

Orange County Sheriff's Department  
Inmate Re-Entry Unit



# **Orange County Sheriff's Department Inmate Re-Entry Unit**

## ***SUMMARY***

The Orange County Re-Entry Partnership (OCREP) founded in December 2005, with the Sheriff's Department as the lead agency, collaborated with over 40 government agencies, private companies, and non-profit organizations to examine Orange County's inmate re-entry practices. The partnership was developed to bridge the gap between the release of inmates from incarceration to community-based services. Consequently, the Orange County Sheriff's Department in 2006 established the Inmate Re-Entry Unit to provide in-custody programs designed to educate and prepare inmates for re-entrance into society.

Due to this undertaking, the 2010-2011 Grand Jury elected to study the Inmate Re-entry Unit and its programs. The review found that the pre-release services offered by the Inmate Re-Entry Unit reduced recidivism (re-entry into the jail system) rates in Orange County. A significant component for the preparation of released inmates is the Great Escape Program, which contributes to the formerly incarcerated individuals' success in staying out of the penal system. Beneficial aspects provided to the community when former inmates do not re-offend were analyzed.

The mission of the Inmate Re-Entry Unit is to successfully transition inmates upon release from custody into the community. The re-entry services offer inmates initial assessment and access to the Great Escape Program while incarcerated. In January 2007, the Great Escape Resource Center opened to provide outreach resources to former inmates.

Orange County Sheriff's Department statistics demonstrate that if an inmate receives rehabilitation programming while in custody and these services are continued immediately upon release, the chance of becoming a productive member of society increases by at least 25%. Breaking the cycle of antisocial behavior and criminality and thereby reducing the recidivism rate is the ultimate goal of the Orange County Sheriff's Department Re-Entry Unit and their programs.

This study revealed the need for greater public awareness as well as an on-going need for funding sources.

## **REASON FOR STUDY**

During the course of the Grand Jury's introduction and familiarization with the Orange County correctional programs, one area of concern is recidivism (in this report recidivism refers to a released inmate who re-offends and returns to the jail system within one year or less).

In an effort to identify and describe new and/or improved methods for reducing the inmate revolving door phenomena within Orange County jails, the Grand Jury chose to study this topic. Recidivism is not only costly but jeopardizes the safety of Orange County citizens. After reviewing attempts made through many programs within Orange County detention facilities in recent years, one comprehensive recidivism reduction project stood out as being successful – the Inmate Re-Entry Unit. The importance and success of this Unit's programs in improving the likelihood released inmates become productive members of society could not be ignored. The cost of housing an inmate (approximately \$40,000 plus per year), the safety of the community and the salvaging of broken lives became obvious reasons to encourage and recognize this program.

