

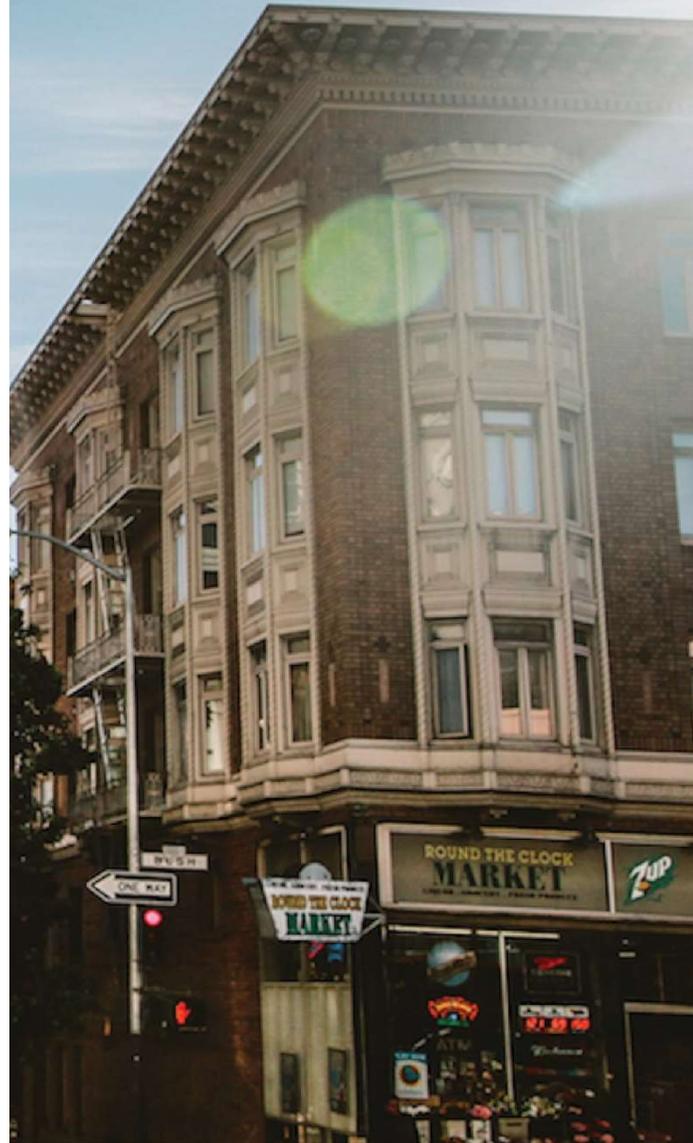
# Reentry Coalition Strategic Plan

A community-wide commitment

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Delaware County, PA

2021-2024



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## Introduction

The Delaware County Reentry Coalition developed this strategic plan to engage the community and build a system of care that empowers and supports individuals in successfully reentering community after incarceration. This local reentry initiative mirrors a national reentry initiative to prevent recidivism and improve public safety by ensuring a safe and successful transition from life in jail to life in the community.



### Our Vision

**The Delaware County Reentry Coalition will take a holistic approach and lend a trustworthy hand of support, motivation, and guidance to all incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.**



### Our Mission

**The mission of the Delaware County Reentry Coalition is to enhance our community by undertaking a broad approach to create and strengthen support networks that encourage dignity, address basic needs, and reset positive self-images for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.**

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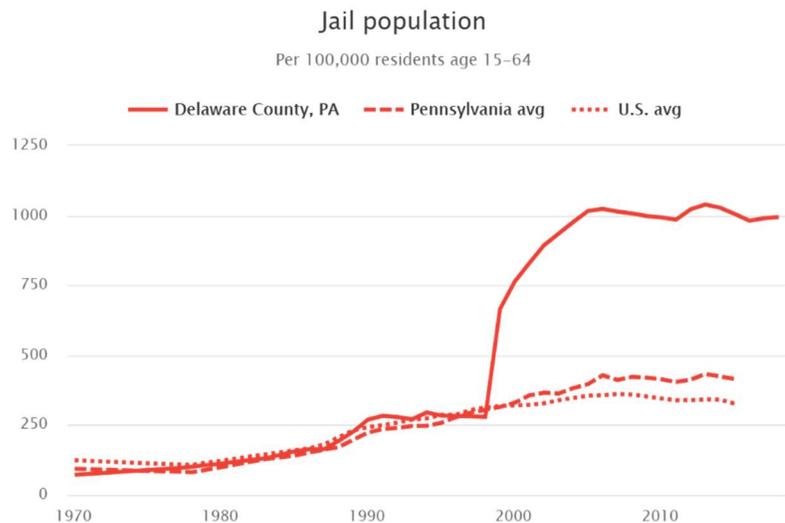
## Reentry Coalition History & Overview

