

# An Examination of Rural Prisoner Reentry Challenges

By: Gary Zajac, Ph.D., Robert Hutchison, and Courtney A. Meyer  
Pennsylvania State University

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## Executive Summary

This study explored issues and challenges surrounding the reentry of state prison and county jail inmates to rural communities in Pennsylvania. Reentry refers to the process of a prisoner transitioning to the community after a period of secure confinement in a state or federal prison or county jail.

The research used secondary data from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and the Pennsylvania Board of Probations and Parole and used primary data from interviews and surveys to: estimate the number and characteristics of state prison and county jail prisoners likely to be released into rural Pennsylvania communities over the next 5 years; identify and document reentry programs and services available to released state and local prisoners in rural Pennsylvania; conduct a gap analysis of reentry services available in rural Pennsylvania for successful reentry; and provide public policy considerations.

According to the research results, releases of county jail inmates to rural counties are projected to hold constant over the next 5 years; however, releases of state inmates are projected to increase slightly over the same period. The most likely explanation for the slight increase in releases of state inmates is that state parole approval rates have increased somewhat over the past several years. The most notable demographic trends among released inmates are an increase in the number of older inmates being released, and a slight increase in the number of female inmates being released.

Significant reentry needs for returning rural inmates include assistance with employment, housing and transportation. Transportation is crucial to the reentry process as the lack of public transit in rural areas can hamper returning inmates in finding and getting to jobs and housing, getting to treatment groups and medical and mental health appointments, and making required meetings with their parole agents. The challenges of finding work and suitable housing are magnified for “hard to place” offenders, such as those with serious mental illness and sex offenders, as the latter face significant restrictions on where they can live and work. This research also found that returning inmates also face some stigma for their status as ex-offenders. This is most notable for returning sex offenders.

While there appears to be a reasonably robust network of social services and programs in rural counties for returning inmates, these services are unevenly distributed between rural counties. Most notably, there are very few reentry programs for sex offenders in rural counties, and almost no programs that specifically address the most important rehabilitative needs of ex-offenders, including programs that address ex-offenders’ thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills and their peer networks, all of which are strongly linked to recidivism reduction.

*The Center for*

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A Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly



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The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It was created in 1987 under Act 16, the Rural Revitalization

Act, to promote and sustain the vitality of Pennsylvania’s rural and small communities.

Information contained in this report does not necessarily reflect the views of individual board members or the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. For more information, contact the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, 625 Forster St., Room 902, Harrisburg, PA 17120, telephone (717) 787-9555, email: [info@rural.palegislature.us](mailto:info@rural.palegislature.us), [www.rural.palegislature.us](http://www.rural.palegislature.us).

# Introduction

Reentry refers to the process of a prisoner transitioning to the community after a period of secure confinement in a state or federal prison or county jail<sup>1</sup>. Reentry is one of the most popular topics in the corrections field (Petersilia, 2003). Research on reentry includes evaluations of prisoner reentry programs, as well as more basic research on how individual offenders navigate the process of reentry. Most of the national reentry research has focused on urban reentry, with relatively less focus on rural reentry. Even within Pennsylvania, reentry research has focused heavily on urban settings (Bucklen and Zajac, 2009; Latessa, et al., 2009; Smith and Suttle, 2008). Successful reentry hinges on pre-release planning, continuity of treatment and services in the community, and following the known principles of effective intervention—for example, targeting key treatment needs (such as antisocial attitudes and substance use), using evidence-based programs, and providing community-based aftercare services (Andrews and Bonta, 2003; LaVigne, et al., 2008; Lowenkamp, et al., 2006; MacKenzie, 2006).

There is a critical need to examine reentry in rural Pennsylvania communities. Pennsylvania led the nation in 2009 with the largest absolute increase in its state prison population (Pew Center on the States, 2010). The overall recidivism rate, which is the total number of inmates who returned to prison for a new crime or parole violation, for state prisoners in Pennsylvania is 62 percent at 3-years post release, suggesting significant challenges to successful reentry (Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 2013). While statewide reentry programs operated by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) have been evaluated (Latessa, et al., 2009; Smith and Suttle, 2008), very little is known about county jail reentry efforts. Finally, Pennsylvania spent nearly \$1.9 billion on corrections at the state level in fiscal year 2011-12, a 40 percent

increase over the past 5 years, reflecting an increase in the prison population of more than 20 percent during that time (PADOC, 2012a). The financial and policy implications of successful reentry are highly significant and timely.

