barriers to visitation to promote ongoing connection to family, friends, and the community.

Ongoing: MCOER continues to develop strategies to promote ongoing family connections statewide in partnership with ODRC. While local planning efforts are ongoing, statewide ODRC efforts have resulted in advocacy and a contractual agreement with JPAY.com, a service that keeps families connected at cost through video visitation with their incarcerated loved ones.

17. Conduct a concerted education and lobbying campaign for a systematic review and response from the Ohio legislature regarding unjust collateral sanctions.

Ongoing: With the support of the Ohio Justice and Policy Center and statewide advocates, two new certificates have been created under Ohio law that remove criminal-record-based barriers to employment, without erasing or hiding the criminal record itself. Certificates of Achievement and Employability (“CAEs”; created by House Bill 86 [2011]) and Certificates of Qualification for Employment (“CQEs”, created by Senate Bill 337 [2012]) are now available to eligible applicants. With the passage of both pieces of legislation, various collateral sanctions barriers have been removed from the Ohio Revised Code. However, a review of the remaining collateral sanctions is ongoing.

In preparation for the new strategic plan, each Policy Board Subcommittee was encouraged to meet and to identify goals, priorities and completed projects. In 2016, the Reentry Policy Board and the Reentry staff will publish a new Strategic Plan. Each Reentry Policy Board Subcommittee has made significant progress with new and existing projects and initiatives. Below is the organizational chart for the overall Reentry effort:
Montgomery County Office of Ex-Offender Reentry

The Office of Reentry accomplished much during its fifth year in operation.

The Office of Reentry focus remains on providing a “Helping hand to those that want to help themselves.” The graphic to the left identifies the steps necessary to go from conviction and incarceration to successful community reintegration. Reentry staff created and implemented the Reentry Career Alliance Academy (RCAA). In a continued effort to minimize client barriers, Reentry staff integrated voluntary pre-employment drug screening into the orientation intake process of the RCAA to improve process efficiency. The RCAA also involves an accelerated Offender Workforce Development curriculum. It is an opportunity to connect returning citizens to the nearly 100 Reentry Collaborative partners, resources and the local community. For example, RCAA graduates are linked directly to an Ohio Means Jobs Staffing Specialist. The nine-day RCAA model consists of 27 workshops conducted during the first three weeks of every month.

Amy Piner, OALRC Treasurer; Gary Mohr, ODRC Director; and Jamie Gee, OALRC Vice President.
Financial support for services to benefit RCAA clients came from the Dayton Chapter of The Links, Incorporated and the Ohio Credit Union Foundation (OCUF). Day Air Credit Union was instrumental in securing the OCUF funding. The partnership with Day Air Credit Union was highlighted in a December 2015 WHIO media segment.

**Community Partnership Development** – In 2015, the Office of Reentry contracted with the University of Dayton to target the needs of the homeless reentry population through the Behavioral Activation Project initiated and operated by UD graduate and undergraduate students and the St. Vincent DePaul homeless shelters. This shared contractual collaboration funded a UD consultant housed within the Office of Reentry to bridge the connection to clients challenged with immediate housing barriers. The partnership has provided valuable insight in the decision-making process and prioritization of needs surrounding this specialized population.

The Office of Reentry contracted with Think Tank, Inc. to acquire an AmeriCorps VISTA Community Partnership Navigator to build the capacity and resources of the Office of Reentry. This partnership has provided the Office of Reentry an opportunity to engage in the Think Tank, Inc. planning and development process (with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction) to provide direct evidence-based practices and experiences to its “Reentry Simulation” model. Reentry staff supported the efforts of this initiative which provides a hands-on reintegration experience highlighting the challenges of returning citizens.

On a statewide level, the Office of Reentry hosted the first retreat for the Ohio Association of Local Reentry Coalitions (OALRC). The reentry coalitions are composed of members from communities throughout the State of Ohio. Office of Reentry staff continue to serve as leaders on the OALRC Executive Committee.

### Ex-Offender Reentry Policy Board Roster

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| CO-CHAIR | The Honorable Walter Rice (United States District Court) Jamiyl Al-Haniyf (Estate Building Management) |
| Khadijah Ali (Circle of Vision Keepers) | Rabbi Bernard Barsky (Beth Abraham Synagogue) Jane Benner (Community Leader) |
| Cheryll Bennett (Federal Public Defender - Southern District of Ohio) | Chief Richard Biehl (Dayton Police Department) |
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