

This document is the result of 5-7 months of meetings and research by the 10 State Reentry Council Collaborative (SRCC) workgroups and presents draft recommendations. The SRCC welcomes your comments and feedback on these draft recommendations. **Note: Budget numbers in these recommendations are estimates only and have not been verified.**

All feedback will be reviewed and considered. Once the final recommendations are approved by the SRCC, they will be submitted to the NC General Assembly and the Office of Governor Roy Cooper.

In submitting your feedback, please include the following information:

- Your name
- Organization (if applicable)
- Workgroup and recommendation to which your feedback applies

We welcome any feedback submitted prior to the deadline, but all comments must be emailed to Irene Lawrence at irene.lawrence@ncdps.gov by 5pm on October 31st.

SRCC Advocacy Workgroup Recommendation #1

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

In order to raise awareness and educate the general public about reentry efforts in the State of North Carolina, this workgroup recommends the implementation of a Reentry Awareness Campaign. This awareness campaign would include comprehensively engaging broadcast, digital and print media, community advocacy resources, faith-based communication channels and leverage partnerships with reentry involved agencies, organizations, and associations. By utilizing these various information and communication sources, the campaign will give external and internal audiences insight into the numerous challenges and barriers faced by citizens transitioning from incarceration back into their communities. Subsequently, the campaign will spark a healthy dialogue that will foster understanding, acceptance, support, and the creation of healthy, safe, and sustainable communities.

BACKGROUND

In North Carolina, the vast majority of people currently serving time in the state's prison facilities will eventually be released. The challenges faced by the formerly incarcerated often stem from the stigma associated with having been in prison. As the SRCC works to remove the barriers that tend to derail a successful reentry process for many individuals, it is important that critical work first be done to change the perceptions which fuel the prejudicial practices that cause roadblocks for individuals when they seek the basic necessities they require in order to start their lives over again; those include housing, transportation, employment, education, medical and mental health services, and family support.

In 2018, NC Reentry Week was launched by the Statewide Reentry Council Collaborative to raise awareness of the challenges individuals face as they work to rebuild lives and enter communities after incarceration. Governor Roy Cooper issued an official proclamation aimed at bringing attention to reentry issues and spotlighting the work of the SRCC and the successful outcomes resulting from the group which combines skill sets and resources of governmental agencies, community leaders, service providers, law enforcement, and faith and advocacy coalitions to create a sustainable action plan for the successful reentry of people leaving the state's prisons and jails. A keen focus on providing access to critical services and improving accommodations are believed to have positive, long-term implications on public safety by reducing the likelihood of recidivism, filling potential gaps in the workforce, fostering economic independence and lifting the social stigma commonly associated being incarcerated.

RECOMMENDATION

The SRCC Advocacy workgroup recommends that the legislature allocate funds for the execution for a comprehensive public awareness campaign. This initiative will utilize the skill sets and knowledge of existing communication and marketing personnel from the NC Department of Public Safety and members of the SRCC who are experts with experience in advocacy, outreach, and public relations. Funding would be used to develop printed and digital collateral, produce information videos for commercial broadcast, venue and talent acquisition

for community and public forums and town hall meetings, and participation in community and faith-based events across the state.

Proposed campaign components and deliverables:

- Printed brochures and information flyers
- Broadcast and print media coverage
- Social media campaigns – multi-channel
- Public community forums and town hall meeting
- Video productions: mini- Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice documentaries and public service announcements
- Exhibitions, trade shows and job fairs
- Speaker series (speaker bureaus)

Preferred language glossary: The glossary would feed into all external communications related to the SRCC, particularly during the campaign. It would discuss how language can further the stigma against individuals re-entering society after their time in incarceration. These stigmas often hinder people’s abilities to rebuild stable lives and access to factors like housing and employment. The language glossary would serve as a guide for communicating to and about people reentering society. It would identify words that have a problematic origin or define people by their time spent incarcerated, and instead provide alternative language intended to help people regain control of their individual narratives.

STAKEHOLDERS

This initiative, while targeting all North Carolina citizens, will require engagement from a cross representation of government and community stakeholders, as well as individuals who were formerly incarcerated or the families of those who have been incarcerated.

BUDGET

Still under development

TIMELINE

Still under development. Signage, etc., may run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars to implement statewide.

SRCC Advocacy Workgroup Recommendation #2

Communication Strategy

A core component of any communication strategy is the integration and leadership of impacted individuals, families, and communities. It will be necessary to educate the public, stakeholders, policymakers, and the press about the need for reform. A multi-strategy effort will need to be developed with the following key activities:

- o Support partner outreach and press efforts by collecting the stories of impacted individuals and deploying high-quality videos of these stories through social media;
- o Launch several social media campaigns that garner significant new engagement and messages about reentry issues and reform;
- o Train impacted individuals to serve as spokespeople at press events;
- o Engage partners to understand the reforms needed and to participate in press events and communicate with their networks and decision-makers;
- o Publish regularly through allied groups' communications, including widely read blogs;
- o Develop and maintain relationships with reporters and editorial boards to secure stories, opinion pieces, and editorials in all major media markets;
- o Hold press events with allies around the state;
- o Organize meetings to educate business leaders, community leaders, decision makers and other influential citizens.