Thus, reentry is a primary focus of the criminal justice system, yet research related to rural reentry - a significant element of Pennsylvania’s corrections environment - is lacking. Much of the extant reentry research has focused on urban areas, which admittedly receive the bulk of returning offenders, at the cost of understanding the challenges faced by offenders returning to rural areas.

## Goals and Objectives

This research, conducted in 2012-1013, examined the challenges and issues related to prisoner reentry to rural Pennsylvania, including release trends and projections, using a mix of original data collected from surveys and interviews with state and local corrections officials, as well as secondary data and other information obtained from their agencies. The four primary research goals were to: estimate the number and characteristics of state prison and county jail prisoners likely to be released into rural Pennsylvania communities over the next 5 years; identify and document reentry programs and services available to released state and local prisoners in rural Pennsylvania; conduct a gap analysis of reentry services available in rural Pennsylvania for successful reentry; and provide public policy considerations.

## Methodology

The study used existing data and also collected original data through interviews and surveys. The methods used for each research goal are detailed below.

The study used the Center for Rural Pennsylvania’s rural definition to identify rural counties: a county is rural when the number of persons per square mile within the county is less than 284. Counties that have 284 persons or more per square mile are considered urban. According to this definition, 48 of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties (72 percent) are rural.

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1. This report generally substitutes the term “inmate” for “prisoner,” as inmate is used by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole. Terminology varies between county jails. Scholarly and practitioner writings on reentry use the terms prisoner, inmate and offender interchangeably, thus, there is no standard term used. Offender is often used to refer to those with a criminal conviction, whether or not currently incarcerated.

## Release Trends and Demographics

Projections of inmate releases to the 48 rural counties during the period 2012-2017 were based on inmate release trends for the preceding 5 years. Data on releases of state prisoners were collected from PADOc and the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP). These combined datasets provided information on all state inmate releases during the period 2007-2011, showing essential demographics (race, gender, age) as well as the county from which they had been committed to prison, the county to which they were first paroled, and the county in which they were residing when the data were accessed. For inmates who were released as “max-outs” (meaning the inmates are not under parole supervision, but at the completion of their maximum sentence without any supervision), no data are tracked on the county in which they reentered. Thus, the county from which they were committed was used as a proxy for the county to which they returned. National reentry research has found residential stability among returning inmates to be quite high, with 72 percent of released inmates in one study residing at the same address 2 years after release, and just 10 percent having moved more than once since release, with the average distance between first and last known residence being 2.79 miles (La Vigne and Parthasarathy, 2005). Thus, the committing county is a reasonable estimation of the release county for max-outs. While PADOc conducts its own population projections, it does not estimate releases per county, so the researchers were not able to simply use PADOc’s projections.

Data on releases of county inmates and their demographics over the past 5 years were abstracted from the study of county jails sponsored by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania (Zajac and Kowalski, 2012).

The researchers analyzed the changes in population over time for each county, and then calculated the slope of a line using the least-squares method. This “line of best fit” method represents the number of releases in each county. Projection numbers were generated by extending the line of best fit through 2017.

While the line is not expected to accurately predict exact numbers, it can forecast reasonable estimates given recent trends. The reliability of the forecast can be estimated by using the  $r^2$  statistic, which is reported for each county. This number ranges from 0 to 1 where 1 represents a perfectly predictable trend. The predictability of the trend for each county is impacted by the direction of recent trends (increasing, decreasing, or both increasing and decreasing over time) and the size of recent trends (small growth vs. large growth).

Thus, while a county with consistent growth is easy to predict, the line for a county with large fluctuations of growth and decline is less reliable. Naturally, as the projection goes further in time, it will become less accurate.

## Interviews and Surveys

At the state level, the researchers solicited key corrections officials to participate in structured, in-person interviews to examine key needs and challenges facing prisoners returning to rural Pennsylvania, as well as how state corrections agencies in Pennsylvania respond to those challenges. Targeted state agencies were PADOc, PBPP, and the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing (PCS). For PADOc, the researchers targeted for interviews the secretary of Corrections, executive deputy secretary, deputy secretary for Specialized Facilities and Programs (who oversees all treatment and reentry programs), PADOc reentry program manager, director of the Bureau of Planning, Research, Statistics and Reentry, director of the Bureau of Community Corrections, director of the Bureau of Treatment Services, and chief of Treatment Services within the Bureau of Treatment Services.

