
Colorado

Criminal Justice Reform Coalition

*Prevention, treatment, and alternatives work
Prison should be the last resort*

Press Release

November 7, 2007

For more information:

Christie Donner, Executive Director
CCJRC 303-956-9603

Carol Peeples, author of reentry guide
719-221-2226

***Release of ReEntry Guide
November 7, 2007
Parkside Mansion, 6-9pm***

ReEntry Guide developed to help people leaving prison

The Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (CCJRC) is proud to announce the release of its newest publication, *Getting On After Getting Out: A ReEntry Guide for Colorado*. This is the first reentry guide of its kind in Colorado and one of only a handful of guides published in the United States specifically to help people leaving prison.

“Hundreds of people re-enter society after incarceration in a Colorado prison every month, many of them without a plan or the information they need for re-entry. They don't make headlines, but they're out there, looking for a place to live and a job and everything else they need--ID, work clothes, medical care, etc. Many people lack the basic information they need to help with this process. That's what this book is for”, said Carol Peeples, the guide's author.

The development of this reentry guide took over 2 years and Ms. Peeples interviewed more than 200 people including those who had been on parole, family members, DOC personnel, parole board members, and community service providers. *Getting On After Getting Out* covers many topics, including

- Planning for release
- Understanding parole/community corrections
- Finding a job and a place to live
- Reconnecting with family and friends
- Getting help from community organizations
- And much more....

"The Re-entry Guide is a much needed tool in the effort to reduce recidivism and impact the revolving door. The book will keep offenders focused on re-entry from day one, to parole, and through to release. This is the way to successful re-entry. I applaud Carol Peeples, Christie Donner, and all involved, on their efforts and commitment to a better future for Colorado", said Ari Zavaras, director of the Colorado Department of Corrections.

Unfortunately, most people released from prison are not successful. Last year, 10,087 people were released from state prison in Colorado. For those released on mandatory parole, 65% will be revoked and returned to prison within 3 years. Parole revocations accounted for 37% of total annual prison admissions. Of those parole revocations (n=3,826), 73% were for technical parole violations (n=2,792) and 27% were for the commission of a new crime (n=1,034). Re-incarceration costs for those returned to prison on a technical parole violation would exceed \$77 million annually.

The Piton Foundation and CCJRC conducted a recent study of people on parole in Denver. Surveys were conducted of 150 people back in prison following a parole revocation and 250 people on parole. The study found that people leaving prison face many struggles and barriers that impact their ability to successfully reintegrate back into their families and communities. Some of the findings include:

- 25% of people on parole in the metro area and 37% of people on parole in Denver are released to homeless shelters or other temporary housing.
- 55% of those whose parole was revoked report continued substance abuse problems after their release which directly contributed to their revocation.
- 66% of people coming out of prison felt unprepared and weren't finding the help they needed from their parole officers, families or community organizations.
- 56% reported that finding and keeping a job is a significant problem and one of the biggest reentry challenges they face. Parolees cite lack of identification papers, employers' reluctance to hire people with criminal records, and an inability to get permission from parole officers to drive as barriers to finding employment. The median wage of survey respondents who worked full time was \$10 an hour, or about \$21,000 a year.
- 69% of parolees reported being depressed. The majority described a sense of being overwhelmed and a deepening sense of hopelessness over time.
- 59% said that they did not have enough money to support themselves and pay for all the parole related expenses (drug/alcohol screens, mandatory classes, child support, restitution, parole fees, etc).

Many people coming out of Colorado prisons face not one, but most of these challenges. One parolee who is back in prison described his experience: "I was nervous at first and then I got scared because I didn't have a sturdy foundation out there. I had no job and I was lost without hope. I know I can succeed, but with the constant debt that I was in with restitution, I had to pay for classes and all, broke as a joke, so I ran to the drugs to drown it all."

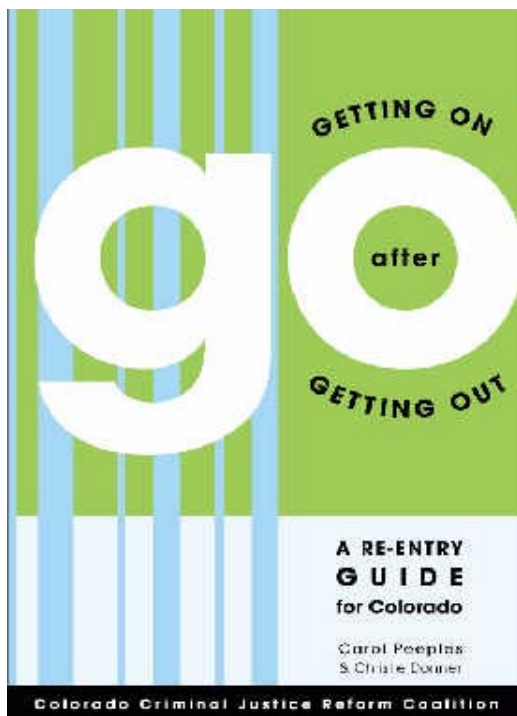
Another parolee said, "I was afraid. I was nervous and somewhat shy. I felt like I was from another planet after doing seven and a half years. I was lost; trying to remember phone numbers and addresses was a nightmare. The only number I couldn't forget was my Department of Corrections number."

When analyzing the challenges and barriers to success, however, there were few differences between those who had already failed and those who were struggling to succeed. Overwhelmed with requirements and financial burdens, they struggle to find a job and stable housing, and feeling ill prepared and unsupported. All this takes its toll. What starts out as confidence quickly deteriorates. "I was lonely and lost, didn't have anyone, didn't know anyone. I wanted

to have a regular life but I felt completely out of place and I felt as sad as I used to feel in prison,” said another parolee who was returned to prison.

Because of generous support from the Piton Foundation, Denver Foundation, Daniels Fund, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, CCJRC will be distributing 20,000 free copies of the reentry to people in prison and on parole. “We hope this guide will provide critical information so that people can leave prison better prepared and overcome the many barriers they will undoubtedly experience after release”, said Christie Donner, executive director of CCJRC. “We are also so grateful to all those people who helped in the production of this reentry guide.”

Copies will be sold for \$10 through CCJRC at 303-825-0122 or www.ccjrc.org.



CCJRC is available to assist the media with interviews of people involved in this project, including people on parole. The table of contents is also available at www.ccjrc.org.

###