*“Ensuring successful reentry means both safer communities and the improved use of tax dollars. But realizing better outcomes for people released from prison and jail requires efforts that address their myriad needs.”*

Report of the Reentry Policy Council:  
Charting the Safe and Successful Return  
of Prisoners to the Community

Delaware County is a county consisting of 184 square miles with a 2010 census population of 558,976. The county was created on September 29, 1789, from part of Chester County and is the fifth most populous Pennsylvania County and the third most compact. The county seat is currently located in Media, Pennsylvania, previously located in the City of Chester. Delaware County’s localities of Chester City and Upper Darby collectively comprise 20% of the entire population of Delaware County. Upper Darby Township borders West Philadelphia and is the sixth most populous municipality in Pennsylvania. The City of Chester has reduced its population by half over the last 50 years due to loss of shipyard and automobile manufacturing jobs.

According to data collected by the Vera Institute of Justice, Delaware County’s daily incarceration rates exceed state data and national averages. VERA INSTITUTE INCARCERATION TRENDS, Delaware County, PA, (assembled using information collected by the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics and supplemented with data from state departments of correction when federal data is not available), *available at: <https://trends.vera.org/rates/delaware-county-pa>.*



Close to ten thousand people are committed to the Delaware County adult correctional facility each year. The vast majority of these individuals will return to their

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communities when released. Upon return to community, they will find themselves facing the same challenges experienced prior to incarceration. For too many, this includes a mix of poverty, racism, homelessness and/or unstable housing, inadequate education, geographic disparity, lack of transportation, debt, and disabilities. After incarceration they will encounter new, additional hurdles—loss of employment, loss of housing and community capital, criminal records, court debt, trauma, and readjustment. While navigating those obstacles, those under supervision by probation and parole authorities will also be required to satisfy reporting requirements and other conditions of supervision, which may include attendance at various programs. One study calculated that, nationwide, the average number of probation requirements a person under supervision must comply with to avoid re-arrest is 18-20.

In early 2020, recognizing a need to improve county-wide reentry services and increase collaboration between stakeholders, the Delaware County government, with the help of the District Attorney’s office and in conjunction with the Delaware County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (“CJAB”), sought a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (“PCCD”). The purpose of the grant was to assist the county with the formation of this coalition. The county was awarded \$15,000 from the Byrne Justice Assistance Fund to support the development of this strategic plan.

The Reentry Coalition, under the guidance of an outside consultant funded through this grant, initiated a “kick off” meeting on Tuesday, December 15, 2020. The turnout from community stakeholders was high. Among those present were the President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, the Judicial Chairman of CJAB, two state senators, a county councilmember, the District Attorney, the Public Defender, state parole and county probation representatives, members of the jail oversight board, participants from multiple government agencies, educators, jail administrators, a myriad of service providers, community leaders, and formerly incarcerated persons. Presenters at that meeting discussed the need for reentry services, offered statistics that underscored that need, and outlined the process for developing a strategic plan for future action. The kick-off occurred virtually amidst a global pandemic and during a summer in which systemic racial inequities were at the forefront of the news cycle, with protests around the world calling for racial justice. The organizers received immediate feedback at that meeting that called for deep commitment to substantive change and highlighted the need for, and value of, representation at all levels—including and particularly with public-

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facing leadership positions—to provide for increased racial and experiential congruity with the communities that are disproportionately justice-impacted.

