

**REPORT OF THE
SECRETARY OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Status Report:
The Implementation and
Operation of the Jail Transition
Programs Administered by the
Department of Corrections**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 22

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
2007**



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Corrections

GENE M. JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

P.O. BOX 26963
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23261
(804) 674-3000

April 19, 2007

The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine
The Honorable Vincent F. Callahan, Jr.
The Honorable John H. Chichester

RE: Item 385 D. Jail Transition Programs

Dear Sirs:

This is a revised edition of the report required in Item 385 D. of the 2006 Appropriations Act. The Department of Corrections was directed to provide a status report on the implementation and operation of the jail transition programs administered by the Department, including the VASAVOR program. The original report was submitted in October, 2006.

The Department was requested to revisit its submission and merge certain documents that had been previously submitted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Gene M. Johnson", is positioned above the printed name.

Gene M. Johnson

Attachment

Note: This revision was originally submitted February 20, 2007.

Virginia Department of Corrections Jail Transition Program

Statement of Purpose

This report is in response to 2006 Appropriations Act, Item 385 D request for status report on jail transition programs operated by the Department. The request asks for the following:

- 1) the participating jails, date the jail joined the program, and whether the department or other organizations are contracted to administer the program;
- 2) services provided to offenders participating in the program;
- 3) the status of offenders released from custody through the program in fiscal year 2005;
- 4) factors affecting utilization or expansion of the program;
- 5) the impact of the program on the department's ability to address the backlog of state-responsible offenders in local and regional jails;
- 6) the status and effectiveness of the Virginia Serious and Violent Offender Reentry (VASAVOR) program;
- 7) evaluation plan for determining the efficacy of the jail transition programs

385 D - 1) Operation of jail Transition Programs

The Department of Corrections Offender Reentry Program provides an integrated system for transitioning offenders back into the community and allows the offender an opportunity to be closer to home to begin the family re-integration process. The program also provides a connection to valuable resources in the community. A Transition Coordinator is assigned to each participating jail to oversee the program development and implementation.

The program consists of three phases. While in phase one, offenders attend daily education programming for a period of up to 60 days. Offenders are transported to the local jail prior to their program start date, and remain at the jail until their scheduled release date.

Offenders who meet the criteria for work release will participate in the phase two work release component. While on work release, offenders will be placed in jobs in the local community. They will have an opportunity to maintain these jobs upon release. During this time, offenders will be able to develop work skills, earn money and start to pay on their court costs, fines, restitution and child support. The duration of this phase varies at each jail. The average stay in the work release phase is three months.

Phase three provides a continuum of services and resource networking for forty-five days after release. Peer support groups are also established. The Transition Coordinator continues to act as a support to the offender and works closely with the local Probation and Parole office and other community resources to ensure a smooth transition

Participating Jails

<u>Jail Locations</u>	<u>Program Start Date</u>	<u>Participants</u>
Hampton Community Corrections	11/03	157
Henrico County Jail	12/03	481
Albemarle Charlottesville Regional	12/03	328
Riverside Regional Jail	12/03	245
Chesapeake City Jail	5/04	250
Roanoke City Jail	2/05	225
Arlington County Jail	4/05	159
Norfolk City Jail	5/05	222
Danville Adult Detention Center	9/05	81
New River Valley Regional Jail	9/05	96
Northwestern Regional Jail	2/06	63
Pamunkey Regional Jail	2/06	111
Hampton Roads Regional Jail	4/06	61
Rappahannock Regional Jail	8/06	42
Blue Ridge Regional Jail	10/06	20

The program located at the Arlington County Jail is privatized and is currently being administered by Health Fellowship Resources. The other jail locations are managed by a Department of Corrections Transition Coordinator under the supervision of the local Probation and Parole District Office. Volunteers are also utilized to assist with programming and providing transition assistance, as are paid vendors.

The Department operates a similar program for female offenders at the Southampton Women's Pre Release Center.

385 D – 2) Services Provided

A variety of services and education programs are offered to offenders participating in the Reentry Program. In addition, collaborations and partnerships have been established with state and local agencies as well as non-profit agencies. The following is a list of various education programming and services provided.

Education Programming:

Cognitive Thinking; Goal Setting; Anger management; Conflict Resolution; Substance Abuse Counseling; Healthy Living; Healthy Sexuality; Values Clarification; Communication Skills; Family Reunification; Parenting; Dealing with Emotions; Employment Skills; Interviewing Skills; Resume Writing; Application Completion; Money Management; Making It On Supervision; Basic Computer Skills; and Community Resources and Addiction & Change Management

Services Provided:

- Assist offenders with securing birth certificate and social security cards and other documents necessary to obtain DMV identification upon release
- Provide local contact with Child Support Enforcement
- Provide addresses to courts for offenders to coordinate fines and restitution payment schedule
- Pre-register offenders with the Virginia Employment Commission
- Obtain free clothing for indigent offenders from local charities
- Coordinate with Social Services for emergency food stamps and provide offenders with community food pantries
- Arrange for placement in local treatment or residential centers
- Encourage obtaining and arrange for Credit Reports and DMV Compliance Summary
- Provide offenders with internet job leads for specific jobs in their releasing area – Call previous employers concerning re-hire status
- Coordinate with Department of Rehabilitative Services of available services
- Ensure proper transfer of supervision from sentencing districts to releasing districts
- Obtain information on training and educational opportunities
- Refer appropriate offenders to the Day Reporting Program
- Find, obtain funding, and coordinate housing for hard to place offenders with no home plans

385 D – 3) Program Evaluation / Status of Offenders Released Fiscal Year 2005

A 2005FY report prepared by the Department's Research and Management Services Unit showed that of the 389 participants completing in the Jail Reentry Program; there was a return rate of 15.2% of offenders who participated in the program compared to 29% of other offenders released from the Department of Corrections.

