

REDUCING STATEWIDE RECIDIVISM:

CHECKLIST FOR STATE CORRECTIONS ADMINISTRATORS



STATE CORRECTIONS ADMINISTRATORS know that by focusing on recidivism reduction, they can have a significant impact on long-term public safety in communities throughout their states. Further, these efforts can improve prison security by engaging individuals in programs that address criminal attitudes and behaviors and can help reduce prison populations over time.

The following checklist is designed to help state corrections administrators quickly assess the comprehensiveness of their state's recidivism reduction policies by engaging in meaningful conversations with managers and staff overseeing reentry and community supervision efforts, as well as with administrators from other state agencies or organizations that play a role in implementing the action items in this checklist.

Goal 1: Make recidivism-reduction an agency priority and set reduction goals for specific programs or policy changes

Defining success as meeting recidivism-reduction goals and using goal-oriented management is essential for establishing agency-wide buy-in.

- Administrators develop formal partnerships with state agencies and community organizations in order to build sufficient capacity in the community to meet recidivism reduction goals
- Policymakers and administrators agree on the definition of recidivism, reduction goals for specific programs or policies that take into account the varying levels of risk within the target population, and the timeframe for achieving those reductions
- Recidivism-reduction goals are incorporated into the agency's vision and mission statements and policy priorities are determined by whether they contribute to progress toward meeting those goals
- Practices that support recidivism reduction are incorporated into written policies and procedures, and are included in staff job descriptions and performance evaluations

Goal 2: Focus resources on the individuals who are most likely to reoffend

Recidivism reduction is only possible when services and treatments are focused on individuals that are most likely to recidivate.

- A risk assessment tool that has been validated and normed within the previous two years is used to measure all individuals' risk of recidivating and their risk-related needs and responsivity factors
- Risk and needs assessments inform all case-management decisions, including classification, program and treatment referrals, release decisions, and conditions of community supervision
- Risk information is used to triage programming and supervision resources, with greater intensity and hours of programming being reserved for higher-risk individuals
- Measures are taken to ensure that statutorily required program participation related to conditions of release does not result in placements that undermine the risk and need principles
- Prison staff, community supervision officers, and treatment providers are trained on how to use the assessment tools and quality-assurance audits are conducted to ensure that assessments are performed and interpreted correctly

Goal 3: Establish programs and practices that have been shown to reduce recidivism and ensure they are implemented with fidelity

Reducing recidivism requires providing high-quality programs that are based in science and address the factors related to an individual's likelihood to reoffend.

- Programs target criminogenic needs (i.e., the present circumstances and risk factors linked to the criminal behavior of the program participant) and address responsivity factors
- All staff who are in regular contact with inmates are trained in communication techniques that promote motivation to change and responsivity to treatment
- Program quality assessments are conducted on at least an annual basis to determine the degree to which programs incorporate effective practices for reducing recidivism and to improve program implementation
- Program evaluations are conducted on a three- to five-year basis to assess programs' effectiveness at reducing recidivism and evaluation results are used to modify or eliminate ineffective programs and services
- Department policy requires that transition plans are developed for all inmates prior to release, and there are standard procedures defining when the plans should be developed and the role of prison staff and community supervision staff in the planning process

Goal 4: Implement community supervision policies and practices that promote successful reentry

Community supervision should promote successful reentry by addressing individuals' criminogenic needs and applying appropriate responses to violations in a swift and certain manner.

- Written policy defines how risk and needs assessments are to be used in determining individual supervision conditions and the provision of treatment in the community
- Probationers and parolees are informed of the sanctions and incentives that will occur for specific behaviors at the start of community supervision and those actions are carried out swiftly when appropriate
- Supervision officers are authorized to use a range of graduated sanctions to ensure that responses are proportionate to the seriousness of violations and take into consideration individuals' risk levels
- Policies and practices promote the use of place-based supervision and the engagement of family and community support systems

Goal 5: Measure recidivism-related outcomes and establish a reporting process that promotes accountability for results

Collecting data and tracking progress is essential for promoting buy-in and support and for fine-tuning recidivism-reduction strategies.

- Recidivism data (particularly data related to revocations) are tracked by management on at least a monthly basis to ensure that community supervision strategies effectively change the behavior of supervisees and reincarceration is being reserved for only the most serious violators
- A quality-assurance process is in place that ensures staff implement programs with fidelity and adhere to policies and practices that advance the goal of recidivism reduction
- Data on recidivism (including whether an occurrence results from a revocation or new crime, type of release, jurisdiction, and individual characteristics) are collected on a regular basis. There is also an established process for how those data are interpreted and inform management practices, funding decisions, and state-level policies
- User-friendly, transparent, and regular reporting methods are used to inform policymakers and the public about progress toward meeting recidivism reduction goals