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Prison Reform Advocates Look to Curtail Prison Growth

On November 10 and 11, Executive Director Janet Leban attended, "State Strategies for Criminal Justice Reform," a conference hosted by the Open Society Institute and the Open Society Policy Center in Baltimore, Maryland.

The conference brought together about 100 invited prison reform advocates who are working to reduce the country's overuse of incarceration and to prevent prison growth. The conference may serve as a first step to

establishing a formal, active network of prison reform advocates.

During the sessions, attendees exchanged reform accomplishments, examined information on how to build effective state advocacy, and developed strategies aimed at preventing continued overreliance on incarceration. Attendees also received information on resources and technical assistance for advocates.

Juvenile Justice Advocacy Gets National Support

The MacArthur Foundation has recently awarded a grant to the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Research on Youth and Social Policy (CRYSP) to support ongoing initiatives to develop, strengthen, and sustain statewide collaborations working for statewide reform in the juvenile justice system.

The funds will be used throughout 2004 to establish a national network of statewide collaborations. This undertaking reflects the intent of eleven states that attended the National Forum sponsored by the CRYSP last year. In addition to Delaware, they included: Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia. Collaboration for Youth co-conveners Janet Leban and Joseph Dell' Olio attended the forum.

The funds will support a second annual meeting for building and sustaining statewide collaborative organizations that will advance juvenile justice reform and providing valuable resources to collaborations, helping them expand their capacity to effect change. One such resource to be created and disseminated is *Forming and Sustaining Statewide Juvenile Justice Collaborations: A Practical Guide*, which all collaborations can put to use, whether they are just getting started or need to evolve.

Another resource is a listserv being maintained through CRYSP, in partnership with the Youth Law Center and the National Assembly, which are subcontracted to provide vital core information. The listserv is designed to facilitate communication and expedite the development of alliances with national organizations.

“ The funds will help by... sustaining statewide collaborative organizations that will advance juvenile justice reform and providing valuable resources to collaborations, helping them expand their capacity to effect change. ”

Future links with the Child Welfare League of America, the National Mental Health Association, and Voices for America's Children are planned.



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PROGRAMS
IN
ACTION

“The DELTA project will help these young people develop awareness, sensitivity, and empathy for their current and future intimate partners.”

Two New DCJ Programs Impact the Quality of Justice in Delaware

Adolescents Educated Against Violence in New DELTA Project

In an effort to prevent domestic violence between intimate partners, the DELTA project will develop and implement a skill building educational program for adolescents who are at risk for behaviors that may lead to this kind of abuse.

The project is being carried out by DCJ under the auspices of the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence, which received a three-year grant for the project from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

At the start, the DELTA project will work with adolescents who are under the jurisdiction of Delaware’s juvenile justice system. The target population will be adolescents, both male and female, who are housed at Ferris School, The New Castle County Detention Center, Stevenson House, Grace Cottage, and Snowden Cottage, or adolescents attending Project Stay Free. There is a possibility that young men in Gander Hill’s Young Criminal Offender Program may be added to this initial list.

To help these young people develop awareness, sensitivity, and empathy for their current and future intimate partners, sessions will include informative presentations, candid discussion, role-playing, and first-hand accounts of survivors of domestic violence.

More Support for Children of Mothers in Prison

DCJ welcomes Delaware Big Brothers Big Sisters as a partner in Project REACH, a visiting program for incarcerated mothers and their children now in its sixth year.

Big Brothers Big Sisters has provided a grant to DCJ to support this new partnership, enabling DCJ to enrich Project REACH by adding a mentoring piece to the program that will directly support the well being of the children.

Project REACH provides incarcerated mothers with private visiting time with their children to practice good parenting skills and to establish positive relationships. Mothers work with a program manager to develop short- and long-term goals, view their visits on videotape, and attend a monthly support group. DCJ’s program coordinator is Elisa Harmon.

“This new program component will foster positive development in youth who are living with a variety of risk factors due to their mothers’ incarceration.”

With this new partnership, children in Project REACH will have the opportunity to be linked with a Big Brother or Big Sister, and the organization will recruit, screen, and train these volunteers. This new program component will foster positive development in youth who are living with a variety of risk factors due to their mothers’ incarceration. Each child, assuming the child’s caregiver and mother agree, will be matched with a caring adult mentor to provide comprehensive support services for the child, sibling, caregivers, and parents.

Delaware Big Brothers Big Sisters is one of 52 organizations (and the only organization in the state) that received a total of \$9 million to train adult volunteers as mentors to children whose parents are incarcerated. According to the funding agency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the grants are part of President Bush’s plan to provide mentors to disadvantaged youth to help them as they grow into adulthood.

PROGRAMS
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Juvenile Victim Sensitivity Program Inspires Insight and Understanding

Eric McLaurin, Director, Community and Restorative Justice Project

For four years, DCJ has implemented the Juvenile Victim Sensitivity Program at the Ferris School and Grace Cottage for adjudicated youth. The program's goal is to help juvenile offenders realize the serious impact their crimes have on victims, emotionally, psychologically, physically, and financially in order to raise awareness and bring about a change in behavior.