Over the course of ten subsequent coalition planning sessions, participants worked to define the coalition’s vision and mission, identify gaps in services and challenges to reentry, discuss strengths and strategies for increased support, gather data, and build relationships to foster momentum and collaboration. The coalition formed working subcommittees that met in-between those planning sessions to further advance the work. Participants were assigned pre-work and given opportunities for input through electronic surveys, break-out groups, and coalition-wide brainstorming. This strategic plan is the output from those months of collective work.

The coalition’s reentry supports will create healthier communities and reduce recidivism. The Reentry Coalition is committed to providing more resources and increasing inter-agency collaboration in order to assist those returning to our community from jail.

## **Recidivism**

Delaware County has a current recidivism rate of roughly 63%. This recidivism rate was provided to the coalition by the former warden of the local jail and is based on an examination of the number of people who were identified at the local jail as being readmitted after a prior release. This number includes those who are arrested on non-criminal probation violations, but does not include those who may be incarcerated on rearrest outside of the county.

The challenges of implementing a uniform system of calculating recidivism are well documented. *See, e.g.,* Measuring Recidivism, National Institute of Justice (2008), available at <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/measuring-recidivism>. The layperson who hears the term “recidivism” often assumes that a person committed a new crime. Many calculations for recidivism, however, count anyone who returns to jail, regardless of whether they committed a new crime. For example, a person who is arrested and returned to jail for failure to comply with probation requirements may be counted as a recidivist even though they did not commit a new crime, as would be one wrongly arrested on charges that are subsequently dropped. In some instances, a facility may

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calculate recidivism based on those who return to that facility after being released, but their calculations will not include individuals who were imprisoned in other facilities.

In 2021, the Coalition's Data Subcommittee developed the following definition of recidivism and related key performance measures for the Coalition to use moving forward. The Delaware County Reentry Coalition currently<sup>1</sup> defines recidivism as:

**Recidivism**: Re-arrest, re-incarceration for a new crime, and/or reconviction or return to prison within three years of an individual's release from prison/jail or placement on supervision for a previous criminal conviction.

### Key performance indicators for tracking recidivism:

- **Nature of recidivism**: actual criminal behavior, arrest not resulting in conviction, or revoked liberty for technical violations of supervision:
  - *Offense type* (where new conviction): property/drug/person/traffic
  - *Offense severity* (where new conviction): felony/misdemeanor
  - *Nature of technical violations* and, when relevant, related documented causal factors such as substance abuse/addiction, mental-health, co-occurring disorders, and homelessness
- **Time to failure**: length of time before reoffense, arrest, or technical violation
- **Length of incarceration**: initial and subsequent
- **Frequency of re-offense**
- **Desistance**: number released who never return

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<sup>1</sup> The Coalition's data subcommittee is a working committee that, among other things, engages in research regarding best-practices for defining and tracking recidivism. The definition provided above was accepted by the data subcommittee and presented to the Coalition during the development of this strategic plan. The data subcommittee will continue to refine and revisit this working definition in light of their research and concurrent data collection efforts in the county, and will present any proposed modifications to the Coalition for adoption. The Coalition works in partnership with the county jail and other stakeholders in the criminal system to track relevant data points.

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## Major Barriers for Successful Reentry

People preparing to reintegrate back into the community from jail face a number of barriers. Mental illness, history of substance use, lack of stable housing, limited access to transportation, decreased employment opportunities, poverty, and structural inequities are some of the obstacles to successful reentry. For example, individuals with drug convictions are often barred from residing in public housing, and private landlords also frequently refuse to rent to tenants with criminal records. Pennsylvania has 10 laws limiting housing options, 34 laws limiting educational opportunities, and 522 laws limiting employment & occupational certification & licensing. Many employers ask for information about criminal convictions on job applications and will not hire individuals with criminal records. Individuals are saddled with court debt when they may not have enough money for basic needs. In addition, lack of insurance and transportation can be barriers to individuals seeking and staying in treatment.

