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Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

March 13, 2014

What's New in Reentry?

As a result of changes fostered through Governor Corbett's Justice Reinvestment Initiative, community corrections funding has been restructured to provide for needed services that will help offenders successfully reintegrate. Through technical assistance from the Council of State Governments, the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Board examined the current structure of Pennsylvania's community correction's system, the allocation of funding and the needs of the Board when considering an offender for parole or while supervising an offender.

The commonwealth is unique in that it has a significant network of intensive residential programs in community corrections. However, the Board and DOC identified a need for funding for certain services in the community that don't require inpatient stays. These resources are necessary because Board members rely on services and treatment in the community to help them develop conditions of parole that support evidence-based principles and practices. Parole agents rely on resources in the community to effectively supervise an offender. Conditions of parole are targeted to each offender's specific needs to hold them accountable and to help them with other issues in their life that might be holding them back from successfully returning home.

Therefore, for the first time, the commonwealth is dedicating a portion of its community corrections funds specifically for local offender management strategies that will greatly enhance reentry efforts. These services and programs provide alternatives to placement in community corrections centers or prison for parolees transitioning out of prison and for those who are non-compliant with their conditions of parole. Through the use of these services, parolees can continue to be managed in the community as long as it is safe to do so and remain connected to family and other support systems.

Through a competitive bid process, more than 350 community-based providers across the state were awarded contracts by the DOC for services and programs in eight key areas. An important improvement to the contracts is the requirement that providers establish performance measures that are specific to recidivism reduction. These services are available to eligible offenders once all other funding sources are exhausted, such as private insurance and Medical Assistance.

The new services and programs include: day reporting centers, employment assistance, outpatient alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment, cognitive behavioral interventions, sex offender treatment, mentoring, family reunification, and housing.

By the Numbers

The percentage of parolees being released timely has increased. Sixty-nine percent of parolees were released within one week of their minimum sentence date and 84 percent within one month for the second quarter of fiscal year 2013/14 (excludes short minimum cases). This is an increase from the same time period last year of 53 and 75 percent respectively.



Lt. Governor Cawley Congratulates Graduates of Basic Training Academy

On February 21, 2014, Lt. Governor Cawley addressed the Board's 118th Basic Training Academy graduates and their family and friends.

As he opened his remarks, Gov. Cawley stated that he brings greetings from Governor Corbett who joins him in congratulating the graduates. "I would like to simply share with you how proud we are of what it is you have accomplished here today and of course I need not tell you how proud your family and friends are," Cawley said.

He recognized that parole agents have a challenging and sometimes dangerous job, but that it can also be a rewarding one. And he recognized the value of public service. "True public servants must dedicate themselves to a higher purpose and that's what you are called to do. As servants within the justice system you have an added burden of dedicating yourself simultaneously to advance justice and to help maintain public safety.

"Public safety is indeed a core function of government. For Governor Corbett and me, I have to tell you, we believe it to be the highest and best calling of government.

"You have a challenging job that requires you to hold individuals accountable but at the same time you must work with them to try to change their behavior and life." Gov. Cawley then stated that he likes to quote "a famous Bucks County resident", Margaret Mead. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

As he concluded his prepared remarks and joked about no one remembering a keynote speaker's speech, he stated, "If you remember nothing else remember this. Be careful. Be safe. Be extraordinary. You can change the world – at least your piece of it - one life at a time."

Following Gov. Cawley's remarks, Chairman Michael Potteiger presented the awards for Class Valedictorian and Top Gun. Institutional Parole Agent Lisa Oyaski of SCI Benner received the Valedictorian Award for achieving the highest score on the written test. The Top Gun award was presented to Parole Agent Joseph Mullin of the Harrisburg District Office for achieving the highest score on the firing range.

At the end of the ceremony, the graduates took the Oath of Office and were presented with their Parole Board badges.



Lt. Governor Cawley

Pittsburgh Agents Receive Public Safety Awards

Pittsburgh District Office Parole Agents Ackerman, Long and McAleer were selected for the U. S. Attorney's Office of the Western District of Pennsylvania's Law Enforcement Agency Director (LEAD) award in November. The LEAD Award was designed to award members of the law enforcement community for their outstanding work for making our communities safer.

Agent Ackerman was commended for his efforts to defuse a volatile situation without the loss of life or serious injury that occurred on July 24, 2013. A team of parole agents and local police conducted a residence search for a wanted fugitive. He was found hiding in the basement under a pile of boxes. When asked to show his hands, the fugitive stood up and yelled "I'm not going back to jail" and kept his right hand behind his back. During the 20 minute standoff, Agent Ackerman was able to engage the offender in conversation and convince him to show both of his hands. As Agent Ackerman began to handcuff him, the offender resisted arrest and was tased in order to bring him under control. A .45 caliber weapon was found on him and he admitted to authorities that he had been hitting heroin "hard" for several days.

Agents Long and McAleer received the award for their participation in the eight-person Western Pennsylvania Fugitive Task Force (WPAFTF) that investigates and apprehends persons who have outstanding state and/or federal warrants. These persons are wanted for murder, robbery, assault and are a part of organized drug rings. In just one year alone, the task force apprehended 512 violent felony fugitives, thus increasing public safety in western Pennsylvania.