

NOTE: "Ohio has emerged as a national leader in helping those who leave prison succeed and stay out."

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Revolving door

In Ohio, state and local re-entry programs are helping more ex-offenders succeed and stay out of prison

Prisons are often said — somewhat inaccurately — to operate revolving doors: Offenders serve their sentences, get out, commit new crimes, and return to prison. The analogy ignores success stories that never make the news.

Still, 40 percent or more of the 700,000 inmates who are released each year nationwide eventually go back to prison. Some committed new crimes; others returned for violating parole conditions.

Either way, the costs of recidivism are enormous. In Ohio, every person who returns to prison costs taxpayers about \$25,000 a year. In many other states, the costs are far higher.

Ohio has emerged as a national leader in helping those who leave prison succeed and stay out. Further progress will require even stronger community partnerships with Ohio's Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC).

It also will require further changes in the department's culture. Corrections officers inside Ohio's prisons must view themselves as part of a continuum that includes the successful return of inmates to their communities.

Ohio's recidivism rate, calculated over three years, dropped to a record low of 28.7 percent last year, compared to nearly 40 percent a decade ago, JoEllen Smith of the DRC told The Blade's editorial page. The state's 28 prisons release more than 22,500 inmates a year.

The department can take credit for much of that success. Director Gary Mohr has made reducing recidivism a core part of the department's mission.

Editorial continued here: <http://www.toledoblade.com/Editorials/2013/07/03/Revolving-door.html>

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