## **METHODOLOGY**

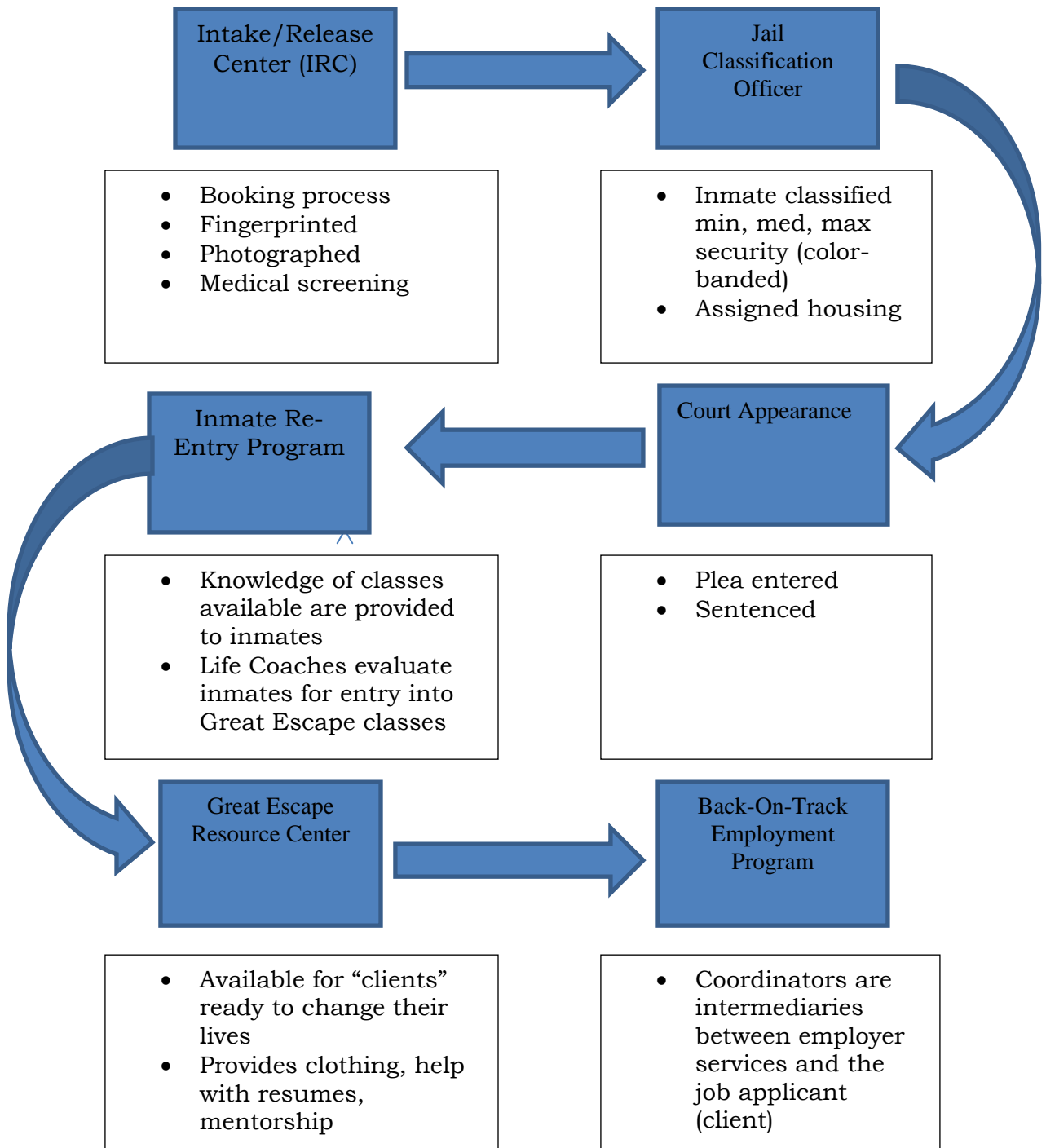
The 2010-2011 Grand Jury conducted the inmate re-entry study by examining a program of the Orange County Sheriff's Department titled "Inmate Services Division Correctional Programs and Inmate Re-Entry Needs Profiles". This inclusive listing of services describes available classes, programs and facilities. A flow chart from the Inmate Re-Entry Unit was used to understand the process when assessing inmates after incarceration. Meetings were held with the Executive Management of the Inmate Services Division. Interviews were conducted with a Sheriff's Captain, Lieutenant and Sergeant from the Central Jail Complex/Intake and Release Center (IRC). Staff members from the Great Escape Resource Center were interviewed. The *Orange County Sheriff's Department Inmate Re-Entry Facts at a Glance* publication, an overview of each program and a listing of Inmate Re-Entry Totals for fiscal year 2008/2009 was reviewed. Lastly, 2009/2010 Inmate Re-Entry data was examined.

## **FACTS**

- Fact: Orange County Re-Entry Partnership (OCREP) is intended to improve transition of inmates into the community.
- Fact: The Orange County Sheriff's Department has a program for classifying inmates after booking.
- Fact: Inmates voluntarily attend rehabilitative programs while in custody.
- Fact: Re-Entry coordinators have a computer-generated assessment form to determine inmates risk to re-offend.
- Fact: Pre-release planning sessions are to be completed on an individual 30 days prior to the inmate's release.
- Fact: The Re-Entry Unit designed the Back-On-Track Employment Program to assist recently released inmates find work.

## INTAKE/RELEASE CENTER TO RE-ENTRY/RELEASE FLOW CHART

(The following chart was designed by the 2010-2011 Grand Jury to illustrate the process from incarceration to release and employment as described in this report)



## **Analysis**

The Orange County Re-Entry Partnership (OCREP) was created to serve as a critical link between community resource providers and the formerly incarcerated individuals striving to re-establish healthy, productive and rewarding lives. The steps required to accomplish this goal for the inmate include initial risk and needs assessments, in-custody classes, pre-release planning sessions, and post-release resource services. OCREP serves as the connecting thread between community resource providers and formerly confined individuals, now referred to as “clients”. A simple word choice such as “client” when referring to a released inmate as opposed to “ex-con, jail bird, etc.”, offers dignity and a sense of hope. This partnership involves agencies which include Probation, Courts, District Attorney, Public Defender, Health Care Agency and private companies.

