



2014

KEY OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE SAFE AND SMART COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS POLICIES

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By Jason Ziedenisberg



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Key Opportunities to Advance Safe and Smart Community Corrections Policies

- The community corrections field comprised of probation, parole, pretrial, diversion, specialty courts, and non-profit partners serves nearly 5 million justice-involved individuals each year.
- When we look at who is locked up in our prisons and jails or juvenile facilities around the country, the data shows that there are hundreds of thousands of individuals who had a drug, mental health or associated treatment need that went unmet.
- The Affordable Care Act (ACA) could be a critical “game changer” for community corrections. ACA provides a significant opportunity to help the field reduce the use of incarceration and meet individuals’ treatment needs outside the criminal justice system.
- Millions of individuals who were in prison, jail or juvenile facilities return to the community every year, and some measures of recidivism show that close to two-thirds of those leaving a correctional institution will reoffend. Community corrections can tailor supervision and support according to an individual’s risk and need; connect them to school, treatment, housing, cognitive interventions and employment; and provide increased opportunities for restitution to repay crime victims.
- To take advantage of the historic opportunities offered by the ACA and Second Chance Act, our field and our partners need to be proactive in securing needed resources, so that we can successfully meet our obligations to our clients and the public while enhancing community safety.

What is the Community Corrections Collaborative Network?

The [Community Corrections Collaborative Network \(CCCN\)](#) is a network comprised of the leading associations representing nearly 90,000-plus probation, parole, pretrial, and treatment professionals around the country, including the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), the Association of Paroling Authorities International (APAI), the Federal Probation and Pretrial Officers Association (FPPOA), the International Community Corrections Association (ICCA), the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), the National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies (NAPSA), and the National Association of Probation Executives (NAPE).





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Key Opportunities to Advance Safe and Smart Community Corrections Policies

“Providing more and more effective treatment on release could save 17 billion in criminal justice costs. These outcomes would be greater if we provide health care coverage and treatment to individuals on probation, parole and pretrial supervision. In a variety of ways, the Affordable Care Act is improving the ability of criminal justice leaders to address the health needs of the justice population at every stage of the system, from diversion alternatives and intake screening on the front end, to reentry programs on the back end. We can save resources, improve outcomes and make our communities both safer and stronger than ever before.”

—Attorney General Eric Holder, National Institute of Corrections telecast, June 18, 2014

The community corrections field comprised of probation, parole, pretrial, diversion, specialty courts, and non-profit partners serves nearly 5 million justice-involved individuals each year. As the cost of incarceration continues to rise, and as more and more evidence on what works to curb offending and change people’s lives emerges, policymakers are coming to realize that a strong community corrections system is key to solving America’s mass incarceration challenge. Research indicates that community corrections agencies can and do provide effective alternatives to incarceration. This is the time, as new opportunities emerge through health care reform and an expanded focus on reentry, to press policymakers on key issues to improve public safety through Safe and Smart alternatives to incarceration.

Health Reform and Community Corrections – A Potential “Game Changer”

When we look at who is locked up in our prisons and jails or juvenile facilities around the country, the data show that there are hundreds of thousands of individuals who had a drug, mental health or associated treatment need that went unmet. Nine out of ten individuals who are incarcerated were uninsured before they entered the system, making it far less likely they would have received the treatment they needed before ending up in a cycle of crime. Anytime we can meet the treatment needs of an individual before they engage in criminal or delinquent behavior, we can save taxpayers thousands of dollars in costs related to incarceration and victimization and reduce the likelihood that a person will reoffend by helping that person move past criminality.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) could be a critical “game changer” for community corrections. ACA provides a significant opportunity to help the field reduce the use of incarceration and meet individuals’ treatment needs outside the criminal justice system. Under the health care reform expansion of the Affordable Care Act, up to 15 million previously uninsured low income adults will be eligible for health care coverage. This change, alone, creates the opportunity to support the drug treatment, mental health and associated needs of millions of individuals before they end up more entrenched in the criminal justice system. We can accomplish this through diversion and drug courts, and pay for the treatment of individuals leaving correctional facilities, and those who are currently on probation, parole and pretrial supervision status. Further, ACA reforms will

revolutionize medical and payer electronic information exchanges providing improved expediency and efficiency in service provision.

The opportunity to bring treatment to our clients at scale cannot be underestimated. By dramatically increasing the number of our clients who are insured and directing them to treatment that can be paid for under the ACA, community corrections will play a huge role in helping transform our clients' lives.

