Delaware convened its statewide Committee on Criminal Justice Reform (CCJR) to address the need to reduce recidivism and increase public safety. Officials assembled the cross system body to identify gaps in reentry services for offenders pre and post release and to coordinate with providers of reentry programs. In addition to reducing recidivism through the application of evidence based practices targeting primary criminogenic (crime-producing) risk factors, the reform project also focuses on the mental health and substance use disorder populations.

The complex nature of these specialized populations requires additional measures to ensure a smooth transition into the community. The CCJR discussed the issues facing formerly incarcerated persons, divided itself into issue-specific subgroups, and evaluated the state’s criminal justice system. Based upon these discussions, the report divides recommendations into five sub-categories: overall reentry, behavioral health, housing, employment and education. CCJR’s vision, mission and goals have been adopted:

**VISION:** Delaware’s Strategic Plan for Prisoner Reentry is a collaborative, system-wide effort developed as part of the state’s Recidivism Reduction System Blueprint. This effort reduces recidivism through the use of data-driven and evidence-based practices, resulting in fewer violations and fewer crimes committed by formerly incarcerated persons, fairer approaches, and increased cost effectiveness, culminating in increased public safety in Delaware communities.

**MISSION:** In order to achieve this vision, Delaware engages in a continuous evidence-based, policy-driven, data-informed, strategic planning process that: (1) acknowledges the complex dynamics associated with justice involved populations; (2) emphasizes collaboration, partnerships and data sharing across agencies and institutions to reduce barriers to reentry; (3) addresses the risks and needs of justice-involved individuals through a seamless case planning and implementation process for supervision and services; and (4) underscores the nexus between recidivism and effective services for housing, employment, health care, mental health, substance abuse, and education.

**GOALS:** The goals of the Delaware Strategic Plan for Prisoner Reentry are to:

1. Further develop and streamline current criminal justice initiatives in Delaware, particularly in the area of prisoner reentry, to maximize planning, reduce duplication of efforts, and improve the state’s capability to leverage its resources.

2. Engage in a collaborative strategic planning effort between Delaware justice stakeholders and NCJRP technical assistance providers that focuses on evidenced-based and national best practices for recidivism reduction to help Delaware achieve its goals for criminal justice reform.

3. Assist in the development of approaches to fully engage Delaware communities in criminal justice reform efforts through improved partnerships with nonprofit organizations, particularly those involved in prisoner reentry services.

4. Assess recidivism reduction efforts, particularly with current and former prisoners, to efficiently identify current assets, barriers, and gaps in its policies, practices and intermediate measures of performance.

5. Provide recommendations on policy and process improvements that will strengthen the prisoner reentry system including an increase in the number of former prisoners seeking state services, strengthening the case planning process, and improving coordination with community agencies.
6. Provide recommendations to enhance current efforts to increase and improve service delivery for mentally ill and substance abusers, as part of Delaware’s response to recommendations of the American Civil Liberties Union.

7. Enhance data collection, and data and information sharing between state agencies and between the state and local communities to improve justice processes and performance.

8. Develop approaches for continuous evaluation of the collaborative strategic planning process.

9. Develop the methodology and funding plan for a third-party evaluation of Delaware’s recidivism reduction efforts beginning with the focus on improved prisoner reentry.

### SUMMARY OF HIGH PRIORITY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Fully develop and implement the Delaware Prisoner Reentry Initiative (DE-PRI)

- Develop an evidence-based “overarching” prisoner reentry policy to guide all reentry work in the state in order to improve state and local coordination
- Develop improved data access and sharing protocols to increase transparency and communication among prisoner reentry state and local stakeholders
- Develop and implement a Survival Analysis to monitor performance of new reentry policies and protocols so that reforms can be assessed and adapted as needed over time
- Develop a process to fully engage communities in the prisoner reentry process
- Synchronize state criminal justice initiatives into a unified structure as part of the DE-PRI

#### DE-PRI Housing Policies

- Create a Department of Corrections (DOC) policy that expresses the agencies commitment to not release prisoners to homelessness so that, whenever possible, prisoners have a sustainable housing plan for at least the first 90 days after release
- In order to address the policy, expand affordable housing for former prisoners

#### DE-PRI Education Policies

- Initiate at prison intake the existing academic assessment and add a vocational/educational assessment so that all incoming prisoners are assessed for their academic and vocational needs
- Develop of a policy to guide the development of “distance learning” for prisoners so that they are better able to address their academic and vocational needs prior to release

#### DE-PRI Behavioral Health Policies

- Review existing and drafted policies that guide interaction with alcohol and other drug (AOD) dependencies that are evidence-based
- Develop policies that assure pre-and post-release continuity for mentally ill and AOD dependent prisoners

#### DE-PRI Employment Policies

- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DOC, the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Labor (DOC) for continuation prison-based services for education and workforce development upon release to the community
- Create within the DOL a policy and resources for skill training developed specifically for former prisoners