

2009 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 09-S-06KY

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Kentucky

Assign Program Category (applicant): Public Safety / Corrections (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name: Kentucky Department of Corrections' Reentry Hotline
2. Administering Agency: Kentucky Department of Corrections
3. Contact Person (Name and Title): Brigid Adams, Internal Policy Analyst III
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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The 24-hour toll-free Reentry Hotline is designed to provide customized information, referrals, and resources to offenders upon release from prison. This service is provided by the DOC and staffed by offenders that are housed in a Therapeutic Treatment Community receiving substance abuse services.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 2, 2009 to be considered.

The program has been operational since August, 2007.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

Given that over 95% of all state offenders will be released from prison at some point, we must look to the future to address the needs of the offenders upon their release (U.S. DOJ, BJA, Reentry Trends in the United States, August, 2003). The Kentucky Department of Corrections has over 21,700 offenders incarcerated in a variety of correctional settings, and over 38,612 offenders on parole or probation. In 2007, Kentucky's prison population increased by 12.0%, which is 6.0% more than any other state in the nation ("One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008," Public Safety Performance Project, p.9). The need for innovative solutions to solve the problem of prisoner reentry is clear. Most of these ex-offenders return to their neighborhoods ill-equipped to meet the everyday challenges of life. Confronted with minimal job opportunities, housing issues, and the lack of other support, many ex-offenders often recidivate.

Currently, offenders are released from prison with limited resources and primarily depend on the local Probation and Parole office for referrals and resource information. Although Probation and Parole offices are available during normal business hours, offenders often require assistance outside of these hours. Offenders that complete their sentence and are not required to be under supervision upon release have no additional assistance with their return to society.

By providing offenders with a toll-free number for resources staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, offenders are able to act on information provided as they receive it. With the additional resource information, former offenders will be able to develop cohesive plans for success in their home community. By providing the hotline as an option for seeking assistance, the DOC anticipates hotline callers will: 1) abstain or decrease use of drugs/alcohol; 2) comply with laws and the stipulations of their parole to avoid revocation; and, 3) utilize information to seek resources in their communities. As a result of the program, individuals are able to cope with the daily stresses of life and avoid substance use and criminal activity. Overall, the program will increase public safety and reduce the long-term costs associated with recidivism.

The program fielded over 3,000 phone calls in its first year of operation. To our knowledge, the Kentucky Reentry Hotline is the only one of its kind in the nation using offender Resource Specialists. Many social service organizations and governmental agencies utilize a single information and referral phone number for local resources, but our hotline is specific for returning offenders and offers statewide information and resources as well as local resources. Additionally, having an offender answer a reentry resource hotline can offer credibility to the ex-offender caller unlike any other hotline.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

The project was first discussed in April, 2006 between the former Commissioner, John D. Rees and the Executive Director of the Louisville Metro Reentry Task Force, Stephen T. Smith. The project design and implementation plan was fully developed in July, 2006.

The first grant application was submitted to a foundation with a focus on prisoner reentry in August, 2006 to seek start-up funds for equipment, computers and promotional materials. In January, 2007, the Department was notified that the project did not meet their funding priorities.

The next funding application was submitted in April, 2007 to the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet through the Edward Byrne Memorial Formula Grant Program. The application scored in the top 10% of applications and was enthusiastically supported by peer reviewers. The funding was awarded in June, 2007 with an initial grant period of July, 2007 to June, 2008.

The first group of thirteen (13) Resource Specialists was trained in early August, 2007. The Reentry Hotline cards were printed and ready for distribution in early August, 2007. Additionally, posters were used in Probation and Parole offices, as well as throughout the prison system. Local jail facilities were able to obtain the cards for distribution in their facilities. The Reentry Hotline became operational on August 16, 2007. A press release announcing the Reentry Hotline was issued on August 17, 2007. The Resource Specialists fielded 200 phone calls from August 16, 2007 to August 31, 2007. Since the initial month of operation, the number of calls has grown by more than 90%. Training occurs with new

Resource Specialists as needed. Typically, 13 to 14 Resource Specialists staff the hotline throughout any given month.

The Department of Corrections was able to utilize significant in-kind resources for the first year of operation, and requested a no-cost extension of the project to enable further implementation. The request was approved and the grant period was extended through June, 2009.