### Intake Release Center (IRC)

When male or female adults are arrested for criminal violations and booked at the Central Jail Complex, the process of classifying inmates commences with an experienced Deputy Sheriff of the Orange County Sheriff's Department assigned to assessing incoming inmates. The deputies' primary assignment is to ensure the security, protection, and welfare of the individual currently being booked, as well as the inmates incarcerated within the facility, and the jail personnel. The deputies responsible for classifying inmates provide crucial information to the staff regarding the incoming inmate.

### Jail Classification Officer

During the booking process the Deputy Sheriff completes the Initial Screening Classification Assessment document on the inmate to determine classification status. The type of law violation, propensity of the inmate for aggressive and violent behavior, affiliation of gang involvement and criminal history are reviewed and stored in the Sheriff's Department data base.

Inmates are classified into the following categories:

- MINIMUM - indicates a low risk inmate who will be assigned to a dorm unit
- MEDIUM - an individual exhibiting abnormal behavior or history of mental illness
- MAXIMUM - an inmate that is permitted to co-mingle with others

- while in a secured environment
- PROTECTIVE CUSTODY – segregated from jail population for their own safety
- ADMINISTRATIVE CUSTODY – inmates that present a danger to themselves or others and are therefore forbidden from association with other inmates.

Following the booking and the initial screening process, the inmate is assigned to a particular housing unit based on their classification and given a bedroll before being moved to their assigned area. Included in the bedroll is a *Correctional Programs Inmate Orientation* brochure describing available programs for inmate consideration. The same information is also posted throughout the facility. Inmates voluntarily attend re-entry programs while in custody to help them stay sober, find jobs and places to live upon release.

#### Inmate Re-Entry Program

Life coaches are civilian employees from the Inmate Re-Entry Unit who gather the information collected from the initial booking/classification session and focus on the answers to three questions. These three answers are used collectively by the Inmate Re-Entry Unit on a form titled “PROXY” data. The questions are:

- current age (lower age generates higher score)
- age at first arrest (lower age generates higher score)
- number of prior arrests (greater number equals higher score).

The inmate’s answers to these three questions are assigned a numerical value, ranging from 1 to 6. Values from 1 to 4 are the least likely to re-offend and are not given priority. Values of 5 or 6 are considered evidence as to the greatest possibility to re-offend and are assigned high priority for a life coach interview. The resulting scores help the life coaches assess the inmate in determining the best and quickest route to successful re-entry. Important areas of the assessment other than PROXY data are substance abuse history, education level, housing information and employment history.

An important tool of assessment used by the life coach is the Wisconsin Risk Needs Assessment. This assessment tool is a 53-item interview-driven analysis. Since its adoption by the National Institute of Corrections (a branch of the Department of Justice) in 1982, the Wisconsin instrument has been widely accepted as a tool for risk prediction or properly classifying offenders and needs assessment. It is currently used by the Orange County Sheriff’s Department, the Orange

County Probation Department as well as the Inmate Re-Entry Unit. By implementing the same assessment tool, all three agencies maximize resources to better identify the inmate/clients needs. In lieu of spending resources on low-risk offenders, the ability to place higher-risk inmates into programs targeted for their needs allows the use of scarce resources to be allocated efficiently.

All four Orange County detention facilities, James A. Musick, Theo Lacy, Central Jail Complex (IRC) and Men's Central Jail offer classes in life skills, educational programs, vocational programs, behavior modification, substance abuse and general services. The educational programs assist inmates in obtaining a high school diploma or GED equivalent and language skills. Math and reading classes are offered as well as classes in citizenship, government and other academic programs. There are vocational programs in food preparation, welding, cabinetry, sewing, software applications and general workforce readiness. Inmates dealing with drug and alcohol addiction can access programs to assist in their recovery. All inmates have access to these correctional programs, however, the Great Escape/Re-Entry Planning classes and the OCREP/Re-Entry Partnership programs are only available to inmates who have been assessed and approved by life coaches using the collected scores. All four jail facilities offer this re-entry program.

Another program the Inmate Re-Entry Unit is in the process of implementing is an evidence-based in-custody curriculum called, *Thinking for a Change*. Evidence-based practices utilize research and documented data as a basis for determining the best action to take that will generate positive results. *Thinking for a Change* focuses on modifying an inmate/clients thinking and behavior.