In Cook County (the second largest county run criminal justice system in the U.S., covering the city of Chicago, Illinois), justice officials estimated that only *one in ten* individuals appearing in court prior to ACA had insurance to pay for treatment and services. Post ACA, Cook County projects *nine in ten* justice-involved individuals appearing in court will have health care.

A Second Chance: Improving Reentry for People Leaving Prison

“There are 2.3 million people incarcerated in America. We should invest in best practices and evidence based solutions to reduce recidivism and help ex-offenders as they return to our communities. Community corrections has an important role to play in promoting diversion and alternative sentencing models that promote public safety and prevent future generations from entering the criminal justice system.”

—Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), April 6, 2014

Millions of individuals who were in prison, jail or juvenile facilities return to the community every year, and some measures of recidivism show that close to two-thirds of those leaving a correctional institution will reoffend. Community corrections can tailor supervision and support according to an individual's risk and need; connect them to school, treatment, housing, cognitive interventions and employment; and provide increased opportunities for restitution to repay crime victims. We can help people reentering the community move past criminal and delinquent behavior towards more productive lives, avoiding future imprisonment.

Since 2008, the Second Chance Act (SCA) allowed the federal government to partner with the community corrections field to improve services to individuals returning to the community after a period of incarceration. Through a partnership with several federal agencies under the U.S. Justice Department umbrella and with their nonprofit partners, the SCA provides the community corrections field key technical assistance and targeted funding to pilot innovative approaches to address the reentry challenges of our clients. Probation, parole, pretrial practitioners, courts and nonprofits can receive support to expand mentoring and treatment for returning individuals and their families, strengthen specialty courts, improve probation supervision practices, encourage better use of technology and help build capacity for community corrections systems.

Federal policy makers have supported SCA activities with a range of between \$60 and \$100 million, and other federal agencies (such as Housing and Urban Development and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), and state and local governments have partnered with U.S. Justice Department agencies to maximize the impact of these opportunities.

What does community corrections need to realize these historic opportunities?

Community corrections can harness the opportunity offered by the ACA and the SCA by redirecting people from correctional facilities to the community, and expanding the capacity of community corrections to serve individuals in the most cost effective way to change their behavior. To take advantage of the historic opportunities offered by the ACA and SCA, our field and our partners need to be proactive in securing needed resources, so that we can successfully meet our obligations to our clients and the public while enhancing community safety.

- 1) Community corrections agencies need to link ourselves to the ACA and SCA implementation networks:** The community corrections field at all levels – from the officer in the field, to the support staff and treatment providers that work with our clients, to the leadership of the thousands of departments, courts, and nonprofits—all need to connect to the networks supporting ACA and SCA implementation. [The National Institute of Corrections](#), and the [Council of State Governments Justice Center National Reentry Resource Center](#), the [Center for Health and Justice at TASC](#), [Community Oriented Correctional Health Services](#), and the [National Association of Drug Court Professionals](#) are all providing special resources to community corrections professionals to take advantage of the benefits of the ACA and SCA.
- 2) Advocate to remove the barriers to successful implementation of the ACA and SCA:** While the new health reform related funding for treatment and the new framework around reentry have the potential to transform the field that will only happen if we can eliminate barriers to our success. Community corrections professionals need to educate and work with our partners in law enforcement, legislatures and the community to address the legislative, programmatic and policy barriers that prevent our field from realizing these opportunities. CCCN believes we need paradigm shifts across our field to take on this new role, and that we need to work with our partners to remove legislative, programmatic and policy barriers to our field’s ability to:
 - Shift the system to risk and need approach;
 - Incentivize behavior change;
 - Reduce reliance on monetary barriers to release;
 - Limit the use of unnecessary incarceration;
 - Keep more people in the community whenever possible;
 - Expand the role of victims in community corrections;
 - Reduce bias, and increase fairness;
 - Expand opportunities for diversion; and
 - Focus the system on what is proven to work.

The barriers we face in community corrections to achieving this new paradigm are as diverse as the communities we live in, and the thousands of courts, pretrial, probation, parole and nonprofit entities we work in. Addressing these barriers may include anything from changing laws around sentencing, to pressing for the ACA’s Medicaid expansion to come to your state, to working in your community to advocate for more resources for the SCA, to working with the courts and law enforcement to change policies that aren’t making us safer. In order to address these barriers, we need to engage law enforcement, crime victims, legislators, and our communities in implementing these policy changes.

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The CCCN is sponsored by the [National Institute of Corrections \(NIC\)](#).

For more information on the CCCN, please contact network manager Greg Crawford at gcrawford@bop.gov or visit our website at: <http://community.nicic.gov/wikis/cccn/default.aspx>