



Questions & Answers

1. What is reentry?

This term applies to the broad array of strategies, programs and services designed to assist offenders in successfully returning to their communities after release from prison or community corrections facilities.

2. Why is reentry important?

Effective reentry programs and services that help offenders reintegrate into society can result in lower recidivism and return rates, less crime, fewer new victims, safer communities and reduced growth in corrections spending.

3. What are typical elements of reentry?

Reentry usually includes a comprehensive case management approach that begins with an offender's placement in a correctional facility. Case management plans are developed after determining offenders' needs. Reentry programming is intended to help offenders acquire life skills needed to succeed in the community and become law-abiding citizens. Reentry services include prerelease centers, drug treatment programs, vocational training, education, work programs, employment and housing assistance, and mentoring.

4. What is the goal of the Montana Reentry Initiative and the implementation team?

This project will analyze existing reentry strategies, programs and services in Montana and develop a comprehensive plan that improves coordination among those elements in order to create a more seamless and effective network of reentry assistance that benefit offenders and society alike. It also is intended to educate public and private stakeholders on the importance of successful reentry

as an issue for communities to address, since about 95 percent of offenders eventually return to their communities.

5. What is the history of this initiative?

In 2009, MSU-Billings began working with female offenders after the college obtained a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to provide educational services to female offenders at Montana Women's Prison and Passages Prerelease Center. A partnership between MSUB and the Department of Corrections led to development of a strategy to provide additional services. The Billings Area Reentry Task Force (BARTF) was formed. Representatives from the MSUB, the Department of Corrections, Passages, Billings Job Service office and the Billings community began meeting to discuss better ways to coordinate reentry efforts for female offenders in the Billings area. The group, with 23 members from 16 local organizations, meets monthly to share information and resources to better coordinate reentry efforts. BARTF's focuses on employment, families and relationships, and housing issues that are identified as offender needs. <http://www.msubillings.edu/BARTF/index.htm>

6. What happened next?

In spring 2010, MSUB and BARTF applied for a federal grant through the Montana Department of Labor and Industry. The agency received a \$165,000 award in September 2010. The "New Path New Life" project targets the high-risk female offenders leaving Montana Women's Prison and entering the Billings community. The project, with an emphasis on Native Americans, focuses on offenders meeting at least one of three criteria: more than return to prison, at least 26 years old or within three years of release. The goal of the project is to reduce recidivism by 50 percent in the targeted group (<http://www.msubillings.edu/BARTF/Templates/BARTF%20Fact%20sheet.pdf>).

7. How does "New Path New Life" work?

Offenders are assessed to determine their risk in four key areas: housing, employment, relationships and healthy living. Those considered high risk in three of these areas and meeting at least one of the criteria are offered the chance to participate in the program. Each develops a reentry plan with the help of a case management team and a reentry navigator. The team and navigator remain with the women through incarceration, prerelease and community supervision. The team is made up of an institutional probation and probation officer, Job Service representatives, reentry manager, prerelease staff and others. Once the offender reaches prerelease, the institutional probation and parole officer transitions is replaced on the time by a community officer.

8. What is the status of BARTF now?

In September 2011, BARTF received two more grants, one an extension of the initial demonstration grant in the amount of \$293,000 to continue providing reentry services to an additional 30 offenders, and a \$150,000 mentoring grant for which another \$150,000 can be sought to continue the program into a second year.

9. How does BARTF relate to the Montana Reentry Initiative?

It is seen as a pilot project for what hopefully can be duplicated statewide. The Billings community understands the importance of successful reentry for their community. Information obtained from the Billings project can be used in other communities to explain the importance of reentry, the impact on the communities and how the Department of Corrections, other state agencies and local officials and organizations can work together to build safer communities.

10. What is your role on the implementation team?

To bring your expertise from within and beyond corrections to this important effort, creating a collaboration of state agencies and offices that will ensure all offenders leaving a correctional facility have an opportunity for the kind of assistance that will make the difference between success and failure, and between being an asset and a threat to their communities. Members are expected to identify resources state agencies have to assist in the reentry process.

11. What is the process the team will use to achieve its goals?

The team, at its first meeting in August, prioritized its seven top goals. Members will begin assessing what is needed to achieve the goals in order of priority. In the end, the team anticipates developing a plan for implementing all of the goals by identifying the assets and barriers that exist, how to measure success and the resources needed to reach each goal.