Since the initial implementation, it has become apparent that additional media coverage is necessary to engage the number of offenders living throughout the state that could benefit from calling the hotline. This is a priority as we continue the project.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

Currently, offenders are released from prison with limited resources and primarily depend on the local Probation and Parole office for referrals and resource information. Although Probation and Parole offices are available during normal business hours, offenders often require assistance outside of these hours. Offenders that complete their sentence and are not required to be under supervision upon release have no additional assistance with their return to society.

By providing offenders with a toll-free number for resources staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, offenders are able to act on information provided as they receive it. With the additional resource information, former offenders will be able to develop cohesive plans for success in their home community. By providing the hotline as an option for seeking assistance, the DOC anticipates hotline callers will: 1) abstain or decrease use of drugs/alcohol; 2) comply with laws and the stipulations of their parole to avoid revocation; and, 3) utilize information to seek resources in their communities. As a result of the program, individuals are able to cope with the daily stresses of life and avoid substance use and criminal activity. Overall, the program will increase public safety and reduce the long-term costs associated with recidivism.

The distinctiveness of the Reentry Hotline is also found in the staffing of the hotline. To provide offenders access to 24-hour resource information, the DOC implemented the toll free number staffed by graduates or offenders in the final phases of the substance abuse program within the prison system. These Resource Specialists are typically awaiting release from prison, and therefore are idle as they will not be returned to the general population of the prison. Resource Specialists provide information to offenders that call the hotline, which may include workforce development information, treatment referrals, faith based/community program referrals, and other necessary information.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The project is funded through an Edward Byrne Memorial Formula Grant Program awarded to the Department of Corrections through the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet. The grant was awarded in July, 2007, and has been extended through June, 2009. It is anticipated that the project will continue beyond grant funding. The original grant budget provided \$21,375 or 75% of the cost of the Reentry Hotline, and \$7,125 or 25% is provided through a cash match of general funds.

The budget provides for the following operating expenses:

| <i>Item(s) / Service(s)</i> | <i>Quantity</i> | <i>Per Unit Cost</i> | <i>Total Cost</i> |
|--|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Promotional Cards | 100,000 | \$0.15 | \$15,000 |
| Telephone Lines / Internet | Monthly | \$100 | \$2,400 |
| Laptop Computers | 2 | \$1,500 | \$3,000 |
| Computer Security Software | 2 | \$500 | \$1,000 |
| Desks and desk chairs | 2 | \$1,000 | \$2,000 |
| Filing cabinet | 1 | \$500 | \$500 |
| Train-the-Trainer contract | 2 | \$500 | \$1,000 |
| Office Supplies | Monthly | \$150 | \$3,600 |
| Total Costs of Reentry Resource Hotline Implementation | | | \$28,500 |

The primary expense of the hotline is the promotional card printing. The Department of Corrections currently uses our in-house Kentucky Correctional Industries to print the promotional cards at a better rate than would be available in the private sector.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

The annual operational costs are the ongoing expense of the promotional cards, as well as hosting the cost of the telephone lines and internet connectivity. Overall, the annual cost will not exceed \$1,500 per year.

16. How is the program funded?

Currently the project is funded through an Edward Byrne Memorial Formula Grant Program awarded to the Department of Corrections through the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet. The original grant budget provided 75% of the start-up costs of the Reentry Hotline, with a 25% cash match of general funds.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

No new legislation, executive orders or regulations were necessary.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

The Offender Resource Specialists are trained to answer the toll-free hotline which is donated by the Department's prison phone operator. The Resource Specialists may use reentry resource manuals that are printed, or search databases of resource materials online. The Resource Specialists utilize a computer under staff supervision to search for referral opportunities for callers. The computer has additional security measures to ensure the offenders do not have access to inappropriate sites.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

The project was first discussed in April, 2006 between the former Commissioner, John D. Rees and the Executive Director of the Louisville Metro Reentry Task Force, Stephen T. Smith. To our

knowledge, the Kentucky Reentry Hotline is the first of its kind in the nation operated by a corrections agency with a focus on reentry utilizing offender Resource Specialists to answer the 24 hour hotline. Many social service organizations and governmental agencies utilize a single information and referral phone number for local resources. The Reentry Hotline offers: information that is specific for returning offenders; statewide information and resources as well as local resources; and is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, including holidays. Additionally, having an offender answer a reentry resource hotline can offer credibility to the ex-offender caller unlike any other hotline. Staff is always available to provide guidance and support to the Resource Specialists if a phone call becomes difficult.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