In addition to teaching positive norms, problem-solving techniques, and coping skills, the program brings reality to life by having crime victims share their personal tragedies with the youth, providing a forum for them to express their feelings in a constructive way and for permitting all participants to explore the adverse effects of crime on offenders and their families as well.

Upon completion, students are awarded certificates during a ceremony, and they are asked to present to other students, family, and staff attending what they learned about victimization through their participation in the program. Presentations can take the shape of a formal written piece, a poem, a song, or a rap verse. The following rap verse was written by Ernest Phillips, a resident of the South Cluster at Ferris School.

Victim Empathy

Victim Empathy to me, was like a look at reality
Made me understand that being healthy is what
I'm proud to be

Watching those photos and clips made my
stomach feel so sick
All those robberies and times I attempted to steal
Now I'm thinking about how my victims feel

I've done said a lot and did enough
To the point where my victims were mad and fed up

If you've been a victim, wipe yah tears and keep
yah head up

Victimizers make amends and keep yah head up
Get yah mind out the gutter and keep yah head up

Before you victimize the wrong one and end
up with some dead luck

Moral of the story is victimize one and you
hurt their family and kids

So be proud of what you got and don't take
the hype to the head.

“...finding
employment is the
most challenging
obstacle to successful
reentry...”

Everyone Benefits from Success of Prison-to-Work Program

DCJ's Prison-to-Work program has provided reentry services to more than 400 ex-offenders since its inception in 2000, assisting them in making a smooth transition back into the community. Our experience proves what research shows: finding employment is the most challenging obstacle to successful reentry, with other barriers including housing, transportation, treatment, and vocational training, and education.

Mr. Johnson and Ms. Bell are two individuals who have succeeded by capitalizing on the wrap-around case management support provided through DCJ's Prison-to-Work program. Despite difficult obstacles, they moved ahead with their lives, found employment, and have been productive members of our community of whom we can be proud.

Mr. Johnson entered the program two years ago. He was in need of transitional housing, employment, and transportation. The program provided Mr. Johnson with transportation in order to search for a job and attend a computer

refurbishing course at the Opportunity Center Inc. After completing his computer courses, Mr. Johnson obtained his A+ Certification. Subsequently, the Second Source Computer Store hired him, he purchased a vehicle, and he has found permanent housing.

After entering the program over a year ago, Ms. Bell needed transitional housing, employment, childcare, and transportation. Once she was provided with childcare services, she enrolled at the Delaware Technical & Community College, where she is currently studying Human Resource Management. Ms. Bell is employed at Super G supermarket in the customer services department, and she has recently purchased her first home.

The success of Mr. Johnson and Ms. Bell reflects how the Prison-to-Work wraparound case management services work in tandem with individual perseverance and resolve to stabilize lives during a difficult period of transition back into the community.

PROGRAMS
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Delaware's Inmates to Heighten HIV/AIDS Awareness

Alfred Onuonga, HIV/AIDS Program Director

Live and Let Live is the theme of the 2003 World AIDS Day, reflecting the day's focus on the stigma and discrimination experienced by those infected with HIV. This year's theme encourages individuals and institutions to rethink their approaches and responses to HIV-infected persons. The need to dispel misconceptions is urgent, especially when you consider that ignorance, denial, and fear cause disruptions in the well being of many communities that must deal with the resulting rejection and aggression towards HIV-infected persons.

DCJ will work with offenders and staff at Delaware's five maximum security correctional institutions to create a program of HIV/AIDS awareness activities for 2003 World AIDS Day in December. Activities will include fundraising, poster contests, talent shows, poetry readings, and personal testimonies by HIV-infected offenders.

Each of the institutions will have guest speakers as well, with representatives from federal, state, and local government, among others.

In recognition of World AIDS Day, women incarcerated at Baylor Women's Correctional Institution (BWCI) are raising funds by cooking and selling special dinner platters through the Culinary Arts Program. Funds raised will be donated to Gift of Mary in Chester, PA, an HIV hospice that has supported HIV-infected women from BWCI; two needy families in New Castle County who, as identified by Beautiful Gate Outreach staff, are either infected with or affected by HIV; and BWCI's Culinary Arts Program, which focuses on heart healthy nutrition. Offenders at Sussex Correctional Institution are raising funds to be donated to a needy family affected by HIV in Sussex County.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

According to a report recently released by Human Rights Watch, an increasing number of the mentally ill call the country's prisons their home. Unfortunately, prison "homes" are often unable to provide the care these offenders need.

Estimates put the number of mentally ill in prisons at as many as 300,000, three times the number of patients in mental health hospitals. Especially troubling is the report's finding that as many as 70,000 at any given time are estimated to be psychotic. In Delaware, 759 offenders, or 13 percent of the incarcerated population, have been diagnosed with mental illness. Of that number, 212, or 28 percent, are taking psychotropic medications.

