

Recommendations to The Connecticut Sentencing Commission From the Recidivism Reduction Committee

During most of the past year, the Recidivism Reduction Committee focused its attention on a white paper entitled, ***Evidence-based Reentry Initiatives Devoted to Strengthening Positive Social Relationships***. This paper brought to the attention of the Sentencing Commission a unifying framework for the consideration of a group of diverse reentry initiatives. These initiatives are connected by virtue of their role in forming, strengthening, and supporting the positive social relationships that are one of the bedrocks for positive change. They carry well-demonstrated, evidence-based potential to have a significant positive impact on recidivism.

A major section of the paper contained recommendations for changes that the Department of Corrections could make in its policies and practices which could strengthen the positive social ties of incarcerated offenders, thereby, reducing recidivism.

Ten recommendations follow. They are drawn from the paper and its review of the research and evaluation literature, and shaped by discussions with Department of Corrections officials. The Recidivism Reduction Committee respectfully submits these ten recommendations to the Sentencing Commission for its review and possible adoption.

It is anticipated that these recommendations may be presented at the December 20, 2012 meeting of the Sentencing Commission, but that action on them will be taken at the following meeting of the Commission.

Recommendations

- 1. The Department of Correction should adopt an agency-wide policy statement recognizing that the positive social ties of offenders can help to reduce recidivism.**
- 2. The Department of Correction should consider revisions to its administrative directives on visiting to make the directives more consistent with the positive impact of positive social relationships on offenders.**
- 3. Within the limits of security and capacity constraints, the Department of Correction should seek to minimize obstacles to family visits. The Department should also implement some means of gathering data on family visits, perhaps using volunteers to gather and process data.**
- 4. The Department of Correction should initiate - from within its own agency or through outside channels - an assessment of the transportation available to visitors to all of Connecticut's prison facilities. The assessment should include an appraisal of the degree of demand for transportation from each of the major cities.**

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- 5. The Department of Correction should assess the quality and prevalence of child-friendly features in visiting areas of its prison facilities, and should encourage efforts by staff and volunteers to expand these features.**
- 6. The Department of Correction should develop criteria and standards for lengthened visits and communicate these to inmates, and through postings, to family members.**
- 7. The Department of Correction should further develop programs that have an evidence-based capacity to strengthen the bonds between incarcerated parents and their children.**
- 8. The Department of Correction review disciplinary restrictions on visiting and phone calls in light of their impact on positive social ties, and where feasible, minimize their impact on family visits.**
- 9. The Department of Corrections' programs for fathers should receive additional attention.**
- 10. In the Department of Correction, increased case management should, where appropriate, strengthen connections of inmates to their families, and family ties to agency services for inmates.**