#### Great Escape Resource Center

Thirty days prior to being released, inmates meet with a re-entry coordinator for a one-on-one release planning finalization assessment. This includes encouragement to utilize the services provided by the Great Escape Resource Center.

Upon release, these formerly incarcerated individuals may go to the Great Escape Resource Center. This facility provides coordinators to act as intermediaries between employer services and the job applicant, who evaluate the clients' skills, work history and reliability and monitor the employees' progress. The facility is centrally located adjacent to the Orange County Probation Department at 909 North Main Street in Santa Ana, California. The resource center is open to individuals ready to change the direction of their lives, but need help to achieve this goal. The Center also provides referrals for housing, domestic violence shelters



and direct links to other community based assistance providers.

Prior to the creation of the Great Escape Resource Center, there were common problems with lack of housing and job placement. Homelessness and housing instability put people at risk for incarceration. Nationally, one out of seven jail inmates is homeless upon entering jail. Research suggests that released inmates who have stable housing are less likely to return to jail. However, they must overcome many obstacles to obtain housing, such as limited financial resources, lack of affordable housing, community zoning regulations and the stigma associated with a criminal record. The Inmate Re-Entry Unit has imposed restrictions dealing with the operation of approved housing, which allow only two people to share a bedroom and requires the availability of 24 hour medical service. Currently, the re-entry program serves 250 clients a month at the resource center.

One component of the Great Escape Resource Center is the Back-on-Track Employment Program. This program finds businesses in the community that will accept clients that have been formerly incarcerated. It not only assists in finding employment but also aids in resume preparation, interview skills and provides proper clothing for an interview. The Back-On-Track coordinators offer continued support to both the client and the employer through a network of resources like free services to businesses and hiring incentives such as the Federal Bonding Program which minimizes employer liability. It also offers another federal program called Work Opportunity Tax Credits. These tax credits are awarded to employers for hiring formerly confined individuals within one year after release.

In October 2010, in the first event of its kind, 20 former Orange County jail inmates were recognized for staying sober and trouble-free for at least one year as participants in the Great Escape Program. In a ceremony headed by Orange County Sheriff's Department and several community charities, former inmates took turns telling their stories before friends, relatives and supporters.

### Jail Transition Strategies

Orange County is one of six communities in the nation selected by The National Institute of Corrections (a branch of the Department of Justice) and its partner the Urban Institute (a privately funded non-profit foundation) to implement the transition from jail to community model. This program devises a jail transition strategy responsive to local circumstances, resources and priorities. These two national organizations have awarded Orange County (one of four selected counties) a Transition from Jail to Community (TJC) technical assistance

grant, which provided free training to 30 re-entry staff. This training was completed in September 2010. Additional goals of the grant include assistance in developing initial inmate assessment tools, standardized curriculum, defining agency roles and improved data collection. The objective of the Inmate Re-Entry Unit's staff is that implementing this grant will create stronger collaborations between all of the agencies in Orange County that service this population, lower recidivism rates, reduce jail overcrowding, reunite families and make Orange County communities safer.

An additional goal of the TJC program is to design new ways of engaging a broader base of elected officials as to the merits of the TJC initiative. A current focus is the development of program enhancements and new program concepts for submittal as a proposal to the Second Chance Act grant program. The Second Chance Act provides additional grant funds for the mentoring (overseeing) of clients from the Re-Entry Program. The resulting outcome could have positive financial implications for Orange County.

The main reason for basing policy on evidence instead of belief or hunch is to provide taxpayers an acceptable return on the enormous investment the County makes in its public programs. Unlike the private sector, there is no feedback from market tests in the public sector. During the first half of 2008, evidence-based practices seemed on the rise. Several states (including California) are reviewing the impacts of their corrections policies and laws. Evidence-based practices are finding a growing audience and the Orange County Sheriff's Department Inmate Re-Entry Unit is in the forefront of using such practices to find out what works and what does not.

The Inmate Re-Entry Unit's latest six-month results regarding client recidivism is 148 clients out of 1,606 or 9.2 % of the total clients/transition case plans developed. Inmate Re-Entry Unit staff predicts that the recidivism rate currently reported will rise due to factors such as drug abuse relapse, violation of probation and or parole, lack of housing, etc. Although unsure as to how high current recidivism rates will rise, they are confident that because of the intensive in-custody services combined with immediate post-release services their recidivism rate will be far under the current 67% recidivism rate plaguing the State of California.

