



Sheriff®

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013 • VOLUME 65 • NUMBER 1

MOVE FORWARD IN 2013... GET CERTIFIED TODAY!

COURT SECURITY

HOMELAND SECURITY

JAIL OPERATIONS



NSA's Center for Public Safety CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

WWW.SHERIFFS.ORG/CPS

000110
10707
273245
3
NEWPORT NEWS VA 23607-4327
2501 WASHINGTON AVE FL 2
NEWPORT NEWS SHERIFF'S OFFICE 0069 /16245
KATHLEEN CAREY
258870
*****5-DIGIT 23607 MIX COMAIL

inside

Police Partnerships:
Sheriffs' Future?

Legal-Based Standards

NSA Annual Conference
2013

Newport News Sheriff's Office Takes A Progressive Approach

By Lt. Kathleen Carey, PIO, Newport News, VA Sheriff's Office

The November 2012 elections could lead to deliberations over the passage of progressive positions, whether on a local, state, or federal level. This could have a significant impact on efforts to help ex-offenders transition back into the community.



Prisoner Re-entry is Critical to Public Safety

Facts

Each year, 10,000 people are released from Virginia prisons or jails. National studies show that 70% will be back behind bars within three years of release. By comparison Virginia's recidivism rate is low at approximately 28%, according to a recently released Department of Corrections report. Nonetheless, those statistical numbers represent new victims. To defend against crime, there is a need to focus on effective prisoner re-entry strategies that prepare individuals to become productive members of society upon their release.

Over 90% of offenders are eventually freed and most return to their original hometown. It is only a small number who receive the death penalty, are sentenced to life without parole, or who die while imprisoned. The question becomes: How do we want them to come back? An ex-con with little transitional assistance is almost certain to re-offend creating more victims and generating more expenses. It costs approximately \$26,000 to house an inmate for one year at the Newport News City Jail. For every inmate who successfully transitions to civilian life, there is a significant cost savings to taxpayers.

Barriers

Housing, employment, transportation, and education have been identified as major obstacles in an ex-offender's quest to successfully return to society. There are also legal barriers.

Take for example the zoning ordinance in the City of Newport News that prohibits more than four unrelated adults from living in a single family dwelling. The restriction is designed to protect single family neighborhoods from someone purchasing homes and converting them into boarding houses. However, the rule's enforcement makes it difficult to create transitional housing.

Idle time is what got a number of men and women into trouble in the first place. If an ex-offender cannot find employment after being released from prison/jail, idle time will become their enemy. In turn, there is a likelihood that they will commit a new crime.

Acquiring adequate transportation is another barricade. An ex-offender without an address cannot get a valid driver's license. Public transportation options are limited to scheduled routes and times.

Then there is education. The greater a person's level of education, the higher their pay. In addition to paying higher earnings, education can lower unemployment rates. A high school diploma or a GED improves a person's chances of getting a job. According to 2010 Department of Labor statistics, the unemployment rate of a person with less than a high school diploma or GED is nearly 15%. That rate improves to 10% with a GED, and to nearly 5% with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Healthcare

Former convicts face many challenges, including gaining access to health coverage. Unemployment is much higher among ex-prisoners than the average American. It is a struggle for an ex-offender to gain insurance through an employer. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, often called "Obamacare," proposes the expansion of the Medicaid program. That could help change high un-insurance rates among former inmates, but only if states agree to participate in its Medicaid expansion.

Opening Medicaid to the nation's poorest would include ex-offenders and provide stability of care. Common medical problems often go untreated. Left untreated, researchers say they can lead offenders right back to prison or jail and place the community in danger of crime. Additionally, lack of coverage can place the general public at greater health risk. Experts say treating substance abuse, HIV, and hepatitis C will reduce the disease rates in our communities.

Relationships

The Newport News Sheriff's Office has taken the lead in developing and maintaining collaborative partnerships with organizations, agencies, and individuals who help hurdle obstacles noted earlier.

In 2011, Sheriff Gabe Morgan joined Mayor Dr. McKinley Price in a citywide effort to reduce violence and formed the Newport News Re-entry Council. Re-entry is one of four working groups in the comprehensive strategic plan to reduce violence: Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement, and Re-entry. The four key aspects spell out the P.I.E.R. approach.

The re-entry council consists of representatives from the federal, state, and local level – all of them players in this complicated issue. An introductory breakfast held in May and was attended by approximately sixty stakeholders, including a



Nurse call at the Newport News City Jail is handled by Conmed medical personnel.

The program called "Class Action: Reducing Gangs in Virginia" teaches elementary students how to make good choices.

cross section of political, law enforcement, and private interest. Some who came to the table were the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, Police Department, Virginia Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole, the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, various churches, Newport News Public Schools, and interested citizens. This laid the groundwork for upcoming dialogue, and for the development and implementation of strategies.

Following the planning breakfast were three Newport News Re-entry Town Hall meetings moderated by Sheriff Gabe Morgan. These public forums were held in the City's three districts, capturing a cross section of the region's diverse population. Public input was encouraged and accepted. A panel of experts was available to speak and to answer audience questions. Plus a number of ex-offenders also loaned their voices to the exchange.

