

## 2014 Jail Best Practices Award Official Entry Form

This form must be attached to all entries. Entrants must complete all sections for the entry to be considered complete. A copy of this official entry is available electronically at [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org).

County Name Perry County County Class 6  
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 Contact Name Brenda Benner Title Commissioner  
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### Project Information

Title Community Re-entry Start Date July, 2012

Each application must be submitted with two signatures. Place appropriate signatures on two of the lines below:

Brenda Benner  
 Chair of the Board of County Commissioners  
Chad L. Clark  
 Chair of the county Prison Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
 County Chief Executive Officer

### Program Narrative

A separate program narrative document must be attached to this form that answers the following questions in the order presented. This must be typed in a Word-document, Times New Roman, 10-point type.

- **Need:** a description of the identified need and the background including what programs were in place before the current project, if any, and how it led to this effort
- **Program/policies:** a description of how the project enhanced general operations programs/policies, treatment, and custody
- **Approach:** a description of the project, including any evidenced-based approaches to jail diversion, community involvement strategies, formation of stakeholder groups, county-wide planning strategies, etc.
- **Evaluation:** a brief description of how the project was evaluated and any lessons learned
- **Stakeholders:** a brief description of the community, including a description of key stakeholders, organizations, and county departments that were involved in the project
- **Processes:** a description of how the activities or processes utilized in this project were altered or will be continued based on experience, including plans for leveraging additional resources
- **Costs:** a description of any costs associated with the project and how it was funded; cost savings, if any and any change in community acceptance, reductions in insurance costs, or inspection improvements that resulted from the program

Scoring will be based on the elements as described above.

Please attach supporting documents, forms or other information that support the award entry. Entries must be received by close of business on February 14, 2014. Winners will be announced during the CCAP Spring Conference, March 23 - 25 2014. More information: Brinda Carroll Penyak, [bpenyak@pacounties.org](mailto:bpenyak@pacounties.org) or (717) 526-1010.

**Need:** a description of the identified need and the background including what programs were in place before the current project, if any, and how it led to this effort.

The Perry County Literacy Council (PCLC) is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization with a mission to “provide educational programs for Perry County residents and families that will enable them to better function as productive and responsible citizens.” PCLC is the Adult Education contractor for residents of Perry County, PA, funded by the PA Department of Education, Division of Adult Education to provide Adult Basic Education, GED® and English as a Second Language programs in the community and at the Perry County Prison with outcomes that include Educational Gains, Obtain GED®, Enter Employment and Retain Employment. PCLC has provided Adult Education programs at the Perry County Prison for 15 years. Two Instructors provide individualized instruction in small classes, targeting needs based on Reading, Mathematics and Language assessments and Student goals. Inmates are referred to the classes by the Prison Counselor who interviews Inmates at intake and identifies needs, including educational services. Inmates are voluntarily assessed and enrolled in classes. The Perry County Prison supports space and logistics for day and evening classes and for official GED® testing administered by the PCLC Chief Examiner. 2014 Computer-based GED® tests are administered on a secure computer with no Internet access, stored at the prison where tests are administered. This partnership supports instruction and GED® credentials for up to 15 Inmates per fiscal year. PCLC’s GED® Scholarship Fund supports testing fees for indigent Inmates.

In 2009, PCLC expanded its Adult Education community programs to include Workforce Preparation Classes that support training and employment goals. Committed to a mission that extends to all Perry County residents including the incarcerated, and with an interest in workforce and economic development, PCLC identified the need for Perry County Prison Inmates to have access to workforce preparation services that supported community reentry. The Perry County Prison supported limited Inmate employment within the facility and at Work Release sites in the community, leaving many Inmates underserved as they reentered the community. PCLC developed and operated a pilot Community Reentry Project in 2012. The project model extended Workforce Preparation Classes to Perry County Prison Inmates. In order to support the transition to employment in the community, the project included a case management model addressing individual reentry needs and barriers. A third model component engaged the faith-based community, with a nondenominational faith-based support group following each class, promoting values and personal commitment to rehabilitation. Inmates were paired with Volunteer Mentors from the faith-based community who provided prerelease and reentry support. The pilot project was successful, data was collected and PCLC established a Community Reentry Project in 2013. The Perry County Prison Board, including the Perry County Commissioners, President Judge, District Attorney, Public Defender, Probation and Parole Directors and the Warden have endorsed this project as one that addresses an identified need with services that impact recidivism.