The Kentucky Department of Corrections appears to be the only agency operating a Reentry Hotline targeted to returning offenders.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The program has been fully implemented.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

When the project was first considered, the Department wanted to ensure that callers felt comfortable asking important questions. Essentially, the Department did not want callers to provide much information to the Resource Specialist to ensure calls remained as anonymous as possible. The only information that is collected from the caller is their zip code to ensure the referrals and resources provided are customized to their area. This may hinder future research on the effectiveness of the hotline as the Department is unable to track outcomes of hotline calls.

The Offender Resource Specialists are able to discuss their role and its influence on their incarceration and reentry plans. The best verifiable evidence comes directly from the Resource Specialists' testimonials:

- √ "At first, I was a little nervous thinking what if someone calls and I can't find the information for them that they need or not find it fast enough. People were happy to wait, they would call and have no place to go, no food, no clothes, transportation, job, they were happy with any information we could give. Sometimes they would call and just be happy that a real person that was in their situation was on the line and they could just talk about how scared or upset they were and it made me feel good that I could at least just listen and give some kind of feedback that would help. It gives you a real sense(sp) of accomplishment(sp) to be able to help someone instead of being a burden on society." T.C.
- √ "I feel fortunate to have been able to give people some information that hopefully has been useful. I feel pride in myself to have been one of the people selected to do my part in helping someone who might call and need help in some way." T.G.
- √ "I enjoy getting the opportunity to help others, especially knowing that these are some obstacles that I may face upon my release." M.I.

The Resource Specialists received significant training prior to taking calls. It is evident by their responses that they benefit as much as the callers do.

The most significant shortcoming is generating additional calls to the hotline. While the Reentry Hotline has seen a steady growth in phone calls, the number of calls is still low in comparison to the number of offenders in communities throughout Kentucky. Because the hotline has been operational for over a year, the Department's primary goal is to generate additional publicity to encourage ex-offenders to contact the hotline for help.

In the coming months, offenders will be encouraged to contact the hotline while incarcerated to experience the call process prior to release. Many offenders may be concerned that the call is not truly anonymous. By making an initial call prior to release or while with their Probation and Parole Officer the offender will understand what information is gathered and what information is available through the hotline.

The Department has recently ordered an additional 30,000 informational cards with the Reentry Hotline phone number and available resources on the back. These cards will be distributed throughout the state to agencies that provide services to returning offenders. It is anticipated that these agencies will pass the cards along to offenders in the communities and other partner agencies to increase the word-of-mouth advertising of the hotline benefits. As the informational cards are distributed, more cards will be ordered to meet the needs of the communities.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The program has seen tremendous growth in the number of calls fielded each month by the Offender Resource Specialists. The estimate of 200 calls per month has nearly doubled in many months.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

The Kentucky Department of Corrections believes the Reentry Hotline is replicable throughout other states and jurisdictions. Given the tight budget situation that most corrections agencies face, while attempting to meet the reentry needs of their offender population, this program provides a significant benefit for minimal cost.

Any agency interested in replicating the project would need to identify a group of offenders that are still incarcerated that could serve as the Resource Specialists. These offenders may be completing a treatment program, may be involved in a vocational or educational class or may be selected from a pool of applicants. The agency would need to designate specific space within their facility to serve as the hotline office, where staff can continue to supervise the offenders. Because correctional facilities operate 24 hours per day, the hotline operation each day should not pose a significant challenge for the security of the facility.

The agency would need to identify the start-up costs for their project, specifically any equipment, computers or advertising materials necessary for implementation. In many jurisdictions, they may not need additional office equipment or computers, and their primary cost would be the telephone line and advertising materials.

2009 Innovations Awards Program Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate Program Category for your state's submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

Infrastructure and Economic Development

- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Government Operations

- Administration
- Elections
- Public Information
- Revenue

Health & Human Services

- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

Human Resources/Education

- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

Natural Resources

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

Public Safety/Corrections

- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

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This application is also available at www.csg.org, in the Programs section.

Deadline: March 2, 2009