The Delaware County Reentry Coalition identified the following barriers (in no particular order) as notably prevalent:

Unmet mental health needs	Criminal records and related hurdles	Inadequate or no housing and intolerance to homelessness	Unemployment & underemployment
Stigma	Trauma	Lack of education & accessible educational opportunities	Limited marketable skills & job acquisition & retention skills
Transportation (Limited access and expense)	Lack of identification	Severed family connections and/or inadequate family support	Burdensome court debt
Separation from community, spiritual, mentoring, other support systems	Challenges identifying & accessing available resources	Disconnect between agencies	Unnecessary and/or overbroad service eligibility exclusion

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## **SWOT ANALYSIS**

To assist with identifying needs and prioritizing actions, the Coalition used a strategic planning technique known as a SWOT analysis. The analysis is so named because it calls on the group to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (“SWOT”) to identify factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieving objectives. Below are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats the Coalition identified as playing a role in recidivism and affecting reentry efforts:

### **Current strengths in Delaware County to reduce recidivism:**

- \* Elected officials committed to systemic changes (ex: expungement clinics)
- \* Support from faith-based communities
- \* Caring community willing to do things differently
- \* Numerous agencies willing to collaborate
- \* Available resources for legal aid, housing, case management, behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, mentoring
- \* Adult education & colleges that provide skill development, building trades, and access to Pell grants
- \* EDSI, CareerLink, Compeer of Suburban Philadelphia, AA/NA chapters, Community Action Agency of Delco
- \* Businesses that hire formerly incarcerated persons

### **Current weaknesses in Delaware County to reduce recidivism include:**

- \* Waiting lists for access to mental health services
- \* Service providers not accepting referrals
- \* Delays in evaluations and requesting referrals
- \* No ID program at the local jail
- \* Inadequate access to housing
- \* Resources/agency programs/services not available beyond M-F 9-5
- \* Silos/disconnects between criminal justice agencies, service providers - need more collaboration/cooperation
- \* Lack of living wage jobs
- \* Insufficient access to transportation
- \* Lack of safe, affordable housing & restrictions on who can live in public housing
- \* Burdensome court debt
- \* Access to identity-specific and culturally-appropriate services

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**Opportunities for policies and practices that could HELP our efforts to improve reentry in Delaware County:**