According to the Urban Institute, a research gathering center located in Washington D.C. and commissioned in 1968 by President Lyndon Johnson, evidence cannot help solve every problem or fix every program, but it can illuminate the path to more effective public policy. The sole purpose of the Urban Institute is to remain an independent nonpartisan

center for analysis of the problems facing America's cities and their residents. The following seven elements are necessary for sound policy analysis.

- Identifying the most important issues and putting them first.
- Gathering as much data as time and money allow.
- Turning to informed and unbiased experts for analysis.
- Applying the most appropriate methodologies for the problem and data.
- Pursuing evidence without preconceived conclusions in mind.
- Subjecting findings to independent review.
- Sharing results, whether positive or negative, with the public.

As a result of the progress made by the Inmate Re-Entry Unit, special recognition was given to the Great Escape Resource Center as a model by the National Institute of Corrections (more information can be found on the NIC website). This program continues to evolve as proven by the ongoing applications for grant funds to extend the Transition From Jail to Communities initiative. A continuing goal of the Inmate Re-Entry Unit is to increase public awareness regarding the benefits of reducing recidivism rates in Orange County.

### ***FINDINGS:***

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the 2010-2011 Grand Jury requires or requests responses from each agency affected by the findings presented in this section. The responses are to be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

Based on its investigation of Orange County Sheriff's Department Re-Entry Program in Orange County, the 2010-2011 Orange County Grand Jury has arrived at seven principal findings, as follows:

- F.1:** Experienced Sheriff Deputies are a primary element of the booking and assessment process.
- F.2:** Former inmates are identified as "clients" upon entry into to Great Escape Program.
- F.3:** Twenty former Orange County jail inmates participated in the Great Escape Program and were recognized for staying sober and not re-offending for at least a year.
- F.4:** Resources (housing and employment) are barriers to successful completion of the Inmate Re-Entry Program.

- F.5:** The Inmate Re-Entry Unit has contributed to reduced recidivism rates.
- F.6:** Greater public awareness of Orange County Sheriff's Department Inmate Re-Entry Program would provide a realistic view of recidivism.
- F.7:** The Orange County Sheriff's Department Inmate Re-Entry Unit Program was identified as a model by the National Institute of Corrections.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

In accordance with California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the 2010-2011 Grand Jury requires or requests responses from each agency affected by the recommendations presented in this section. The responses are to be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

Based on its investigation of Orange County Sheriff's Department Inmate Re-Entry Unit in Orange County, the 2010-2011 Orange County Grand Jury has arrived at two principal recommendations, as follows:

- R.1: Continue to seek funding to support the Re-Entry Program.**
- R.2: Increase public awareness of the value of programs responsible for recidivism reduction.**

### **REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS:**

The California Penal Code Section 933(c) requires any public agency which the Grand Jury has reviewed, and about which it has issued a final report, to comment to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the agency. Such comment shall be made *no later than 90 days*

after the Grand Jury publishes its report (filed with the Clerk of the Court); except that in the case of a report containing findings and recommendations pertaining to a department or agency headed by an elected County official (e.g. District Attorney, Sheriff, etc.), such comment shall be made *within 60 days* to the Presiding Judge with an information copy sent to the Board of Supervisors.

Furthermore, California Penal Code Section 933.05(a), (b), (c), details, as follows, the manner in which such comment(s) are to be made:

- (a) As to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:
  - (1) The respondent agrees with the finding
  - (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.
  
- (b) As to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:
  - (1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
  - (2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
  - (3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This time frame shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
  - (4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.
  
- (c) If a finding or recommendation of the grand jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the Board of Supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the Board of Supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with the Penal Code Section 933.05 are required from the:

<b><u>Responding Agency</u></b>	<b><u>Findings</u></b>	<b><u>Recommendations</u></b>
<b>Orange County Board Of Supervisors</b>	<b>F.4</b>	<b>R.1, R.2</b>
<b>Orange County Sheriff Coroner</b>	<b>F.4, F.6</b>	<b>R.1, R.2</b>

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with the Penal Code Section 933.05 are requested from the:

<b>Orange County CEO</b>	<b>F.6</b>	<b>R.2</b>
<b>Orange County Public Information Office</b>	<b>F.6</b>	<b>R.2</b>
<b>Orange County Social Service Agency</b>	<b>F.6</b>	<b>R.2</b>
<b>Orange County Probation Department</b>	<b>F.6</b>	<b>R.2</b>