

HB 1874-S - DIGEST

(DIGEST OF PROPOSED 1ST SUBSTITUTE)

Declares an intent to support evidence-based programming for offenders and focus on facilitating the successful reentry of offenders into the community. The goals of the offender reentry programs are to increase public safety, maximize rehabilitation of offenders, and lower recidivism.

Provides that the department of corrections shall continue to establish community justice centers within the state for the purpose of providing assistance to inmates who are reentering the community.

Requires a minimum of six community justice centers to be operational by December 1, 2009. The six community justice centers include those in operation at the time of the effective date of this act. The community justice centers shall be located in the six counties with the largest population of offenders who were released from department of corrections custody. At least two centers shall be located in eastern Washington.

Provides that, by December 1, 2011, the department of corrections shall establish a minimum of three additional community justice centers within the state.

Provides that, in addition to any other programs or services offered, the community justice centers shall designate a community transition coordinator who shall act to facilitate connections between the former inmate and the community. The community transition coordinator shall provide information to former inmates regarding services available to them in the community regardless of the length of time since the offender's release from the correctional facility.

Directs the department of corrections and the state board for community and technical colleges to investigate and review methods to optimize educational and vocational programming opportunities to meet the needs of each offender as identified in his or her individual reentry plan both while an offender is incarcerated and postrelease.

Requires that, in conducting its review, the department and state board shall consider and make recommendations regarding: (1) Technological advances which could serve to expand educational programs and vocational training including, but not limited to, distance learning, satellite instruction, videotape usage, computer aided instruction, and flexible scheduling;

(2) Methods to ensure educational programs and vocational training are relevant to work programs and skills necessary to enhance the employability of offenders upon release;

(3) Long-term methods for maintaining channels of communication between the department, state board administration, educators, and students; and

(4) Methods for ensuring that security measures remain intact regarding an offender's use of the internet.

Requires the department and state board to report to the governor and the legislature on the investigation and recommendations required in this act no later than November 15, 2007.

Provides that, on or before October 1, 2007, the department of corrections and the department of licensing shall enter into an agreement establishing expedited procedures to assist offenders in obtaining a driver's license or identification card upon their release from a department of corrections' institution.

Establishes a joint legislative task force on reentry barriers for previously incarcerated individuals for the purpose of providing oversight into the implementation of this act and develop recommendations to assist the reentry of inmates into the community.

Requires the joint legislative task force to present a report of its findings and recommendations to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature, including any proposed legislation, by November 15, 2008.

Provides that: (1) The department of corrections shall enter into agreements to provide short-term housing assistance to offenders classified as high risk or high needs who are reentering the community and are in need of transitional housing;

(2) The department may develop further criteria in rule to determine who will qualify for housing assistance and shall utilize the recommendations provided by the joint legislative task force under this act in the development of the criteria;

(3) Housing assistance shall not be provided in excess of one hundred twenty days for each offender; and

(4) The state, department, and its employees are not liable for civil damages arising from the conduct of an offender solely due to the placement of an offender in short-term housing or the provision of housing assistance.

Makes appropriations to carry out the purposes of the act.