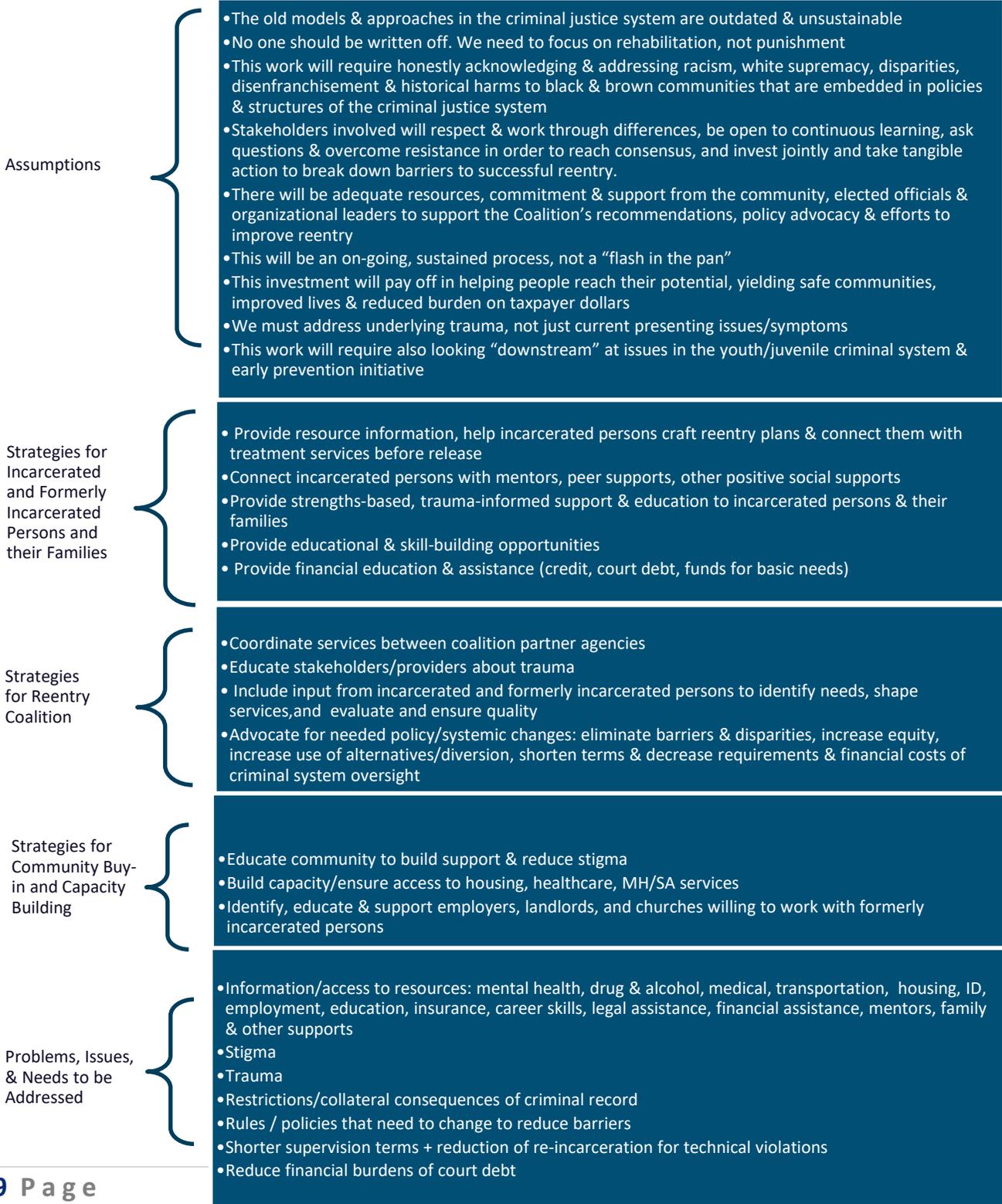
- \* Provide family supports so they can better help their loved one, to remove pressures from the CJ system and provider agencies
- \* Allow public transportation access to the county jail
- \* Address underlying trauma: root cause of multiple challenges
- \* Provide help/guidance to navigate systems and access resources
- \* Increase funding/reduce barriers for access to housing and residential therapeutic placements
- \* Educate key stakeholders to decrease stigma/increase support
- \* Partner with employers and landlords

