

States Engaging Human Need with Community Partners: Michigan and Prisoner Reentry



Michigan is facing an exorbitant prisoner population crisis, but the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI) is poised to mitigate this issue. According to the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), prisoners in the MPRI are 21 percent less likely to return to prison. Partly in response to this success, Michigan plans to roll out the program to the whole State in 2008.

The Michigan Prison ReEntry Initiative is a cooperative effort of the Michigan Department of Corrections, Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Governor's Office of Community and Faith-Based Initiatives, and community stakeholders (including non-profit and faith-based organizations). MPRI has three phases designed to help ensure that offenders return to the community prepared to succeed: getting ready, going home, and staying home.

The direct role of faith-based organizations in this initiative is to provide mentoring to offenders who are now considered "returning citizens." The mentoring framework includes three target groups: former prisoners, children of prisoners, and family members of prisoners. Mentoring includes informal counseling and assistance and can be provided by unrelated adults or peers with similar backgrounds who are able to serve as role models and informal advisors. Mentors are prescreened and trained in the standards of conduct to ensure that they are knowledgeable about the needs and barriers facing the returning prisoner population.

The primary function of the Governor's Office of Community and Faith-Based Initiatives is to serve as the connector to the faith-based community through ministerial alliances, clergy leadership groups, councils and clergy at large. This office bridges the gap between state departments and agencies and the faith-based community by disseminating information and holding regional workshops that bring awareness and education to the faith-based community about programs, initiatives, possible funding opportunities and projects in which they may participate.

More information is available at <http://www.michpri.com/>