**Program/policies:** a description of how the project enhanced general operations programs/policies, treatment, and custody Perry County Prison Inmates are referred to the Perry County Literacy Council (PCLC) Community Reentry Project by the Prison Counselor who identifies inmates who want and need support for successful reentry. These Inmates voluntarily commit to participation that supports transition to employment as well as personal responsibility for demonstrating values aligned with rehabilitation. Participants must comply with rules and regulations, engage in prison programs that address the sources of their past conduct that led to incarceration and maintain compliance throughout their sentences. The prison supports space and logistics for the class, the support group as well as Case Management and Volunteer Mentor meetings. Volunteer Mentors submit applications with references and clearances, are interviewed by the Project Coordinator/Case Manager and attend Volunteer Mentor orientation and training. PCLC requires that Staff and Volunteer Mentors participating in this project submit State Police and Child Abuse Clearances, sign a Confidentiality Statement and complete prison clearances to have access to inmates in the facility. Inmate compliance and commitment to change have supported persistence in the program through release for the majority of participants, supporting compliance with prison policies and participation in treatment programs. The partnership between PCLC, the Perry County Prison and the faith-based community has supported a decline in recidivism among the majority of participants, an outcome aligned with successful reentry, compliance with terms of Perry County Parole and ultimately community economic development. The prison personnel and the Prison Board continue to support the evolving needs of the project’s participants, identifying ways to support timely reentry employment that reduces recidivism.

**Approach:** a description of the project, including any evidenced-based approaches to jail diversion, community involvement strategies, formation of stakeholder groups, county-wide planning strategies, etc...

The PCLC Community Reentry Project model incorporates Adult Education, Workforce Preparation, Volunteer Mentoring and community engagement, supporting a multi-faceted program with evidence-based components that support a reduction in recidivism. Adult Education supports the GED® credential at the Perry County Prison, supporting successful reentry and community economic development. Research conducted at IUP finds that offenders who obtain a GED® have higher employment rates and earn consistently higher wages compared to offenders with less than a high school diploma as they reenter. For each person without a GED®, the public cost is minus \$673 in needed support. Research conducted by Henry Levin (Columbia University) estimates that every adult that completes a GED® contributes an additional \$60,000 in tax revenue over their lifetime. Furthermore, high school graduates earn an estimated \$260,000 more over their lives than high school dropouts. The South Central Workforce Investment Board supports PCLC Workforce Preparation with Workforce Investment Act funding, supporting Career Management and access to programs aligned with funding for on-the-job and postsecondary training. Project participants attend pre and post-release Workforce Preparation Classes aligned with training and employment outcomes. The PCLC Community Reentry Project offers a faith-based support group that follows the Workforce Preparation Class. The Project Coordinator pairs Inmates with Volunteer Mentors from the faith-based community who provide pre and post-release support. Volunteer Mentors meet with project participants at the Perry County Prison and maintain contact following reentry, offering guidance and addressing concerns and needs on an ongoing basis. This