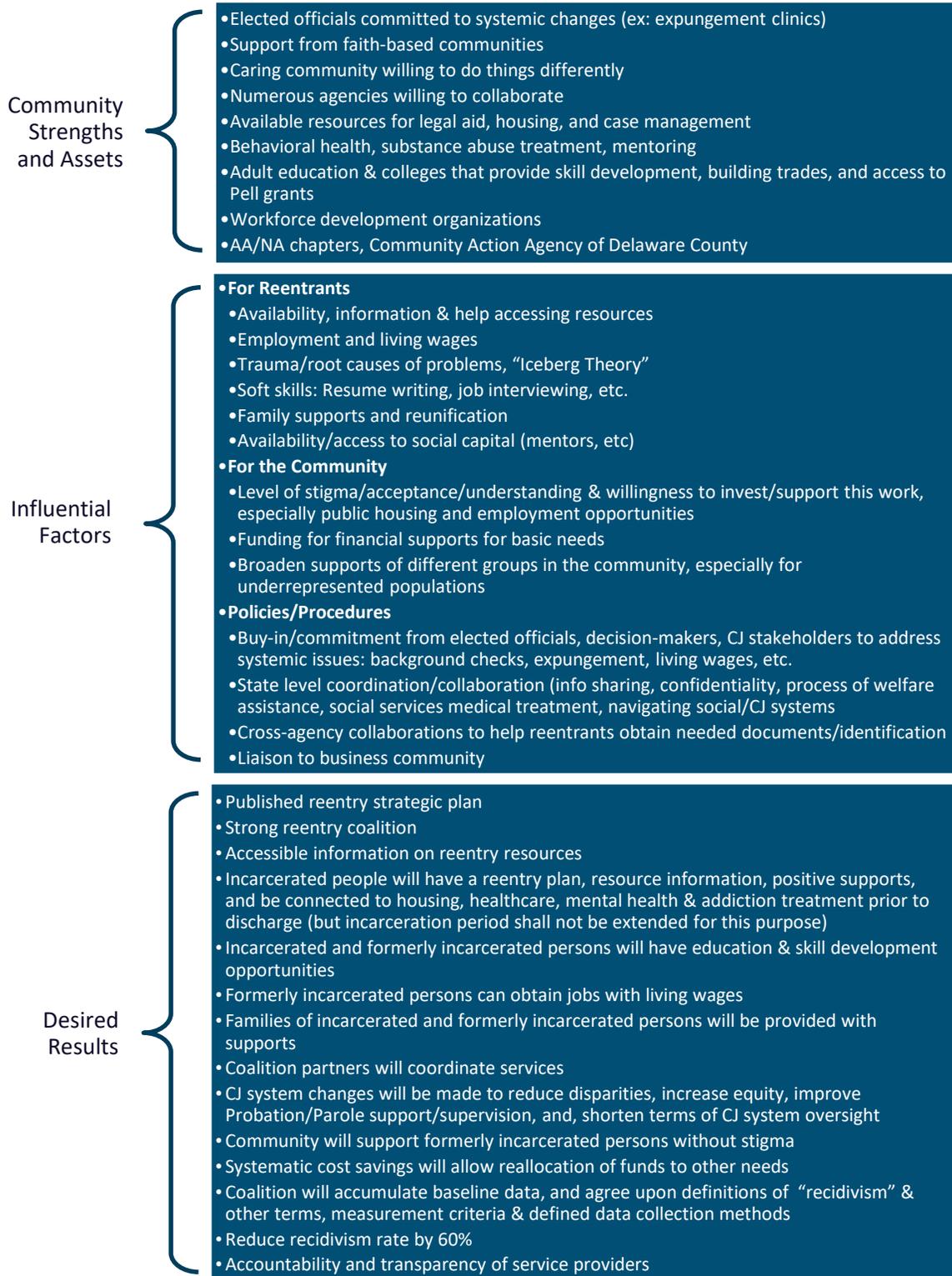
**Policies and practices that complicate our efforts to improve reentry in Delaware County:**

- \* Stigma and resistance from the community (lack of understanding)
- \* Changes in political leaders can change priorities and level of support
- \* Service providers not accepting referrals
- \* Imposition of court costs when people cannot afford them
- \* Racism, ableism, xenophobia, sexism, and homophobia

# Theory of Change

The Coalition collectively developed a Theory of Change—a method of planning, participation, and evaluation—to define long-term goals and identify what must be in place to achieve those goals. Below is the Coalition’s Theory of Change.





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## Delaware County Reentry Coalition Action Items

*Wanting* the expansion of reentry supports and *achieving* it are two different things. Through surveys, breakout sessions, and subcommittee meetings, the Coalition broke down its broad goals into more concrete action items, prioritizing necessary next steps through group-conceived action plans. *See* Appendix A. Identifying and prioritizing Coalition actions for capacity building is an iterative process. The Coalition will continue to update, revisit, refine, redefine, and add to the existing action plans over time. Below is a description of the initial action items identified as necessary to building more meaningful reentry supports in Delaware County.

### **Educate, Raise Awareness & Gain Buy-In for Reentry**

#### **(Target pop: Stakeholders, Service Providers, General Public)**

- \* Ensure service providers are educated about trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (“ACEs”), and resilience and that they are using trauma-informed approaches to reentry services.
- \* Educate various stakeholder groups in the community about the criminal justice system, reentry, the needs of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons, mental health, addiction, homelessness, and trauma.
- \* Agree upon language and definition of terms.
- \* Create an awareness & branding campaign.
- \* Contextualize how race and ethnicity primarily (along with disability, gender, nationality, and sexual identity) could have an impact on treatment and access.

### **Assist Inmates, Reentrants, & Families**

#### **(Target pop: Incarcerated/Formally Incarcerated People & their Families)**

- \* ID: get free state identification for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons
- \* REENTRY PLANS: conduct needs assessments with incarcerated persons, develop written reentry plans, provide resource information, and connect individuals with services and mentors before release (but do not extent period of incarceration for this purpose).
- \* Family: provide supports to access incarcerated persons and transition individuals back to their families and children
- \* Basic needs: Provide “welcome home” bags of basic supplies and sufficient necessary medicines.

