



Marion County

OREGON

February 27, 2013

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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Representative Jeff Barker, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Barker and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2450. I also want to give special thanks to Representative Kevin Cameron for introducing this bill on behalf of the Marion County Reentry Initiative. Representative Cameron serves on the local Marion County Reentry Council in addition to the state Governor's Reentry Council.

I apologize that I cannot be at the hearing in person. I am en route to Washington, D.C. to meet with our Congressional delegation and federal agency representatives in conjunction with the National Association of Counties legislative conference.

The Marion County Reentry Initiative, or MCRI, has achieved significant successes with the more than 600 individuals who return to Marion County from state prison each year. In addition to developing evidence-based employment, housing, and cognitive treatment programs with the goal of reduced recidivism, our MCRI team has begun to tackle a number of policy issues that have created barriers to serving this population.

House Bill 2450 was developed to address a need identified by our local partners. When individuals with serious physical or mental health conditions are released from prison, they often have difficulty getting medical or mental health care. The vast majority of clients are single men who are often not covered by the Oregon Health Plan or private insurance. And even as 2014 approaches with the prospect of broader Medicaid coverage, access to care will likely continue to be a challenge.

The Salem Free Clinics are operated by a faith-based organization in Salem. The clinics rely heavily on volunteer or retired (or both) practitioners who donate their services to serve people with significant needs and limited incomes. Director Todd Gould spoke passionately to us about the struggles encountered by clinic staff as they reach out to recruit volunteers. The most immediate barrier to the practitioner is regaining a license, particularly if more than a year has passed since the person has practiced medicine. A second barrier is concerns about tort liability and the cost of insurance.

The MCRI team initially considered ORS 30.302 which extends tort claim coverage to certain retired physicians under county health departments. Marion County Counsel provided a legal opinion dated October 30, 2011 which stated that ORS 30.302 has apparently never been used by any county, and that "concerns from both Risk Management and Health Department ... may render this option infeasible; and, it is not clear that this would cover mental health services."

The MCRI team then convened representatives from relevant associations and legislative staff to discuss additional ideas. We learned about House Bill 4027 which had passed during the 2012 legislative session for "homeless individuals" and saw that it could possibly be applied to certain reentry clients, as written. However, only about half of people reentering Marion County from prison are deemed "homeless", and those individuals are not necessarily the same people with significant medical or mental health needs.

We reached out to Kathleen Haley, Executive Director of the Oregon Medical Board, who identified a number of administrative options that are already available for retired medical practitioners. However, these options were not readily known to the people representing the target population who had attended the prior meeting.

In response to this research, we proposed House Bill 2450 that does the following:

1. Adds "individuals who are under the supervision of a corrections officer" (this includes county parole and probation officers) to the client population defined in House Bill 4027 (2012). House Bill 4027 allows persons providing outreach services to homeless individuals immunity from civil liability. We believe that by adding reentry clients to the 4027 definition, it would better encompass services provided in volunteer clinics to reentry clients, such as services provided at Salem Free Clinics.
2. Requires relevant regulatory boards to make available information to the state Department of Corrections and to the county community corrections programs about programs that already exist for retired practitioners to become re-licensed so these practitioners can volunteer their services. We found that there are a number of viable options and believe that increased and improved communication and education could provide a path for practitioners who would like to become volunteers in clinics serving people with limited financial resources.

We understood that there were at least two workgroups addressing the broader issue of medical tort liability and chose not to become involved in that larger policy question. We recognize that while House Bill 2450 may not solve the entire problem, it is a solid step forward and a "tool in the toolbox" for our programs.

We appreciate the committee's consideration of House Bill 2450. We have included the attached brochure with information about the Marion County Reentry Initiative and our track record in serving this population.

Sincerely,



Janet Carlson
Commissioner



MCRI
MARION COUNTY
REENTRY INITIATIVE

Giving Adult Offenders a Second Chance

"Helping ex-offenders successfully integrate into the community is crime prevention. Crime prevention is a foundation for public safety." *Sheriff Jason Myers, Marion County Oregon*



Teaching People to Transition Successfully from Prison Back into their Communities