Intake

Because much of the work of re-entry begins long before an offender actually leaves confinement, the Newport News Sheriff's Office starts preparation for effective re-entry at intake. During the initial booking process, information is gathered to determine which rehabilitative programs are most appropriate for which individuals. Additionally, their skills are assessed. In this way, personnel can match inmates with specific classes and programs. If an individual has a vocational skill, work release may be the best option. Of course, not all offenders will take advantage of programs provided. But efforts must be made for the security of the community and the future of its children.

Education-Based Incarceration, or EBI

The Newport News Sheriff's Office practices Education-Based Incarceration (EBI). EBI is an effort to provide educational, vocational, and life-skills training to inmates who qualify. A total of 2,159 inmates completed classes in 2011. The cost of EBI is minimal because classes are facilitated by volunteers or contractors, therefore, not relying of monies from the general fund. Calculated savings topped \$126,000.

The Newport News Sheriff's Office continues to improve upon existing programs and to develop smart, creative approaches to instruction.

To illustrate the creative approach to rehabilitation, we need look no further than Charles Williams. He spent eleven years and nineteen days in prison on a bank robbery conviction. In prison, Williams learned the trade of brick masonry and credits the vocation with his successful transition from incarceration to society. Since 2007, he has been giving back by voluntarily teaching brick masonry skills to inmates at the Newport News City Jail.



Nancy Redd retired from Hampton Public Schools, retired from Hampton University, and retired from the Newport News Adult Education Center but selected to continue teaching at the jail in Newport News. She is rewarded by watching her students earn the equivalent of a high school diploma. Under her tutelage, 35 inmates graduated with their GED in 2011.

A collaborative relationship was formed between the Sheriff's Office and the Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula. The Foodbank accepted jail inmates into its newly launched Culinary Training Program designed to help disadvantaged adults gain culinary and job readiness skills. Trainees participate in an academic and hands-on training environment that produces a graduate ready to work immediately in the food service industry as a successful employee. Graduates of the culinary program earn ServSafe Food Manager Certification. The training supported the Kids Cafe Program, serving over 5,000 hot meals per week to children in the community.

Inmates learn how to manage their money in financial management class. They learn how to develop a budget, how to reduce their debt, how to be financially responsible for their family, and how to save for their future. Other practical courses include parenting, anger management, overcoming drug and alcohol addiction; and there is English as a Second Language (ESL) for the non-English speaking jail population. Volunteers with Building Bridges with Books use their concept to improve the literacy of parents while simultaneously instilling the desire to read in their children. A compact disc recording is made of the parent reading to his/her child. That CD and the book is given to the child at home.

That is just a sampling of what is taking place at the Newport News Sheriff's Office.



The program called "Class Action: Reducing Gangs in Virginia" teaches elementary students how to make good choices.

from a pebble tossed into a pond. There is the victim; higher taxpayer costs associated with law enforcement, court processes, and re-incarceration; unsupported families on public assistance; and other negative social implications. Children of incarcerated parents face unique difficulties like the trauma of sudden separation from their mom or dad. Without adequate love, support, and guidance from other adult family members, they are at risk for neglect, school failure, low self-esteem; and difficulty in decision making, critical thinking and problem solving. Studies estimate that over 70% of children whose parents are incarcerated will one day find themselves behind bars.

Investing in Youth

That same wave of motion--the outward reach from point of contact--can have constructive consequences when the pebble represents a good action. Make a ripple. Make a difference.

That is how Sheriff Morgan sees the investment in children and teenagers. He is a strong advocate for intervention and prevention as a means to intercept behaviors that could lead to criminal offenses.

In 2011, Sheriff Morgan was back on Capitol Hill asking members of the U.S. Congress to maintain funding for juvenile justice programming for Fiscal Year 2012. On behalf of "Fight Crime: Invest in Kids," an anti-crime organization of over 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and violence survivors, Morgan testified how Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Grants are vital federal dollars for preventing youth crime. "Every year, thousands of juveniles will be arrested for serious crimes in our state, and there is no substitute for tough law enforcement when it comes to ensuring public safety," Morgan said, "but it's also clear that certain research-based interventions are an effective way to turn around young offenders, reduce repeat offenders, and make our communities safer."

Again on the national stage, Sheriff Morgan was invited in May of 2011 to speak at the American Jail Association's training conference about preventing youth violence by supporting programs that put caring adults into the lives of children.

Morgan gained attention as a convincing leader when, in 2009, he testified before the U.S. Congress and endorsed the Youth PROMISE Act, a bill introduced by Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA 3rd District). The acronym stands for Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education. The legislation supports evidence-based intervention and treatment that have been shown to reduce youth crime and delinquency. ★

Good Government

Public safety is the priority of government at any level, and effective prisoner re-entry is a critical component to safeguarding society. No one is suggesting that enforcement be eliminated. When a crime is committed, the person responsible should be punished. Once that prison sentence is completed and the debt to society paid, additional steps should be taken to ensure the prison system is not a revolving door.

The toll of recidivism is far reaching, much like the ripples