

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Pursuant to P.A. 207 of 2018
Article V, Section 310 (1)
Reentry Strategic Action Plan

Sec. 310. (1) By February 1, the department shall provide a report to the senate and house appropriations subcommittees on corrections, the senate and house fiscal agencies, the legislative corrections ombudsman, and the state budget office which details the strategic plan of the department. The report shall contain strategies to decrease the overall recidivism rate, measurable plans to increase the rehabilitative function of correctional facilities, metrics to track and ensure prisoner readiness to reenter society, and constructive actions for providing prisoners with life skills development.

(2) The intent of this report is to express that the mission of the department is to provide an action plan before reentry to society that ensures prisoners' readiness for meeting parole requirements and ensures a reduction in the total number of released inmates who reenter the criminal justice system.

The Department of Corrections plays a critical role in Michigan's criminal justice system. While the Department's primary goal is ensuring public safety, the MDOC has focused on Offender Success as the strategy for accomplishing this task. Offender Success, which impacts offenders throughout their time with the MDOC, including the transition from prison back to the community, prioritizes education, training, and cognitive programming to change offender behavior to promote employment, self-sufficiency, and long-term success. Key metrics associated with Offender Success include vocational training completions, prisoner programming completions/waitlists, offender employment post-release, and recidivism.

The Vocational Villages are one of the most public examples of the Offender Success model in action. The Vocational Villages are a first of their kind skill trades training program that aims to provide a positive learning community for prisoners who are serious about completing career and technical education. Prisoners participating in Vocational Village programming are housed together in one unit that acts as a therapeutic learning environment designed to support their success. Participants have a full day of training and classroom instruction intended to mimic a typical workday outside prison walls and receive state and nationally recognized certifications in their trade. Most importantly, the MDOC active works with prisoners and employers to help secure offers of employment prior to parole, so that offenders can immediately work toward stability and self-sufficiency. The MDOC currently operates two vocational villages, while a third is under construction.

The MDOC has also intensified its job development functions statewide to directly connect more returning citizens with employment opportunities in communities throughout the state, with the goal of offenders securing employment as close to the release date as possible. Employment readiness programs are now available to prisoners who are preparing for parole and the Workkeys test is being utilized by offenders to determine how they compare to the overall labor market. The Department also developed an Offender Employment and Opportunity Unit that works directly with employers to promote the benefits of hiring returning citizens.

In addition to the Vocational Villages and vocational trades programs, there are increased partnerships with colleges to provide post-secondary education to eligible prisoners. Under a pilot program with the U.S. Department of Education more than 60 U.S. colleges and universities were granted the ability to offer Pell Grants to inmates in state and federal prisons. Delta, Mott Community and Jackson College are all partnering with the MDOC to deliver post-secondary education, while Calvin College is offering a privately funded four-year degree.

To start a successful reentry to the community as quickly as possible, all offenders coming into the prison system are screened by MDOC staff who develop a plan, including program recommendations, to mitigate the offender's risk upon release. Evidence-based core programming and reentry services are available throughout the MDOC to help offenders better understand their behavior and develop tools to reduce their risk so that they can safely return to the community. Examples of programs for male offenders include Violence Prevention Programming (VPP), Thinking for a Change (T4C), the Michigan Sex Offender Program (MSOP), Batterers Intervention Programming (MIDVP) and Advanced Substance Abuse Treatment (ASAT). Evidenced based programming for the female population includes Beyond Violence and a cognitive restructuring program titled Moving On. Community-based programming is also available at the Detroit Reentry Center (DRC) and the Lake County Residential Reentry Program (LCRRP).

It is also important to ensure that all offenders complete their required programming in advance of their Parole Board interview. In 2014, a decision was made to unite the administration of all reentry services under one administration, which was subsequently renamed the Offender Success Administration. Centralizing these functions has allowed the Department to coordinate services between sites more effectively. For example, in June 2014 there were approximately 1,800 offenders that needed either VPP or T4C and were either past or within six months of their ERD. More effective coordination of program delivery has allowed the Department to significantly reduce this waiting list. As of fourth quarter of FY 2018 the waiting list for VPP/T4C offenders that are past or within six months of their ERD has been reduced to roughly 250 offenders. Progress has been made regarding those offenders waiting for sex offender programming and additional work has been performed regarding the waiting list for substance abuse treatment services. The MDOC is now operating with the mission of putting the "right prisoner, in the right program, at the right time". The result has helped support high parole rates while producing the lowest recorded recidivism in Michigan's history, leading to over a 10% decline in the prison population in the last four years.