385 D – 4) Factors Affecting Utilization or Expansion of the Program

The inability to hire a Transition Coordinator to oversee the Lynchburg City Jail and the Rappahannock Regional Jail programs in a timely manner caused concern. The Lynchburg position was advertised six times and the Rappahannock position was advertised four times prior to selecting qualified candidates. The difficulty to fill these positions is attributed to the area location, lack of experience of candidates, and salary.

One factor which may affect the expansion of the program is lack of space in some jails to accommodate the needs of the program.

The jails listed below have expressed an interest in developing a partnership with the Department to house the Reentry Program in the future. These jails are able to provide jail beds for program participants, a designated classroom for workshops, and office space for the Transition Coordinator.

- Western Tidewater Regional Jail
- Virginia Beach City Jail
- Middle River Regional Jail
- Middle Peninsula Regional Jail
- Charlotte County Jail
- Petersburg City Jail
- Southwest Virginia Regional Jail

385 D – 5) Impact on Backlog of State Responsible Offenders

The impact of the program on the department's ability to address the backlog of state responsible offenders in local and regional jails has been beneficial. For every offender brought into the reentry program, the jail is relieved of an out of compliance state responsible offender in addition to the jail's normal intake quota. The program first began in late 2003 and since that time 2,541 offenders have participated in the program, thus reducing the jail's population by that amount.

385 D – 6) Virginia Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (VASAVOR)

With grant funding from the U.S. Department of Justice and other Federal agencies, the Virginia Department of Corrections (VA DOC) has implemented a reentry program for serious and violent offenders in two localities – Fairfax County, started in February 2003 and the City of Newport News that started in March 2005. The program is designed to identify and address critical services and supervision requirements needed to enhance the offenders' chances for a successful reentry back into the community. VASAVOR is the only such program the VA DOC has that addresses the needs of the serious and violent offender.

Participants in this program have totaled 206 in Fairfax and 51 in Newport News as of June 30, 2006.

To be eligible, prior or current offenses must be serious or violent. Offenders with a release home plan to Fairfax or Newport News are screened for possible placement into the program.

The program is administered in three phases:

Phase I – participant assessment and reentry planning. During this phase, VASAVOR offenders are identified by the Department of Corrections, assessed for suitability, and begin special programming while in the institution. An institutional reentry plan is developed and information regarding the prospective participant is forwarded to the locality. The participant is transferred to the local jail where he/she will meet with the Probation/Parole Officer and the Transition Team members. The Transition Team develops a community reentry plan. Pre-release and transitional programming is provided in the local jail during an approximate 45-day transitional period.

Phase II – the establishment of individual and community support systems. In this phase the offender is released to the community. The Transition Team coordinates access to community-based services to meet the needs identified in the community reentry plan.

Phase III – the offender is expected to have achieved self-sufficiency, responsibility, and productivity with his own support system; including family, mentors, and peer support groups.

To be considered “Successfully Terminated” from the program, the offender must have successfully completed Probation/Parole supervision and be placed in community housing. They must be living independently, contributing to their living expenses, working, have no new charges, be clean and sober for a significant period of time, and be making progress in all work, home and educational goals.

To date, 25 participants have successfully completed the program in Fairfax, and 5 have successfully completed the program in Newport News.

Recidivism reports completed in recent years by the Department of Corrections looked at 1998 and 1999 populations and used data gathered after a span of three years had elapsed from time of release. The VASAVOR Program has not been in existence long enough to complete a comparable recidivism study. Serious and violent offenders such as sex offenders generally show lower recidivism in the early years of release with increased recidivism in longitudinal studies. To this end, yearly studies for a five year period are recommended. The results of these yearly evaluations will be used to revise eligibility requirements to target serious and violent offenders who are most likely to benefit from participation in the VASAVOR program. In the meanwhile, program effectiveness has been measured through other means, i.e., Process Evaluations, Staff and Participant Surveys.

The two qualitative surveys revealed positive perceptions of the benefits of the VASAVOR program from both staff and participants. Staff members and affiliated partners believe the program is effective, has high collaboration and congenial staff functioning, and uses evidence-based practices. Staff surveys also indicate the need for program improvements including expanded services to returning offenders. Participants rated the program high on staff rapport, assistance to participants, self assessment, motivation to participate in the program, provision of services, and service quality.

This is the 3rd year of a 3-year Federal Grant. The total allocation was \$2,396,647. The VA DOC will be submitting a Decision Package to convert federal grant funding to state funding effective July 2007. Resources necessary to sustain the program in both localities total approximately \$600,000 annually. This amount will afford the Department the opportunity to continue the sole program established to address the needs of this high risk population.

385 D - 7) Evaluation Plan for Determining the Efficacy of the Programs

As referenced above, the Department's Research and Management Services Unit has completed extensive research on both the jail reentry program and VASAVOR. Statistical data is maintained on all of the inmate participates of each program. The results of the research have been positive reflecting a rate of 15.2% of graduates of the program compared to 29% of other offenders. A copy of this research may be obtained by contacting the Department of Corrections Research and Management Services Unit.

The program has been operational since 2003 and the feeling of the Department is that it has been a great success. Feedback from program participates, jail personnel, community service providers and others has been positive. Additionally, the program has enabled the Department to form partnerships with other state agencies, non profit agencies and other community resources.