For PBPP, the researchers targeted all nine Parole Board members, the director of the Bureau of Offender Reentry Coordination, board secretary, and assistant to the board secretary.

The researchers targeted the executive director of PCS.

Overall, the researchers interviewed 13 of the 21 targeted subjects, for a response rate of 62 percent.

The state officials were asked about the various challenges and issues related to offender reentry in Pennsylvania, based on their professional work experience in corrections in Pennsylvania. The interview topics included employment, housing, family support, life skills, availability of community services, health issues (including mental health), criminogenic needs, and others. The respondents were asked to rate items on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 indicating that the issue was not a significant reentry challenge, and 10 indicating it was a very significant challenge. The respondents were also given the opportunity to make open-ended comments. In addition, a key informant was identified in PADOc and PBPP to respond to eight additional questions about the specific reentry programs in operation or in development in those two agencies (PCS does not deliver reentry services directly).

To get input from Pennsylvania’s rural county jails, the researchers conducted a mail survey of the 44 war-

dens/sheriffs<sup>2</sup> of each rural county jail<sup>3</sup>. The survey followed the basic Dillman Tailored Design Method (Dillman, et al., 2009). Survey participants' names and addresses came from PADOc. Twenty-four of the 44 jails responded to the survey, for a response rate of 55 percent. It is unclear why more counties did not respond. There were no clear geographic or other patterns to the non-responders.

### Identification of Rural Reentry Services

The researchers used information about in-prison corrections reentry programs collected through the interviews/surveys discussed above. As part of the interviews conducted with PADOc, the researchers learned that PADOc has compiled detailed directories of community-based services available in Pennsylvania counties over the past several years. The PADOc reentry program staff had contacted each of the county human services departments to compile lists of all human services providers in each county, supplemented by searches of county websites to learn about additional programs. This information is compiled into a resource directory for the counties, which are available on PADOc's website<sup>4</sup>. While it is unclear how often these directories are updated by PADOc, the current versions were prepared within 1 to 3 years of the research and were considered reasonably current. The researchers downloaded and analyzed these directories and coded the programs into eight service categories. While these directories do not provide detailed information relating to the quality of the programs, such

as staff qualifications, numbers of clients that can be served, and fees for service, or how they coordinate services among themselves, they do provide valuable information on the numbers and types of programs operating in rural counties. It should be noted that the directory programs are available to any member of the community, regardless of their status as ex-offenders, but these programs represent resources that are available to returning offenders. PBPP also maintains a similar database of programs that may be used by parole agents as they seek to link parolees to community services. The county wardens were also asked to list programs to which they refer released county inmates, as part of the wardens' survey discussed above.

### Gap Analysis

The gap analysis compared the number of state and local inmates returning to each county to the total number of programs available in each county to gauge the number of released inmates who may need services to service capacity (i.e. total number of programs) in each county. As noted earlier, the total number of programs does not provide insight into program quality or into true service capability, but, given the large number of programs in operation across all rural counties, it was beyond the capacity of this study to do any sort of program evaluation. It was not possible to estimate how many community programs may be in operation over the next 5 years, so this study simply used the current number of programs and returning inmates to create a snapshot of the current

match between returning offenders and service capacity in each county.

To examine the match between released inmate needs and community service capacity, the researchers collected data from PADOc on several types of treatment needs for released state inmates, so that those specific needs could be compared to the specific types of treatment programs available in the counties. Data were acquired from PADOc on the need for drug treatment, educational services and mental health needs, based on assessments conducted by PADOc on state inmates. Detailed needs assessment data were not available for county inmates, as many small jails lack the capability to conduct in-depth needs assessments on their inmate populations.

## Results

### State Prison Release Estimates

Based on trends from 2007-2011, the number of overall releases from the state prison system was projected to increase at a rate of about 380 releases per year across all rural counties for the period 2012 – 2017.

Table 1 presents the estimates of changes in the numbers of state prison inmates to be released to each of the 48 rural counties from 2012 – 2017.

As indicated in Table 1, the number of state inmates released to some counties, such as Adams and Blair, was relatively stable. Therefore, the researchers had more confidence in these population projections. Other counties, such as Armstrong and Susquehanna, had significant changes in the number of

2. In most states, jails are run by the sheriff's office. Pennsylvania jails, however, are typically run by wardens, who are not associated with the sheriff's office, except for McKean and Potter county jails, which are run by the dually titled warden/sheriff.

3. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, the five rural counties that do not operate their own jails are Cameron, Forest, Fulton, Juniata and Sullivan. Juniata County closed its jail in July of 2012 (during the course of this study), with those inmates being transferred to the Mifflin County Jail.

4. See: [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/directory/resource\\_guides/155964?DirMode=1](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/directory/resource_guides/155964?DirMode=1).

state inmates released from year to year, so the researchers had somewhat less confidence in the population projections in those counties. For example, although Armstrong fluctuated only between 38 and 45 inmates, these fluctuations represented a very large proportion of the jail's total population. More importantly, the fluctuations changed directions, neither consistently decreasing nor increasing. The projected releases in Armstrong still reflect the average number of inmates one would expect in a given year, but the low  $r^2$  value means that this projection will likely have more "error"—a larger proportional difference between the projection and the actual population in any individual year. In general, year-to-year trends are more difficult to predict for jails with smaller populations due to greater proportional changes in their populations over a short period of time. Conversely, counties, such as Adams, show a consistent change (increase in this case) in their population over the study period, thus presenting a more plausible case for prediction, which is what the  $r^2$  statistic represents.

### County Jail Release Estimates

Overall, rural Pennsylvania county jail releases were predicted to increase at a slow pace of about 220 releases per year across all rural county jails for the period 2012 – 2017 (See Table 2 on Page 6). These county-by-county projections are based on the inmates released from each county jail, for that county. Several conditions should be noted. First, as documented in Zajac and Kowalski (2012), there is a small degree of movement of inmates between county jails, but detailed data on such movement

Table 1: Projected Releases from State Prisons to Rural Counties, 2012-2017

County	Actual Releases					Projected Releases						$r^2$
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Adams	96	106	137	146	193	206	229	253	276	299	323	0.94
Armstrong	39	46	38	45	38	40	40	40	39	39	39	0.01
Bedford	34	38	44	62	84	90	102	114	127	139	152	0.90
Blair	158	158	221	243	251	288	315	342	369	396	423	0.89
Bradford	98	66	72	93	107	101	105	110	114	119	123	0.17
Butler	134	141	161	184	170	193	204	216	227	239	250	0.78
Cambria	95	65	69	83	98	89	92	94	96	99	101	0.07
Cameron	3	4	16	6	10	13	14	16	17	19	21	0.23
Carbon	27	20	30	28	44	42	47	51	55	59	63	0.57
Centre	60	64	64	73	79	82	87	92	96	101	106	0.91
Clarion	26	24	45	39	50	56	62	68	75	81	87	0.75
Clearfield	176	162	191	194	204	212	221	229	238	247	256	0.71
Clinton	30	36	47	42	41	48	50	53	56	59	62	0.47
Columbia	36	36	43	58	36	48	51	53	55	57	59	0.13
Crawford	78	102	94	97	92	100	102	104	106	109	111	0.16
Elk	20	23	20	33	30	34	37	40	43	46	49	0.63
Fayette	321	295	324	353	384	391	409	427	446	464	483	0.73
Forest	8	17	5	15	9	11	11	11	11	11	11	0.00
Franklin	197	196	211	250	235	257	270	283	296	309	322	0.74
Fulton	26	31	28	36	34	37	39	42	44	46	48	0.65
Greene	37	39	53	60	64	73	81	88	96	103	111	0.95
Huntingdon	26	28	25	45	52	56	63	70	77	84	90	0.77
Indiana	52	49	58	74	72	81	87	94	100	107	113	0.81
Jefferson	81	79	100	113	115	128	138	149	159	169	179	0.89
Juniata	14	9	17	22	19	23	25	28	30	32	35	0.54
Lawrence	91	121	111	134	124	140	148	156	164	172	179	0.59
Lycoming	286	253	270	273	289	282	285	287	290	292	295	0.08
McKean	37	47	62	50	66	71	77	83	89	95	101	0.68
Mercer	155	144	129	153	146	143	142	141	140	139	138	0.02
Mifflin	45	38	50	76	91	99	112	125	138	151	164	0.83
Monroe	81	86	129	155	179	206	232	259	285	312	338	0.96
Montour	12	14	20	25	28	33	37	41	46	50	54	0.98
Northumberland	155	122	111	130	362	303	345	387	429	471	514	0.40
Perry	29	16	42	43	57	62	71	79	87	96	104	0.71
Pike	29	32	42	48	59	65	72	80	88	95	103	0.97
Potter	8	17	14	14	9	12	12	12	12	12	12	0.00
Schuylkill	87	93	154	174	180	218	244	271	298	325	351	0.90
Snyder	73	55	66	70	72	71	72	74	75	76	78	0.08
Somerset	92	85	67	66	89	72	70	67	65	62	60	0.10
Sullivan	5	5	6	5	8	8	8	9	9	10	11	0.53
Susquehanna	31	24	29	27	39	36	38	40	41	43	45	0.28
Tioga	25	29	29	39	38	43	46	50	54	57	61	0.85
Union	58	38	59	61	74	75	80	86	91	97	102	0.45
Venango	164	131	138	139	158	145	144	144	144	143	143	0.00
Warren	48	61	62	75	78	87	94	102	109	117	124	0.94
Washington	132	140	165	228	233	267	296	325	354	383	412	0.91
Wayne	79	59	77	93	86	93	98	103	108	112	117	0.36
Wyoming	39	30	32	28	48	40	42	43	45	47	48	0.10
Total	5,640	5,482	5,986	6,510	7,035	7,282	7,659	8,045	8,424	8,806	9,188	0.89