model is supported by findings from the evaluation of a research study conducted by Ready4Work, a national organization that supports employment, and funded by the US Department of Labor, suggesting that mentoring can have real benefits in strengthening outcomes in the context of a multifaceted reentry program. The research project model helped returning offenders by linking them to the faith based community and institutions that helped them find work and avoid a relapse into a life of criminal activity. Across the 11 sites, about half of the participants in the reentry program became involved in mentoring. Those participants fared better, in terms of program retention and employment, than those who did not participate in the mentoring. Because individuals who leave programs early are less likely to realize the full benefits of participation, one key question is whether there is an association between mentoring and the length of time participants remain in a reentry program. Ready4Work participants who met with a mentor persisted in the reentry program at a higher rate than those with no mentors. They were more likely to find a job while in the program. Research has found that employment plays a crucial role in helping ex-prisoners avoid criminal behavior and recidivism. Participants who met with a mentor were more than two times more likely to find jobs than participants who never met with a mentor. People recently released from prison not only need to find a job, but they also need to remain employed in order to establish stability and, ideally, to lay the foundation for long-term advancement and wage growth. Among the participants who found a job and were active in the program for at least three months, 65 percent met the research job retention benchmark. Furthermore, those who met with a mentor were 56 percent more likely to meet the retain employment benchmark than those who did not. They were less likely to recidivate. At the one-year post-release mark, mentored Ready4Work participants, regardless of whether they attained employment, were 39 percent less likely to recidivate than those participants who were not mentored. This research suggests that as participants make a transition back into their communities after a period of incarceration, mentoring may play an important role in keeping them involved in the program, employed and less likely to recidivate. Since 2012, 25 Inmates have participated in the PCLC Community Reentry Project. All participants with no GED® attended prison classes with 50% obtaining the GED® credential prior to release from the prison and another 25% completing at reentry; 10 are employed in the community; 10 no longer have contact but have not returned to Perry County Prison; 3 have returned to Perry County Prison and 2 are recently discharged and enrolled in PCLC community GED® Classes and Workforce Investment Act Career Management. Three Inmates are currently attending the PCLC Community Reentry Class.

**Evaluation:** a brief description of how the project was evaluated and any lessons learned

The outcomes used to measure success of the Perry County Literacy Council (PCLC) Community Reentry Project include transition to community housing with a home plan that aligns with the participant's stability and probation requirements; compliance aligned with the Perry County Probation Department including accountability for one's behavior and the development of competencies to allow the offender to become a better person. (This rural model provides the Court of Common Pleas and the community an effective and efficient delivery of services involving the supervision of both adult and juvenile offenders); timely employment/income that supports the participant's economic needs; employment retention for 6 months following release; and maintaining contact with the Project Coordinator and Volunteer Mentor for 6 months following release. Outcomes were measured through ongoing contact with the participant, the Volunteer Mentor and the Perry County Probation Department. The challenges faced by Inmates reentering the community and the measures needed to support successful reentry were the lessons learned over time. Participants had few resources to support themselves as they reentered. This lack of resources put them at immediate risk for lengthy unemployment and potential recidivism. Each participant's barriers have been addressed through a variety of solutions that have become program resources through experience and a broad range of support. Participants receive immediate program support on reentry, entering available employment or enrolling in programs that support employment. Case Management addresses participant needs ranging from basic living needs to transportation and logistics. Two significant barriers to reentry include housing and transportation. Ex-offenders are ineligible for subsidized housing and must find other affordable sources with no current incomes. There is no homeless shelter for men in Perry County. The housing barrier model now includes extensive pre and post-release Case Management. Transportation is a barrier as Perry County has no public transportation and the county's transportation authority has no funding to support ex-offender travel. This barrier has been addressed with a variety of volunteer and private grant-based transportation models as well as advocacy for a rural transportation model that supports employment.

**Stakeholders:** a brief description of the community, including a description of key stakeholders, organizations, county departments that were involved in the project.

