



Coordinating Community Development: The Heart of MPRI

Strong and sustained local capacity is the single most critical aspect of the MPRI implementation process. The Pilot Site communities will become dedicated champions of improved offender re-entry that will result in less crime through determined and specific preparation for inmates who will transition back to their communities. Local efforts at education, training, planning, and implementation need significant guidance and support in order to build the capacity for system reform. Each Pilot Site needs a local Community Coordinator to help the community effectively prepare for offender re-entry while MDOC is better preparing inmates for release.

Community convening and organizing will serve to elicit community buy-in and investment, planning for sustainability, and ensuring quality results throughout the transition process. The Community Coordinators will receive training and technical support from the Michigan Council and Crime and Delinquency (MCCD) and from Public Policy Associates (PPA) so that they are clear on how to manage the process based on the MPRI Model. The four key ingredients for successful community organizing¹ that the Community Coordinator will assist with are:

- **Capacity.** Each Community Coordinator must have the capacity to work on prisoner re-entry. Indicators of adequate capacity include experience, staff capacity, resources to apply to the work, and relationships with key stakeholders.
- **Commitment.** Each Community Coordinator must demonstrate a dedicated commitment to prisoner re-entry. Additionally, the community must develop a commitment to prisoner re-entry. The development of community commitment may be fostered by the Community Coordinator. How is this level of interest perceived by other key community stakeholders?
- **Credibility.** The Community Coordinator must demonstrate credibility within the community. What is the demonstrated historic experience and credibility of the Community Coordinator in playing a catalytic role?
- **Knowledge.** What is the Community Coordinator's understanding of prisoner re-entry and its implications?

¹ Adapted from The James Irvine Foundation, [Community Catalyst](#).

The Skills of Community Coordinators

It is through the Community Coordinator that the support from the JEHT Foundation will have tremendous and long-lasting impact on the MPRI. Local community-development efforts to implement the MPRI Model throughout the state will require a precise and extensive set of skills that will be the hallmarks of the Community Coordinators who will staff the local development process.

- **Communication.** The Community Coordinators must have excellent communications (both written and verbal) skills to facilitate connectedness among all implementation stakeholders. Communications must be facilitated both from the local communities to the statewide MPRI managers and from MPRI to the local communities.
- **Community convening.** The Community Coordinators must possess the skills to bring diverse stakeholders together, build consensus around prisoner re-entry issues, and catalyze action and leadership within communities toward transition planning.
- **Community organizing.** Organizing within pilot communities involves training Steering Team members and Transition Team members, facilitating ReEntry Advisory Council meetings, and building partnerships among key stakeholder groups.
- **Brokering.** When acting as a broker within communities, the Community Coordinator can benefit from maintaining a degree of neutrality to negotiate effectively through community conflict. Extensive skills in brokering and fostering neutrality will be a central requirement of a Community Coordinator.
- **Coordinating.** The implementation planning associated with MPRI is challenging to coordinate. Maintaining connectedness to community activities will require extensive coordinating by the Community Coordinator.
- **Systems building.** Building systems and shepherding cross-systems change requires a complex set of skills. The Community Coordinator must have experience in building and managing system-wide change.

The Responsibilities of Community Coordinators

The involvement of Michigan's communities in the MPRI revolves around three "focus areas" that will be coordinated by dedicated MPRI Community Coordinators who are funded at each Pilot Site under a grant award from the JEHT Foundation:

- **Focus Area One:** Coordination and communication regarding the evolving design of the MPRI Model so that each of the seven primary decision points is deeply influenced by the community perspective. The iterative process of refining the Model will require open communication and effective coordination to ensure that community input is captured, the community has an accurate understanding of the Model, and expectations for implementation are clearly defined.
- **Focus Area Two:** Facilitation and coordination regarding the identification of: (1) community assets that can be applied to improve parolee success, (2) policy and operational barriers among state and local agencies, and (3) service gaps that can be filled with state, federal, and local funding.

- **Focus Area Three:** The design and implementation by local Pilot Sites of Comprehensive ReEntry Plans that will provide the framework, rationale, and funding for improved policies, practices, and programs whose success will be measured by reduced crime and fewer parolee returns to prison. The Community Coordinator will facilitate the local process and provide the staff support needed to write the Comprehensive Plan.

Focus Area One: Community Involvement in the MPRI Process

Each of the major decision points for improved prisoner re-entry under the MPRI Model must involve community input and collaboration. Without local community involvement, the process would be viewed as “top down” and undoubtedly miss the opportunities for local expertise and experience at the ground level where service delivery must be focused. The community role in each of the seven decision points began at the first meeting of the MPRI Advisory Council and continues to be one of the hallmarks of the design and implementation process. The seven decision points affect the policies and practices that apply to the offender transition process—each of which must be adapted as a result of community input and involvement in the process. The affected policies and practices provide a rich context for an examination of the community’s role in the MPRI and thus a guide to the work that will be done.

The primary role of the MPRI Community Coordinator is to be the “point person” to coordinate the community’s input so that the key local stakeholders have enhanced capability to adjust their processes accordingly and have in place a communications system to make certain everyone is clear about the process and has a voice in its development.

Task 1. The Community Coordinator will be responsible for making certain the information from the first Transition Accountability Plan (TAP1) is in the hands of the local MPRI Steering Team.

Task 2. The Community Coordinator will be responsible for making certain that the Targeted or Earliest Release Date and status of the offender’s movement to the facility nearest his or her city of return is communicated to the local Steering Team by the local Field Operations staff.

Task 3. The Community Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the local re-entry parole agent coordinates the logistics for the interaction of the Transition Team and the local prison and for the convening and facilitation of local Team meetings to develop the TAPs.

Task 4. Since the Community Coordinators will be acting as staff for the local Steering Teams and their ReEntry Councils, one of their many responsibilities will be to coordinate the planning and implementation of the fourth and final TAP (TAP4: The Discharge TAP) that will be the “hand off” of the parolee’s case to responsible parties in the community who will continue providing services and guidance to the ex-offender.

Task 5. Committees will be formed to address these issues. Community representation on the MPRI committees will be coordinated by the Community Coordinator.

Focus Area Two: Community Assets, Policy Barriers, and Gaps in Services

Task 6. The community-assessment task of evaluating the assets, barriers, and gaps will be organized by the Community Coordinator.

Focus Area Three: Community-Based Comprehensive Prisoner ReEntry Plans

Task 7. Coordinating the completion of the Comprehensive Community ReEntry Plans will be the responsibility of the Community Coordinator.