We will need to develop—and adapt for this campaign— an array of communications tools and messaging focused on the reasonableness of a comprehensive and coordinated reentry system, the waste and economic cost of unnecessary barriers that exclude individuals working to re-integrate to their communities, and the successful, bipartisan and evidence based reforms making progress around the nation. Our messaging should focus on detailing the experiences and needs of impacted men and women, as described and explained by those individuals.

SRCC Advocacy Workgroup Recommendation #3

Recommendation Summary

The Advocacy Workgroup recommends that all SRCC Principal Members participate in a Phase 1 Racial Equity Institute training prior to the start of the implementation phase of the SRCC recommendations. We also recommend that at least 25% of the SRCC Principal Members are people who have been justice-involved.

Background

In the United States and in North Carolina, race has always been a primary determining factor in every area of well-being from educational attainment, life expectancy, income level, quality of health, and, finally, an individual's likelihood of being involved in the justice system. Numerous books, articles, and studies have revealed the racial disproportionality in justice system outcomes as a whole. For example, African Americans are incarcerated at more than 5 times the rate of whites, and even though African Americans and Hispanics make up approximately 32% of the US population, they comprised 56% of all incarcerated people in 2015.¹

In North Carolina in particular, extensive research has been done on racial disparities in the justice system on everything from traffic stops to being referred to juvenile court to contact with the adult correctional system. African Americans only make up 22% of the State's population, but they comprise 57% of North Carolina's prison population. Close to home, in Durham County, African Americans are nearly nine times more likely to be incarcerated for criminal conduct than whites.²

National surveys measuring the "racial typification of crime" - particularly the extent to which people explicitly associate crime with blacks and Latinos - reveal that this occurs most strongly among whites. In addition, implicit bias tests have shown that the general public holds negative associations of blacks and Latinos and frequently suspects them of criminality. These biases are believed to reach all corners of the criminal justice system.³ The ubiquity of these racial biases is an important factor in the difficulty of eliminating racially disparate criminal justice outcomes. These biases, of course, extend to reentry efforts, and people of color are disproportionately on the receiving end of reentry programming. This makes it that much more necessary that SRCC members, most of whom are white, have an awareness of the historical racial framework of our criminal justice system and can critically examine and question their own racial biases.

¹ <https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>

² https://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/papers/NCAJ_Exec_Summary.pdf

³ <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/race-and-punishment-racial-perceptions-of-crime-and-support-for-punitive-policies/#A.%20Overestimating%20Black%20and%20Hispanic%20Crime%20Rates>

Recommendation

The workgroup recommends that all SRCC Principal Members participate in a Phase 1 Racial Equity Institute training prior to the start of their meetings on the implementation of the 10 immediate 2019 recommendations. This would help ensure that all SRCC Principal Members have an adequate and accurate baseline understanding of the history of racial prejudice and racist policies throughout the history of the U.S., especially how this history has played a critical role in determining current racial disparities in the justice system. Undergoing this training would also serve as a start in making sure that all SRCC members are able to operate from an organizational definition of racism, as well as ensuring that they can both proactively address racism and ensure racially equitable outcomes in their organizations and communities. Like the rest of the criminal justice system, true reform in reentry cannot be accomplished without viewing the work through a racial lens. This training will create the necessary context for reentry reform and will prime stakeholders to be conscientious and aware of deep-seated biases that risk hindering the important work the council is poised to do. In addition, since the SRCC will consist of many fewer members during the implementation phase than it does now, it should be entirely possible to have all the SRCC members undergo this training, even if not all SRCC members go to the same training. Some of the more zealous SRCC principal workgroup members might even want to take their knowledge of racism further by participating in REI's Phase II training in order to practice reframing problems and determining solutions with a racial equity lens.

This workgroup also recommends that SRCC Principal Members make an explicit effort to get justice-involved people to the table during the SRCC implementation phase that will take place in 2019, such that at least 25% of the SRCC Principal Members are people who have been justice-involved. This will ensure that people with a diverse set of experiences with the justice system are at this table and will reduce the chances that the SRCC is viewed as (or actually is) a top-down bureaucratic group that does not always keep the interests of affected individuals top of mind. This percentage is necessary to ensure that SRCC Principal members who were justice involved are not "tokens" but are critical voices in the conversation. Additionally, from a public relations perspective, it is hypocritical not to give justice involved folks a seat at this table when we are trying to convince the public to give them a chance. We must model the inclusion we are asking for from the public.

Stakeholders

SRCC Principal members will benefit from their increased ability to ground their work in power and race-based analysis. Also, indirectly, the LRCs and corresponding local reentry stakeholders will hopefully also benefit from the SRCC Principal members' greater awareness of race-based power dynamics. The SRCC will also have a more successful implementation process as a result of having a more diverse set of experiences with the justice system at the table during the implementation phase.

Budget

Still under development

Type of Action

Immediate organizational change