THE PROBLEM

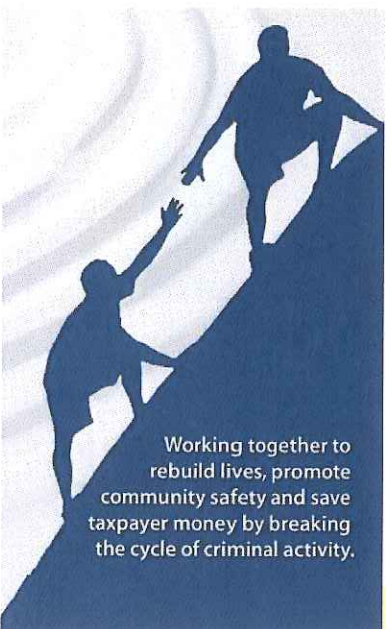


Marion County, Oregon has one of the highest prison admission rates in Oregon. More than 600 people return to the community annually from state prison in Marion County:

- Most have no job waiting
- Almost 50% are at medium or high risk to recidivate
- Almost 50% will be immediately homeless
- 60-70% have untreated substance abuse issues
- Almost all (90%) will return back to their home communities

Ending The Cycle of Crime

THE SOLUTION



Working together to rebuild lives, promote community safety and save taxpayer money by breaking the cycle of criminal activity.

THE MARION COUNTY REENTRY INITIATIVE

The Marion County Reentry Initiative (MCRI) is a collaborative effort involving community corrections, education, law enforcement and nonprofit agencies working together to rebuild lives, promote community safety and save taxpayer money by breaking the cycle of criminal activity.

MCRI provides adult ex-offenders with the following resources:

- Employment from local businesses
- Education from a local community college
- Housing, which is transitional, drug free and safe
- Mentoring from positive role models
- Transportation
- Family Strengthening



The Marion County Reentry initiative has served more than 1,600 ex-offenders since 2009. One of the primary goals of the MCRI is to *“Improve evidence-based practices to better assure successful offender re-integration, increase public safety, and reduce recidivism by 50% in five years”*. Recidivism in Oregon is defined as committing a new felony crime within three years of release. In 2009, Marion County’s overall recidivism rate for people entering into the community from incarceration was 26%; by 2012 it had fallen to 17%.

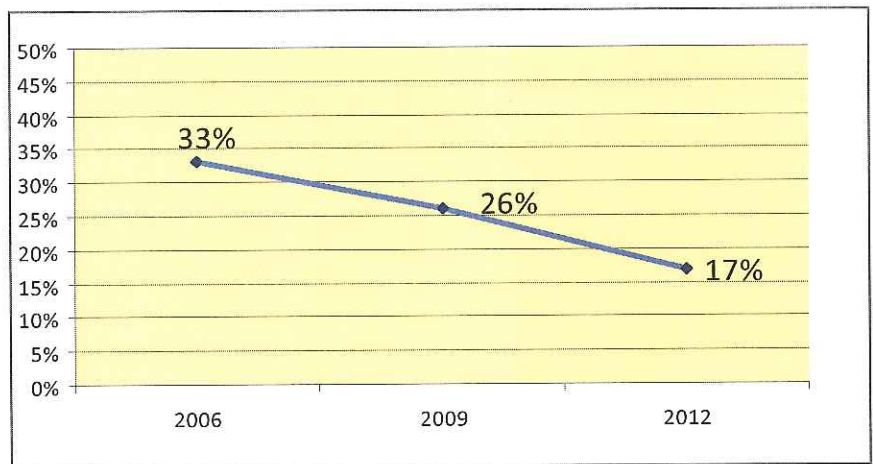
DECREASED RECIDIVISM RATES



*Recidivism rate declined from 26% in 2006 to 17% in 2012

*Recidivism is defined as a new felony conviction within three years of release or probation

Marion County Reentry Initiative
General Population Post-Prison Recidivism Rates 2006-2012

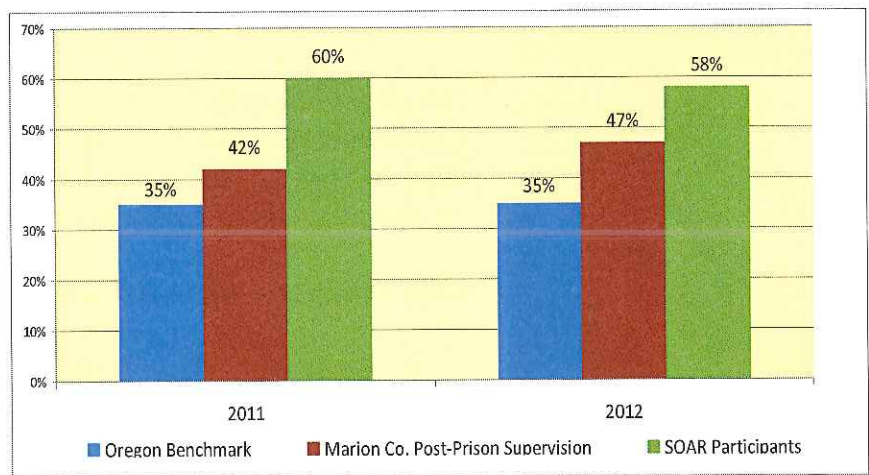


INCREASED EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT RATES



More Marion County post-prison supervision clients are employed or in school than the Oregon benchmark. Even more notable, a greater percentage of SOAR participants are employed or in school than the Oregon benchmark or the post-prison population.