Data source: PADOC and PBPP.

were not available. Thus, for the purposes of these projections, the researchers considered each county jail's releases as belonging to that county. Second, as noted earlier, Cameron, Forest, Fulton, and Sullivan counties do not have their own jails, and have not had them over the time period of the study. Therefore, no county

jail release projections were made for those counties. Presumably, there were a very small number of county inmates from those four counties so the inability to account for their releases should introduce little error into the overall picture of rural county inmate reentry. Juniata County closed its jail midway through this study (July 2012), with its inmates being transferred to the Mifflin County jail. Since data were available on prior releases from the Juniata County jail (which were

among the smallest of all the counties), the researchers conducted a county jail projection for Juniata, as its inmates would presumably return to Juniata County after their release from the Mifflin County jail. Finally, data were missing for some counties for some years. Data for Potter County were available for only 1 year, so no projection could be made for Potter County.

Looking at Table 2, some counties show relative stability in the trend of the number of county inmates

Table 2: Projected Releases from Rural County Jails, 2012-2017

County	Actual Releases					Projected Releases						r <sup>2</sup>
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Adams	1,771	1,844	1,852	1,965	2,036	2,048	2,099	2,149	2,200	2,251	2,302	0.95
Armstrong	1,215	1,407	1,323	1,117	1,022	1,106	1,074	1,042	1,010	977	945	0.48
Bedford	713	673	662	640	593	554	518	482	445	409	373	0.96
Blair	2,310	2,208	2,244	2,094	2,292	2,377	2,436	2,496	2,556	2,615	2,675	0.08
Bradford	928	927	973	1,089	1,134	1,146	1,190	1,234	1,278	1,322	1,366	0.90
Butler	2,306	2,615	2,270	2,384	2,494	2,517	2,559	2,600	2,642	2,683	2,725	0.03
Cambria	3,450	4,481	3,725	3,476	3,350	3,996	4,149	4,302	4,456	4,609	4,762	0.17
Carbon	1,016	919	931	904	988	1,013	1,040	1,066	1,093	1,119	1,146	0.05
Centre	1,200	1,211	1,164	1,173	1,155	1,189	1,196	1,202	1,209	1,216	1,223	0.72
Clarion	685	754	643	630	568	617	610	603	596	589	582	0.67
Clearfield	1,420	1,584	1,585	1,392	1,359	1,441	1,438	1,435	1,432	1,429	1,426	0.21
Clinton	3,170	3,043	2,138	1,829	1,890	1,587	1,339	1,092	845	597	350	0.86
Columbia	1,053	1,385	1,562	1,408	1,187	1,514	1,589	1,663	1,738	1,812	1,886	0.05
Crawford	1,410	1,323	1,357	1,392	1,424	1,395	1,399	1,403	1,407	1,411	1,415	0.14
Elk	310	389	370	326	351	350	350	350	350	350	350	0.01
Fayette	2,573	2,217	2,791	3,150		3,095	3,200	3,305	3,410	3,515	3,620	0.58
Franklin	2,467	2,444	2,528	2,595	2,580	2,624	2,659	2,694	2,730	2,765	2,800	0.80
Greene	576	570	573	653	698	692	716	740	764	788	811	0.78
Huntingdon	373	471	470	510	537	568	599	629	660	690	721	0.87