Perry County is a rural community with a population of 46,000 residents, 97.5% Caucasian, earning per capita incomes of \$25,340. 10% of the county's residents live below the poverty level. The unemployment rate is 7.5% with workers' mean travel time to work at 31.3 minutes. Agriculture is the primary industry. The top 50 employers in the county include school transportation vendors; health care vendors; local, state and federal government employers; school districts; banks, grocery chains, trucking companies and construction companies. The key Stakeholders include the Perry County Literacy Council, the lead agency for the Community Reentry Project; the Perry County Prison, the lead partner on the project; the Perry County Prison Board with representation from the County Commissioners, the President Judge, the District Attorney, the Public Defender, the Perry County Probation Department and the Perry County Prison Warden, all endorsing the project with interest in reducing recidivism; TechBridge Youth, Perry County's at risk youth contractor, providing a Job Developer who provides individual case management supporting pre-employment skills, support services, transition to postsecondary and on-the-job training and employment for youth ages 17 – 21; the South Central Workforce Investment Board, supporting unemployed and dislocated workers with Workforce Investment Act Career Management in Perry County with outcomes that include transition to postsecondary and on-the-job training and employment; Perry County churches that support the project with earmarked funds and donations of goods; Perry Human Services, Perry County Family Center, Tri County Community Action, Newport Assembly of God Bread of Life Outreach, social service agencies that support participants with a variety of services

including a broad range of counseling, parenting classes and early intervention programs, enrollment in programs that support costs associated with food and utilities and the distribution of goods that support basic needs. Stakeholder missions and interests align with the PCLC Community Reentry Project target population.

**Processes:** a description of how the activities or processes utilized in this project were altered or will be continued based on experience, including plans for leveraging additional resources

As the Perry County Literacy Council (PCLC) Community Reentry Project has evolved, an additional hour dedicated to the project was added to the Project Coordinator/Case Manager's schedule in 2013. This staff member performs duties aligned with three other agency positions funded by the PA Department of Education, Division of Adult Education. This State and Federal funding supports the GED® and employment outcomes. No current government funding supports the reentry project hours. This project has been funded by a private foundation and with contributions from the faith-based community. Data has been collected to use in applying for future funding and in determining the number of funded hours per participant necessary for effective support. A time and effort log is currently being used to capture the actual hours associated with the project in an effort to project future funding needs. In 2014, PCLC plans to develop a Community Reentry Workforce Preparation model that incorporates Workforce Investment Act Career Management into the pre-release class, leveraging South Central Workforce Investment Act funding to support Instructor salary. PCLC highlights the Community Reentry Project in printed and web-based communications and at events in an effort to leverage local community funds. Local churches have invited the Project Coordinator and participants to speak about the program's impact.

**Costs:** a description of any costs associated with the project and how it was funded; cost savings, if any and any change in community acceptance, reductions in insurance costs, or inspection improvements that resulted from the program

The Perry County Literacy Council (PCLC) Community Reentry Project has been funded by a private foundation with interest in Perry County and PCLC, for the Workforce Preparation Class Project Coordinator Salary at 4 hours per week. This foundation funded community Workforce Preparation Classes that supplement the South Central Workforce Investment Board funding in the community. This private funding was extended to include the PCLC Community Reentry Project Workforce Preparation Class in 2013. A second funding source comes from local churches that earmark donations to the project. This funding supports PCLC operational costs including communications, copier costs and supplies for the program. Other sources of funding that supported this project include the Highmark Youth Workforce Development Grant, supporting door to door transportation to classes, employment appointments and jobs sites for participants ages 1 – 25; PNC Foundation Volunteer Drivers Project, providing gift cards to volunteer drivers who transported participants; PCLC Employment Services Fund, providing track phones and fees for documents for participants; PCLC GED® Scholarship Fund, supporting GED® testing fees for indigent participants; and PCLC Office Manager and Executive Director Council Funds Salary, supporting time and effort that contributed to the project. No current government funding that supports PCLC aligns with this project. The Perry County community has embraced the PCLC Community Reentry Project with donations earmarked to the project. A project participant spoke at PCLC's Annual Meeting, sharing his experience and supporting the need for the program, impacting the audience. The Perry County judicial community has supported participants. Cost savings are aligned with participants who have transitioned to employment and who have not returned to prison. PCLC promotes programs that ultimately reduce reliance on public assistance and unemployment as well as support individuals who voluntarily enroll in programs that improve their conditions. Supporters view the PCLC Community Reentry Project as such a program.