

News for Immediate Release

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State and Local Agencies Partner to Help Offenders Beat Drug and Alcohol Addictions, Succeed in Society

Reentry Program Uses Key Principles of Effective Drug Courts

Harrisburg – State and local officials today announced a partnership that will help offenders with drug and alcohol programs successfully transition from prison to their community.

"Drug and alcohol addiction and abuse are barriers for many offenders to successfully complete parole and turn their lives around," Parole Board Chairman Michael Potteiger said. "This partnership with Dauphin County continues the emphasis on meaningful reentry efforts under the leadership of Gov. Tom Corbett to decrease the number of offenders who return to the criminal justice system."

The partnership is a court-based Reentry Program with the PA Board of Probation and Parole, Dauphin County Court, and Dauphin County Commissioners to decrease recidivism, increase public safety and reduce correctional costs.

The Reentry Program provides intensive supervision and oversight to higher risk offenders with a history of substance abuse and it does so in a unique way by having a Parole Board Member and Common Pleas Judge meet with the offender on a monthly basis in the court room. The first session will be held on February 13.

The program includes a case management team to provide individually tailored continuity of services for each parolee, maximizing their ability to succeed in the community. To be eligible, offenders must have been convicted in and returning to Dauphin County and have at least 18 months of parole supervision remaining on their sentence.

"This program meshes nicely with our court's efforts to handle the increasing criminal caseload in the most efficient manner," said Judge Richard Lewis, who will oversee the program at the court level. Reducing the number of recidivists by directly addressing two of the chief culprits - drugs and alcohol - will hopefully lower the number of repeat offenders and ease the congestion in our prisons and courtrooms."

"We're looking at new, innovative ways to break the cycle of recidivism in our court system," said Dauphin County Commission chairman Jeff Haste. "Participants in Dauphin County's re-entry program must adhere to the rigorous program goals, such as regular court appearances, drug and alcohol screenings and other treatment goals. Similar to the county's jail diversion programs, this re-entry

program will aim to reduce recidivism in the criminal justice system as well as save county taxpayer dollars on prison costs."

The Dauphin County Reentry Program will include Chairman Potteiger, Judge Lewis, Parole Board staff, county drug and alcohol case managers, mental health services and supports, and other agencies as necessary to help the offender to be successful.

The Board currently has Reentry Programs operating in Berks, Lackawanna and York counties, with a 23, 17 and 17 percent one-year recidivism rate, respectively. Of those offenders who graduate from the programs, over 80% have not been recommitted since program completion. The Parole Board is in discussions with the Common Pleas Courts in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia to establish a similar Reentry Program.

Visit the Board of Probation and Parole online at www.pbpp.state.pa.us.

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