

**THE VIRGINIA PRISONER REENTRY POLICY ACADEMY
STATUS REPORT**

**AS REQUIRED BY
EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER TWENTY-TWO
AND
ITEM 377 B OF THE 2006 SPECIAL SESSION BUDGET**

The aim of the Virginia Reentry Policy Academy, as outlined in Executive Order Number Twenty-Two, is to promote reentry strategies for offenders. As directed by the Governor, the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety has taken the lead of this initiative and provides the following status report of actions taken to date.

The Secretary of Public Safety, designated chair of the Reentry Academy, held a meeting of the representatives of the Reentry Academy on October 20, 2006 at the Greensville Correctional Center in Jarrat, Virginia. The agenda addressed the issue of prisoner reentry from the national, state and local level.

In addition to Reentry Academy members, attendees included members of the SJR 126 Subcommittee studying the Commonwealth's Program for Prisoner Reentry into Society, the General Assembly, Supreme Court of Virginia, Law Enforcement and Community Advocacy Groups. Approximately 100 people attended.

The meeting provided on-going coordination at the executive level of reentry initiatives across the state. Representatives of local reentry planning councils from five Virginia communities (Culpeper, Emporia, King George County, Norfolk and Richmond) discussed their plans for implementing pilot programs in their communities. These pilot programs will allow for testing and evaluating implementation of the recommendations developed from Virginia's participation in the National Governors Association Policy Academy on Prisoner Reentry. Staff from the Departments of Juvenile Justice, Correctional Education, Corrections (Institutions and Community), and Correctional Enterprises emphasized the effort each agency is making toward successful transition of offenders back into the community. Policies and practices that impede the process were also addressed. A representative from the Local Community Corrections Act Programs and Offender Transition and Reentry Coalition (formerly known as PAPIS) outlined the efforts of such programs in aiding with offender reintegration.

In FY 2004 the National Governors Association (NGA) announced that Virginia was one of seven states selected to participate in its Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy. This initiative brought together a team of representatives from agencies and organizations that deliver services to offenders and their families. The NGA assisted the state team in developing effective prisoner reentry strategies designed to increase public safety and reduce costly recidivism rates by improving transition programs and services. Subcommittees, established based on the broad categorization of need or barriers to successful reentry, have met regularly to develop work plans that include proposed

actions to address such needs and roadblocks. These recommended actions serve as the guidelines for the pilot programs mentioned earlier in this report. The Office of the Secretary of Public Safety provides ongoing support and guidance to these subcommittees and meets with the designated chairpersons regularly.

Efforts aimed at fostering successful transition of offenders into their communities are pointless if not grounded in a spirit of communication and collaboration. To this end the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety plans to host a statewide conference in the spring of 2007 that will bring together those involved with this issue on the national, state and local level. The conference will provide informational and educational sessions designed to stimulate ideas, as well as networking opportunities designed to advance collaboration on all levels.

Finally, the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety acknowledges the hard work of all those involved with this effort. Employees of state agencies and local organizations have enthusiastically exceeded their job duties toward the support of the prisoner reentry initiative. In an effort to provide support to these agencies and organizations, the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety, through the Department of Criminal Justice Services, will pursue federal funds available through the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) Grant to be awarded in early 2007. The PRI is designed to reduce recidivism by helping offenders find work and access other critical services in their communities. Plans for the grant award include resources to include staff support for the five aforementioned pilot programs. Based on the amount of the award, plans may include the expansion of pilot programs to other Virginia communities.

Throughout the next year, the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety will continue to lead the Virginia Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy by providing opportunities for ongoing coordination of reentry initiatives, encouraging the exploration of effective programs that will aid with offender transition, and continually direct those involved with this issue to address policies and practices that impede successful reintegration and, when necessary, work collaboratively to implement new policies and procedures.