

# CSAC Corrections Reform

## County Policy Principles and Guidelines

### Preamble

In light of the state's recent focus on corrections reform — primarily on recidivism and overcrowding in state detention facilities, counties feel it is essential to articulate their values and objectives as vital participants in the overall corrections continuum. Further, counties understand that they must be active participants in any successful effort to improve the corrections system in our state. Given that local and state corrections systems are interconnected, true reform must consider the advantage — if not necessity — of investing in local programs and services to help the state reduce the rate of growth in the prison population. Front-end investment in local programs and initiatives will enrich the changes currently being contemplated to the state system and, more importantly, will yield greater economic and social dividends that benefit communities across the state.

Recognizing that preserving public safety — a matter of paramount importance in communities statewide — will be enhanced by ensuring that appropriate attention and commitment are focused on rehabilitation for adult and juvenile offenders, counties offer the following Corrections Reforms Principles and Guidelines that, we believe, will help advance discussions between the state and counties.

### Fundamental Principles

- An optimum corrections strategy must feature a strong and committed partnership between the state and local governments.
- State and local authorities must focus on making productive use of offenders' time while in custody or under state or local supervision. A shared commitment to rehabilitation can help address the inextricably linked challenges of recidivism and facility overcrowding. The most effective method of rehabilitation is one that maintains ties to an offender's community.
- Programs and services must be adequately funded to enable counties to accomplish their functions in the corrections system and to ensure successful outcomes for offenders. To the extent that new programs or services are contemplated, or proposed for realignment, support must be in the form of a dedicated, new and sustained funding source specific to the program and/or service rather than a redirection of existing resources, and adequate to achieve specific outcomes. In addition, any realignment must be examined in relation to how it affects the entire corrections continuum and in context of sound, evidence based practices. Any proposed realignment of programs and responsibility from the state to counties must be guided by CSAC's existing Realignment Principles.
- System and process changes must recognize that the 58 California counties have unique characteristics, differing capacities, and diverse environments. Programs should be designed to promote innovation at the local level and to permit maximum flexibility, so that services can best target individual community needs and capacities.
- Counties and the state can best achieve their shared objectives by focusing on results both in the form of improved offender outcomes and community safety.

## Reform Policy Guidelines

*The following reform policy guidelines represent specific proposals that serve to promote the principles outlined above.*

- **Keys to Slowing the Prison Population Growth: Investment in local programs and facilities.** The state’s investment in local programs and facilities returns an overall benefit to the state corrections system and community safety. State support of local programs and facilities will aid materially in addressing the “revolving door” problem in state and local detention facilities.
  - The state should invest in improving, expanding and renovating **local detention facilities** to address overcrowding, early releases, and improved delivery of inmate health care. Incentives should be included to encourage in-custody treatment programs and other services.
  - The state should invest in **adult probation services** — using as a potential model the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) — to build a continuum of intervention, prevention, and supervision services for adult offenders.
  - The state should continue to fully support the successful JJCPA initiative, which provides a range of **juvenile crime prevention and intervention programs** and which represents a critical component of an overall crime reduction and public safety improvement strategy. Diverting juveniles from a life of offending will help to reduce pressure on the adult system.
  - The state should invest in **mentally ill in-custody treatment and jail diversion programs**, where treatment and services can help promote long-term stability in mentally ill offenders or those with co-occurring disorders, decrease recidivism, and divert appropriate offenders out of the criminal justice system.
  - The state should continue to invest in **alcohol and drug treatment and diversion programs**, including but not limited to outpatient treatment facilities, given that the vast majority of inmates in state and local systems struggle with addiction, which is a primary factor in their criminality.
- **Inmate reentry programs.** Reentry programs represent a promising means for addressing recidivism by providing a continuum of care that facilitates early risk assessment, prevention, and transition of inmates back into the community through appropriate treatment, life skills training, job placement, and other services and supports. The state should consider further investment in multiagency programs authorized under SB 618<sup>1</sup>, which are built on proven, evidence-based strategies including comprehensive pre-sentence assessments, in-custody treatment, targeted case management, and the development of an individualized life plan. These programs promote a permanent shift in the way nonviolent felony offenders are managed, treated and released into their respective communities. Examples of program elements that have been demonstrated to improve offenders’ chances for a successful reintegration into their communities upon release from custody include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Early risks and needs assessment that incorporates assessments of the need for treatment of alcohol and other drug abuse, and the degree of need for literacy, vocational and mental health services;

---

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 603, Statutes of 2005.

- In-custody treatment that is appropriate to each individual's needs — no one-size-fits-all programming;
- After care and relapse prevention services to maintain a “clean and sober” lifestyle;
- Strong linkages to treatment, vocational training, and support services in the community;
- Prearranged housing and employment (or vocational training) for offenders before release into their communities of residence;
- Completion of a reentry plan prior to the offenders' transition back into the community that addresses the following, but is not limited to: an offender's housing, employment, medical, dental, and rehabilitative service needs;
- Preparation of the community and offenders' families to receive and support each offender's new law-respecting and productive lifestyle before release through counseling and public education that recognize and address the inter-generational impact and cycles of criminal justice system involvement.
- Long-term mentorship and support from faith-based and other community and cultural support organizations that will last a lifetime, not just the duration of the parole period; and
- Community-based treatment options and sanctions.

Counties believe that such reentry programs should include incentives for inmate participation.

- **Siting of new facilities.** Counties acknowledge that placement of correctional facilities is controversial. However, the state must be sensitive to community response to changing the use of, expanding, or siting new correctional facilities (prisons, community correctional facilities, or reentry facilities). Counties and other affected municipalities must be involved as active participants in planning and decision-making processes regarding site selection. Providing for security and appropriate mitigations to the local community are essential.
- **Impact on local treatment capacity.** Counties and the state must be aware of the impact on local communities' existing treatment capacity (e.g., mental health, drug treatment, vocational services, sex offender treatment, indigent healthcare, developmental services, and services for special needs populations) if the correction reforms contemplate a major new demand on services as part of development of community correctional facilities, reentry programs, or other locally based programs. Specialized treatment services that are not widely available are likely the first to be overtaxed. To prevent adverse impacts upon existing alcohol and drug and mental health treatment programs for primarily non-criminal justice system participants, treatment capacity shall be increased to accommodate criminal justice participants. In addition, treatment capacity shall be separately developed and funded.
- **Impact on local criminal justice systems.** Proposals must adequately assess the impact on local criminal justice systems (courts, prosecution and defense, probation, detention systems and local law enforcement).
- **Emerging and best practices.** Counties support the development and implementation of a mechanism for collecting and sharing of best practices that can help advance correction reform efforts.