The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center announced today the release of a guide for policymakers committed to reducing the likelihood that probationers will reoffend. A Ten-Step Guide to Transforming Probation Departments to Reduce Recidivism provides probation leaders with a roadmap to overhaul the operations of their agencies so they can increase public safety in their communities and improve rates of compliance among people they are supervising.

The first section describes how officials can engage key stakeholders, evaluate agency policies, and develop a strategic plan for implementing reform; the second section provides recommendations for redesigning departmental policies and practices; and the final section includes steps for making the department transformation permanent. The report provides numerous examples of how these steps were used in one probation department in particular (Travis County, Texas). Since transforming its operations between 2005 and 2008, the Travis County probation department has seen felony probation revocations decline by 20 percent and the one-year re-arrest rate for probationers fall by 17 percent (compared with similar probationers before the departmental overhaul).

Geraldine Nagy, Director of Travis County’s adult probation department and one of the authors of the report, said, “Probation leaders across the country share the conviction that probation administrators play a key role in community safety. In Travis County, we’ve made preventing crime and reducing reoffending the focus of our mission statement. Everyone, at all levels of our agency, along with judicial leaders, sees recidivism reduction as our shared and topmost priority. The Ten-Step Guide captures the key lessons we learned in reforming our agency.”

While probation officials in every state are experiencing cuts to their budgets, the number of people they are supervising is increasing. According to a recent study by the Pew Center on the States, more than five million people are currently on probation or parole in the U.S., representing an increase of 59 percent over the past 20 years. Facing high expectations and intense public scrutiny, probation officials should revisit their agency’s goals, processes, and measures for success. The Ten-Step Guide is designed for these community corrections officials and policymakers responsible for funding and overseeing probation.

North Carolina State Representative David Guice (R-Transylvania County), who is a member of the board of the CSG Justice Center and worked as a probation officer for over 30 years, said, “As a member of my state’s General Assembly, I worked diligently with fellow lawmakers to author legislation to overhaul the probation system across North Carolina. I believe it's important to realize how state governments can position probation staff to go beyond 'trailing and nailing' probationers who don't comply with conditions of release, and actually work to change behaviors among this population so they commit fewer crimes. The Ten-Step Guide is a critical tool for any state lawmaker who wants to help accomplish these same goals in their state.”

Work on the guide was supported by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance, Pew Center on the States Public Safety Performance Project, Texas Department of Criminal Justice-
Community Justice Assistance Division, and the Travis County (TX) Community Supervision and Corrections Department.

The report was produced under grant number 2009-DD-BX-K139 of the Bureau of Justice Assistance. Additional resources can be found at www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org.

By:
Tuesday, August 9, 2011 at 02:53 PM
Tags:
CSG Justice Center
Policy Area
› Public Safety
› Corrections
› Community Corrections
Policy Area
› Public Safety
› Corrections
› Offender Reentry

© 2016 The Council of State Governments. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL:
http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/csg-justice-center-releases-guide-transforming-probation-departments-focus-recidivism-reduct

Links