Indiana	844	926	984	1,136	1,199	1,212	1,270	1,328	1,386	1,444	1,502	0.98
Jefferson	1,176	817	663	700	820	711	680	648	616	585	553	0.42
Juniata	294	305	265	283	297	292	293	294	295	296	297	0.03
Lawrence	2,317	2,043	1,847	1,632	1,634	1,511	1,393	1,274	1,156	1,037	919	0.93
Lycoming	2,406	2,520	2,511	2,362	2,335	2,397	2,392	2,387	2,382	2,377	2,371	0.31
McKean	842	781	614	648	681	736	754	773	792	810	829	0.57
Mercer	2,135	2,129	1,879	1,940	1,859	1,907	1,889	1,871	1,853	1,834	1,816	0.76
Mifflin	1,251	1,188	1,248	1,162	1,061	1,195	1,206	1,216	1,227	1,238	1,248	0.68
Monroe	1,820	2,246	2,386	2,567	2,666	2,732	2,848	2,964	3,081	3,197	3,313	0.92
Montour	279	246	258	267	256	268	270	273	275	278	280	0.10
Northumberland	1,470	1,529	1,580	1,419	1,487	1,540	1,561	1,582	1,603	1,624	1,645	0.04
Perry	665	760	748	615	709	708	711	715	718	721	725	0.02
Pike	1,275	1,244	1,711	1,771	2,092	2,034	2,158	2,282	2,407	2,531	2,655	0.91
Potter					226							
Schuylkill	1,908	1,872	1,810	1,833	1,747	1,903	1,938	1,973	2,009	2,044	2,079	0.87
Snyder	773	669	593	578	485	453	398	343	288	234	179	0.96
Somerset	776	765	706	698	627	554	495	436	377	318	259	0.93
Susquehanna	695	465	446	428	468	444	427	411	394	378	362	0.50
Tioga	450	469	419	432	487	426	415	405	394	384	373	0.05
Union	522	445	375	391	408	378	363	348	333	319	304	0.58
Venango	1,437	1,334	1,257	1,250	1,229	1,216	1,192	1,168	1,144	1,120	1,096	0.85
Warren	833	779	818	754	762	784	786	788	790	793	795	0.57
Washington	2,650	3,027	3,038	3,176	49	1,531	1,291	1,052	812	572	332	0.37
Wayne	581	439	539	533	532	510	503	497	491	485	478	0.00
Wyoming	387	367	365	421	449	403	401	399	397	395	393	0.60
Total	56,732	57,829	56,220	55,723	50,223	55,674	55,794	55,914	56,041	56,161	56,281	0.65

Data source: Zajac and Kowalski (2012).

released (the r<sup>2</sup> statistic), such as Adams and Bradford, so the researchers were more confident in these population projections. For other counties, such as Carbon and Elk, the release trends were less clear, so the researchers had somewhat less confidence in those population projections.

Total admissions and discharges from rural county jails from 2007-2010 were highly correlated (r = 0.93 where r ranges from -1 to 1 and 1 means perfect positive correlation). This indicates that discharges increase when admissions increase and discharges decrease when admissions decrease. This correlation should be interpreted with caution because of the small number of years of data available; three or four more years of data would have provided more concrete evidence in terms of statistical significance. However, this correlation is consistent with the high turnover in the county jail system. Thus, the annual number of

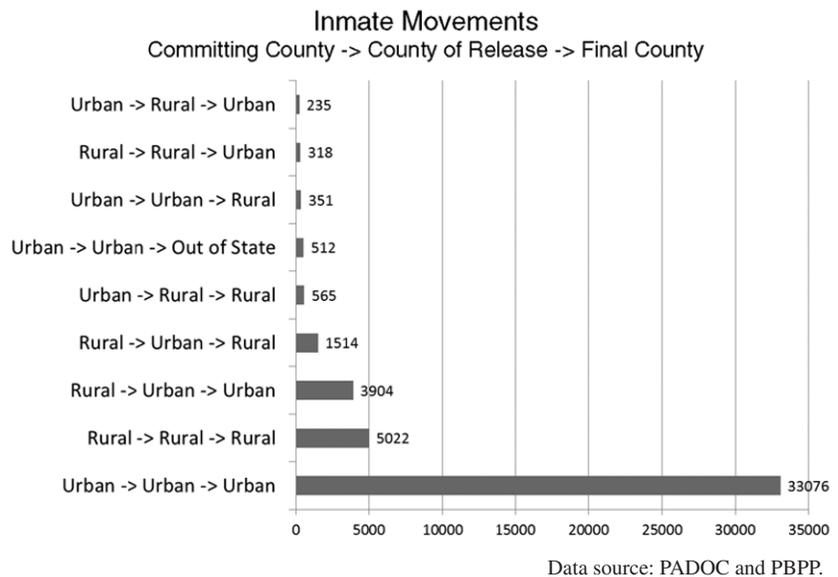
releases in rural county jails seems to be closely related to the annual number of admissions. Admissions data for the state prisons were not available, so this analysis was conducted only for county jails.