Why is there such an increase? In large part, it is due to a lack of adequate community mental health care that could help those with mental illnesses before they do something that brings them into contact with the criminal justice system. Mandatory minimum sentences also play a role in the incarceration of the mentally ill.

Prisons should not have to perform a function that they are ill equipped to perform. Although mental health resources in prisons have improved in recent years (Delaware has special needs units at all of its maximum security prisons), staffing and housing limitations do not permit the level of care and structured activities many mentally ill offenders need.

Experts express concern about this trend, citing that prison life has a negative impact on people with serious mental illness. According to the report, extreme confinement, sometimes 23 to 24 hours per day, combined with a lack of structured, therapeutic activity serves "as an incubator for worse illness and psychiatric breakdowns." The report goes on to observe that "most people with a serious mental illness need structured days, they need therapy, they need far more than just medication."

The report makes several recommendations, including urging Congress to fund grants that would allow communities to establish alternatives to prison for mentally ill offenders, treatment programs for those who are in prison, and transitional program for those returning to the community.

The Delaware Center for Justice recognizes that the Delaware Department of Correction has improved, and is working on continuing to improve, services for the mentally ill. However, we strongly support the report's recommendations.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

VISIT US WITH YOUR THOUGHTS ON LINE:
WWW.DCJUSTICE.ORG

“...most people with a serious mental illness need structured days, they need therapy, they need far more than just medication.”

PEOPLE
AT
WORK

Correctional Health Care is Focus of National Conference

HIV/AIDS Staff Member Attends

In October, Kevin Marshall, HIV/AIDS Transitional Case Manager, attended the National Conference on Correctional Health Care in Austin, Texas. The conference included more than 100 educational sessions on correctional health in a variety of topics ranging from legal issues to discharge planning for different types of offenders. U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Richard H. Carmona provided the keynote address.

“...it became clear that Delaware was ahead of other states in providing seamless transitional case management, especially to HIV-infected offenders.”

Kevin attended sessions on discharge planning and transitional care for offenders, gaining information and ideas for effective discharge planning and programs that deal directly with those being released. He also shared information with others about DCJ's transitional case management services for HIV-infected offenders. He also attended sessions on the provision of services to persons with mental illnesses, substance abuse, and other special needs.

According to Kevin, after listening to the presenters, it became clear that Delaware was ahead of other states in providing seamless transitional case management, especially to HIV-infected

offenders. DCJ is therefore looking at the potential for sharing information at future Correctional Health Care conferences on our transitional case management program, in support of other states that are struggling with reintegration efforts.

DCJ Welcomes Two New Staff Members

Margaret Tagliaferro joins DCJ as our DELTA project coordinator. Before coming to Delaware Center for Justice, Margaret was employed by Correctional Medical Services at the Multipurpose Criminal Justice Facility (Gander Hill) as a counselor with the Young Criminal Offender Program. She has also led substance abuse recovery groups at the Cecil County Detention Center, working under the auspices of the Cecil County Health Department's Alcohol and Drug Center. Margaret is licensed as a substance abuse counselor by the State of Maryland. She has also trained in civil, family, and labor mediation and volunteers as a mediator with the Delaware Center for Justice program.

Georgette Foster, HIV/AIDS health education coordinator, comes to DCJ from Delaware HIV Consortium where she worked as a Community Membership Liaison for the past two years. Georgette's background includes working with challenging clients both in the community and in correctional settings. Currently, she attends Springfield College and is expected to receive her Bachelor's degree in May 2004.

OPPORTUNITY
PLACE

OUR MISSION:

For 83 years, the Delaware Center for Justice has dedicated itself to building a safer, more secure Delaware through advocacy, education, research, and direct services that restore justice to all who are involved in and affected by Delaware's criminal justice system, including victims, offenders, their families, and the community.

Become a member of the Delaware Center for Justice and be counted among those who want to ensure justice in Delaware.

Senior Friend _____	\$20	Organizational Sponsor _____	\$100
Friend _____	\$35	Leader _____	\$250
Advocate _____	\$50	Patron _____	\$500+

Individuals and organizations are invited to join by choosing the membership level most appropriate for you, making your check payable to the Delaware Center for Justice and dropping it in the mail today. Your support is vital to building a safer, more secure Delaware for every citizen.

Juvenile and Adult Reentry Mentoring Programs Need More Volunteers!

Guiding hands and supportive hearts are needed to help adult and juvenile ex-offenders transition into the community. Be a volunteer mentor. Call Janet Leban at DCJ, 658-7174, ext. 14.

COMMENTARY

Published by the Delaware Center for Justice
100 West 10th Street, Suite 905
Wilmington, DE 19801
Phone: 658-7174 • Fax: 658-7170
Board President: Frank Scarpitti
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Design: Hughes Design, Inc.



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