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**Advocacy Alert**

ICCA is concerned with the current situation surrounding BOP contracts for Residential Reentry Centers (RRCs). Many of the RRC providers are also ICCA agency members. There are disturbing rumors coming from the field and unsettling actions taking place from BOP that lead to this concern:

- Pending RFPs are being called back;
- Smaller programs being eliminated;
- USPO residents are no longer welcome by the Bureau;
- There is reportedly a reduction in the BOP budget which we are told may severely impact RRC operations;
- The more progressive SOW of 2016 is being abandoned.

Some of these issues have come to our attention from the Regions, others from DC, others from within the provider network. In brief, BOP seems to be backing off of the positive momentum, research based strategies they have embraced and improved outcomes they have enjoyed over the past couple of years. In order to make our voices heard, and ensure accurate and factual information based on decades of experience with RRCs as an integral part of the conversation, ICCA is asking you to take part in the following action:

- **Contact your Congressional representative and their district staff ASAP (especially those on the attached call list).**
  - Alert agency Board(s), local officials, community, and other supporters.
  - Use the attached talking points to educate elected officials and staff, garner their attention and support for RRCs.
  - Plug in your local story and data if it is available.
  - Let us know who you contact, what their reaction is and any recommended follow up action to be taken

ICCA Executives are working on scheduling meetings with key legislators during the week of July 17 in DC. Any feedback you can share before then will be helpful. We will report back on what we learn the following week.

**This is one of those times when we need to speak with one voice.** Please join us in this effort – the more noise the better.

**Talking Points**  
**Impact of Potential BOP Budget Reductions on RRC Programs**

**RESIDENTIAL REENTRY CENTER'S (RRCs) WORK**

Residential Reentry Centers or halfway houses are an essential step in the Criminal Justice system – the critical handoff from institution to community. We know what we do works. Proper resources to fund efficacy research could demonstrate that RRCs effectively and significantly reduce the risks for recidivism as release through an RRC positively impacts family reunification, helps with securing stable employment, provides linkages to necessary social services, medical, mental health, and substance abuse treatment, and establishes stable post release housing and programming aimed at reducing criminal thinking. Reducing the number of federal inmates participating in RRC programs reduces your state's access to these services, increases chance of recidivism, and could threaten public safety.

“A growing body of research demonstrates that inmates are far more likely to return to society successfully if they are equipped with the prerequisites for a stable life. These include a steady job, a safe place to live, state-issued identification, and access to essential services such as health care, particularly mental health and substance abuse treatment.”

-Sally Q. Yates, Deputy Attorney General  
November 30, 2016

**NUMBERS**

Over 43,000 inmates were released from Federal prisons during 2016. 79% of those released benefited from releasing through a Residential Reentry Center and/or home confinement<sup>1</sup>. There are 249 separate RRCs providing services in communities across the country through 180 competitively awarded contracts.

Bureau of Prisons budget cuts which would reduce the number of inmates released through RRCs is poor policy, and can negatively impact public safety. Potential cuts are also minimizing RRC services.

- Evidence based tools demonstrated to reduce recidivism are being eliminated as a cost reduction strategy employed by the Bureau of Prisons.
- Research proven intervention strategies used in developing essential skills are being eliminated to save costs.

**COSTS**

The budget reduction approach being employed by the Bureau of Prisons threatens to undermine their own mission:

“It is the mission of the Federal Bureau of Prisons to protect society by confining offenders in the controlled environments of prisons and **community-based facilities** that are **safe, humane**, cost-

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Inspector General U.S. Department of Justice. *Audit of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Management of Inmate Placements in Residential Reentry Centers and Home Confinement*.  
<https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2016/a1701.pdf> November, 2016.

efficient, and appropriately secure, and that **provide work and other self-improvement opportunities to assist offenders in becoming law-abiding citizens [emphasis added]**<sup>2</sup>”

The fact is that RRC residents pay a quarter of their wages into subsistence, thereby reducing the cost to the Bureau; their employment is also taxed; they pay fees and restitution including child support.

If the BOP reduces participation in RRCs, this action will:

- Limit the ability of families to reestablish and clarify roles and responsibilities with loved ones who have been incarcerated for years (37.5 months on average).
- Limit employment assistance thereby reducing help in securing living wage jobs which currently impacts the local tax base by filling labor gaps and increases the probability an individual will maintain a crime free lifestyle.
- Impact recidivism rates. Research indicates recidivism is most likely to occur within the first three months after return to the community. Returning an inmate through an RRC is a transition that provides accountability, support and assistance in a supervised environment.
- Impact public safety. Residents of an RRC are closely monitored during community activities, required to participate in employment, job training or education programming, are routinely drug tested, and participate in other pro-social life skills building programs. These are necessary guardrails, in safe reentry efforts.
- Limit funds paid to fines, restitution fees and child support as well as the millions of dollars that RRC residents pay towards subsistence and taxes - an amount representing 25% and 30% respectively of wages earned.

The Department of Justice must assist the Bureau of Prisons in not only eliminating any reduction in RRC services but in expanding the current level of services and the number of releasing prisoners who benefit from transition to the community through and RRC. We invite you to come to our Centers and see the work we do first hand. We ask for your support of this work and urge you to put report language in our DOJ Appropriations bill, expressing "Congress's concern about their actions on reentry programs, and that they need to send the Appropriations Committee a report and plan of action prior to any changes being made..."

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<sup>2</sup> Mission statement of BOP - [https://www.bop.gov/about/agency/agency\\_pillars.jsp](https://www.bop.gov/about/agency/agency_pillars.jsp)