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- \* **Mental Health:** provide mental health, trauma, and ACES education to incarcerated persons. Connect with mental health services and support groups and provide for continuation of services and medication, transferring care and case management to civil systems where possible.
  - \* **Jobs:** provide vocational training before release, increase access to paid internships, on-the-job training and workplace support.
  - \* **Housing:** provide more options to transitional housing with in-residence mentoring. Provide more community-based residential options for individuals with disabilities and dual diagnoses.

**Strengthen Coalition/ Increase Services Capacity  
(Target pop: Coalition Partner Agencies & Others)**

- \* Continue to meet regularly as a coalition and invite others.
- \* Increase network of mental health providers/services.
- \* Address housing needs for people with mental health needs.
- \* Coordinate/streamline referrals & services between courts, prison, probation, and provider agencies.
- \* Establish leadership and governance structure for Coalition.
- \* Identify the housing/zoning officers in each community to develop a relationship.
- \* Get written commitment from Coalition partner agencies and clarify roles/responsibilities/expectations for Coalition partners.
- \* Link data systems between agencies.

**Advocate for Policy & Systems Changes  
(Target pop: Government, Elected Officials, Coalition Partners)**

- \* **Jobs:**
  - \* Identify employers who hire formerly incarcerated persons.
  - \* Advocate for employer incentives.
  - \* Advocate for living wages and jobs with dignity/jobs that lead to careers.
  - \* Establish vetting process and minimal standards to prevent exploitation.
- \* **Housing**
  - \* Identify landlords who rent to formerly incarcerated persons.
  - \* Advocate for incentives to rent to formerly incarcerated persons.
  - \* Establish vetting process and minimal standards to prevent exploitation.
- \* **Drugs and Alcohol**
  - \* Identify gaps in the substance use and recovery system.

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- \* Mental Health and Disabilities
    - \* Identify gaps in mental health services: both in-community and residential.
    - \* Educate general public and decision-makers about mental health and disabilities.
  - \* Transportation
    - \* Improve access to transportation for those who cannot afford it.
    - \* Provide access to local jail for those who are taking public transportation to maintain community connections while incarcerated (currently one can only drive onto the grounds).
    - \* Provide individuals with transportation plans as part of reentry planning while incarcerated.
    - \* Encourage service providers to incorporate transportation supports into their service models.
    - \* Work with stakeholders to develop stronger infrastructure for communities less served.
  - \* General
    - \* Educate county departments & agencies in each sector about challenges to reentry and then conduct focus groups with them to determine what changes in policies can be made to eliminate barriers.
  - \* Parole/probation
    - \* Craft, finalize, and implement early parole and re-parole programs to those demonstrating a committed willingness to be active partners in reentry.
    - \* Tailor and reduce the number of reentry/parole requirements a person must fulfill.
    - \* Finalize and implement an early probation termination program.

### **Additional Actions:**

- \* Identify all existing community resources and create a Reentry Resource Guide available in print and digital formats.
- \* Complete a housing inventory to ensure affordable housing is available to formerly incarcerated persons and craft a comprehensive housing plan for reentry.
- \* Commit to keeping formerly incarcerated people involved in Coalition meetings and committee work.

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- \* Examine reentry processes and protocols, looking for opportunities to enhance or develop better processes and remove process barriers.
  - \* Define method for calculating recidivism, set specific target for reduction rate, design and implement system to track and analyze recidivism rates.

**Additional Strategies for Action Points are attached in Appendix A**

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## Subcommittees

In addition to monthly meetings, the Coalition developed working subcommittees to advance specific areas of focus and report back to the Coalition at large. Below is a description of those subcommittees and their 2021 members.

### Community Resources

Compile and maintain centralized listing of available community resources; work with Coalition members and community to identify needs, barriers, and gaps in services; perform outreach with community stakeholders to retain and expand Coalition participation and momentum; serve as a liaison between community and Coalition.