Marion County Reentry Initiative
2011-12 Program Participants Employed &/or In School



In July 2012 Marion County became one of only seven agencies in the nation selected for federal funding by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance for renewed Second Chance Act Funds as a result of the MCRI. Marion County also became a participant of a national research study on offender/community reintegration programs.

SYSTEMIZED SUPPORT FOR EX-OFFENDERS

REACH-INS

- Reentry for a MCRI client begins 180 days prior to prison release with a “reach in.” Local corrections officers and representatives from nonprofit agencies go into the prisons to discuss housing, employment, pro-social activities and other relevant issues with an inmate preparing for release. The “no show” rate for inmates connecting with their parole officers immediately after release fell from 30% to 2% when prison reach-ins were instituted.

RELEASE

- Upon release from prison, each inmate is assigned a Marion County Parole Officer who is trained in evidence-based practices. Clients also participate in evidence-based assessments to determine their risk levels and motivation to make positive life changes.

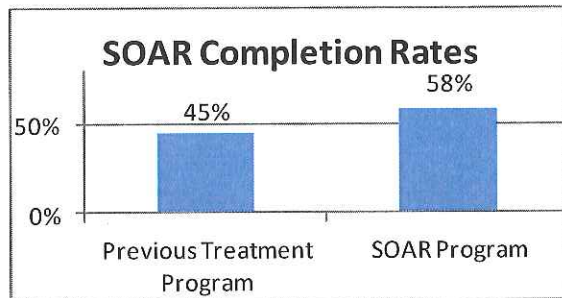
SUPPORT

- With guidance from the Marion County Parole & Probation Division, clients get help navigating the systems in place to meet needs with health care, housing, education, employment, and social services. Through MCRI efforts, reentry clients can get help in a number of ways:
 - **De Muniz Pine Street Resource Center** - Access to a multitude of resources, ranging from employment, transportation, housing, and basic needs, to family reconciliation, veterans affairs, and disability services.
 - **Mid Valley Mentors Reentry Services** – Pre- and post-release mentoring
 - **Marion County Sheriff’s Office** – Cognitive, motivational, and treatment programs to help individuals increase their readiness for change and make positive life choices. (Approximately 60% of individuals on supervision need cognitive and motivational programming.)
 - **Marion County Sheriff’s Office Employment Services** – Support for those ready to seek employment.
 - **Chemeketa Community College Education Assistance** – Support for those seeking continuing education.
 - **Job Growers** – A nonprofit entity offering employment services, scholarships, and on-the-job training support.
 - **Salem Free Clinics** – Medical help for severely mentally ill clients and those requiring dental services.
 - **Student Opportunity for Achieving Results (SOAR)** –This 12-week, collaboratively-delivered wraparound program meets four days per week for six hours each day on the campus of Chemeketa Community College. After program completion, graduates participate in another 12 weeks of post-SOAR programming to help them integrate new skills into daily living.



STUDENT OPPORTUNITY FOR ACHIEVING RESULTS (SOAR)

SOAR is an intensive 12-week treatment program which encompasses elements of intensive supervision, motivation, cognitive behavioral applications, substance abuse treatment, family reunification, pro-social skill building, financial planning, “success based” case planning, case management and education and employment assistance for ex-offenders. The recidivism for SOAR graduates is 8.5%



SOAR graduates is 8.5%

SOAR is delivered on the Chemeketa Community College Campus in Salem, Oregon and serves up to 30 participants at a time. Two parole and probation deputies are assigned to work with SOAR participants. All SOAR participants must

have a current property crime charge or a history of property crimes. SOAR programming includes both professional and volunteer mentors, an in-house mental health specialist, an educational component, and a pro-social activities group. SOAR partners include the Marion County Health Department, Mid Valley Mentors, Pathfinders of Oregon, Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, and Chemeketa Community College.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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