CONVENER: Lee Awbrey, Delaware County Office of the Public Defender

Members:

- \* Olga Antonyuk, Compeer
- \* Eric Bayne, Chester Workforce Development Center
- \* Christy DiStefano, Peerstar, LLC
- \* Darren Laws, Team PowerCore 24/7 Inc., Today's Labors Professional Labor Staffing Services
- \* Hailey Gerena, Maturity Works
- \* Christine Jones, Temple University
- \* Salena Jones, Delaware County Office of the District Attorney
- \* Sara McCullough, Chief of Staff to Senator Tim Kearney
- \* Trish McFarland, President, Delaware County Chamber of Commerce
- \* Kate McGeever, Delaware County Workforce Development Board
- \* Richard Mosley, Sr., Top Class Detailing
- \* Gina Ruggieri, Community Action Agency of Delaware County
- \* Toni Truehart, Entrepreneur Works

### Data

Develop Coalition's definition of recidivism and identify key performance indicators. Gather available data and identify gaps in data. Work with Coalition and stakeholders to identify key data points, recommend input regarding collecting, tracking, and analyzing relevant data.

CONVENER: Alexia Clarke, Chester Community Coalition

Members:

- \* Kelly Shaw, George W. Hill Correctional Facility
- \* Vivian Smith, Associate Professor of Criminology, Cabrini University

### Community Education

Educate community, stakeholders, and decision-makers about the needs and opportunities for reentry supports in Delaware County and to remove stigma.

CONVENER: Robert J. Richter, Jr.

Members:

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- \* Lorie Ackerman, ReEntry Coach, Delaware Dept. of Corrections
  - \* Jean-Pierre Brice, Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods
  - \* Michael Harper, Voice and Vision, Inc.
  - \* Shawn Johnson, Friends Rehabilitation Program
  - \* Brenda Kucirka, Widener University
  - \* Robert Lodge, Delaware County Office of the Public Defender
  - \* Richard McFadden, Delaware County Community College

### **Vision/Mission**

Collaborate to define Delaware County's vision and mission statements.

CONVENER: Jerry Sanders, Delaware County Sheriff

Members:

- \* Olga Antonyuk, Compeer
- \* Dawn Chamberlain, Hooper Council Positive Potential Project
- \* George Mink, Making A Change Group
- \* Chris Welsh, Office of the Delaware County Public Defender

### **Strategic Plan Assembly Subcommittees**

Assemble the Delaware County Reentry Coalition Strategic Plan based on input gathered during coalition-wide work sessions through pre-work surveys, subcommittee meetings, and break-out sessions.

CONVENER: Chris Welsh, Delaware County Office of the Public Defender

Members:

- \* Danielle Hibberd, Delaware County Adult Probation & Parole
- \* Salena Jones, Delaware County Office of the District Attorney
- \* Mischico Warren, The Foundation for Delaware County
- \* Laura Zales, EDSI

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## **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee will make recommendations to the coalition-at-large regarding Coalition structure, draft bylaws, and provide organizational direction to the Coalition as it moves forward to achieve its goals.

### **Co-Chairs:**

Lee Awbrey, Delaware County Office of the Public Defender

Danielle Hibberd, Delaware County Adult Probation & Parole

### **Secretary:**

Gina Ruggieri, Community Action Agency of Delaware County

### **Impacted Persons Representatives:**

George Mink, Making A Change Group

Richard Mosley, Sr, Top Class Detailing

### **Community Education Subcommittee Representative:**

Robert J. Richter, Jr.

### **Community Resources Subcommittee Representative:**

Mischico Warren, Foundation for Delaware County

### **Data Subcommittee Representatives (alternating):**

Alexia Clarke, Chester Community Coalition

Vivian Smith, Chair and Associate Professor of Criminology, Cabrini University

### **PARC representatives:**

Robert Lodge, Delaware County Office of the Public Defender

Laura Zales, EDSI



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## Member Involvement

The Delaware County Reentry Coalition includes criminal justice system practitioners, human service and county administration departments, and key community stakeholders including the faith community and social service providers focusing on housing, addiction and mental health supports. A breakdown of representation by agency or position follows, and are not presented in any particular order:

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# APPENDIX A

## Action Plans