The projected releases for rural county jail inmates over the next 5 years were basically flat. Therefore, there were no dramatic changes projected in releases of rural county jail inmates. For state prison inmates, the projected trend was for a slow but steady increase in releases of state inmates to rural counties. This continues the documented trend of increases in releases of state prison inmates to rural counties over the previous 5 years, upon which these projections were based. The most plausible explanation for this increase is that the approval rate of state inmates applying for parole showed a similar slow-but-steady increase. The parole approval rate dipped to 52 percent in 2008 and 51 percent in 2009 due to the moratorium on parole imposed by then-Governor Ed Rendell<sup>5</sup>. Since then, the parole approval rate has increased to 61 percent in 2012<sup>6</sup>. PADO and PBPP have also been making efforts to expedite the actual release of inmates from state prison once they have been approved for parole. While these parole approval rates are statewide and are not available for each county, it remains a reasonable conclusion that the increase in state prison releases to rural counties can be attributed at least in part to this shift in parole decisional processes and the “rebound” in parole rates after the moratorium.

The projected steady state for rural county jail releases and the projected increase in the release of state prison inmates to rural areas signals that rural reentry will remain a significant issue in Pennsylvania.

Finally, Figure 1 illustrates the extent to which state inmates from urban counties are paroled to rural counties, and vice versa. In the majority of cases, a state inmate who was committed from an urban county is first paroled back to an urban county, and remains in an urban county (although there may be transfers between urban counties not accounted for here). Similarly,

Figure 1: Parolee Movement Between Rural and Urban Counties, 2007-2011



most state inmates committed from a rural county are initially paroled back to a rural county, and remain in a rural county (although there may be transfers between rural counties not accounted for here). Moreover, there are far more cases of state inmates committed from rural counties being paroled to urban counties than of state inmates committed from urban counties being paroled to rural counties. This analysis indicated that rural reentry is a relatively self-contained process, with state inmates being paroled to the same type of county from which they came. It is the same for urban reentry. It should be noted that this analysis applied only to state parole releases and not those who are maxing out. Also, the county from which a state inmate is committed is not always the county where the inmate was living, but instead is the county where the inmate was convicted.

### Demographic Profile of Inmates Who Are Likely To Be Released

The demographic trends for released state prison inmates were projected for the period 2012 – 2017, based on the known age, race and gender demographics of released state inmates for the period 2007-2011.

The percentage of minority releases was projected to continue its steady decline since its peak in 2008 at about 22.5 percent at a rate of about 0.5 percent per year. The proportion of female inmates has steadily climbed since a 2007 low of 12 percent at a rate of about 0.7 percent per year. Similar to the jail trends, the proportion of state prison releases for those over age 44 is expected to increase at about 0.5 percent per year.

5. See: “Pa. ends moratorium on parole for violent felons.” USA Today. December 1, 2008. [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-12-01-2116996479\\_x.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-12-01-2116996479_x.htm).

6. Data and explanation on parole decisional rates supplied by Fred Klunk, director, Statistical Reporting and Evidence-Based Program Evaluation Office, PBPP.

The county jail data had no information available on the demographic breakdowns of actual inmate releases per year. Therefore, the demographic trends for released county jail inmates were projected for the period 2012 – 2017, based on age, race and gender demographics of the in-house jail population for the period 2007-2011.

Based on trends since 2007, county jail releases will be increasingly composed of minority inmates, increasing at a rate of about one half of 1 percent per year. The proportion of female releases was projected to remain stable, decreasing at a rate of less than 0.1 percent per year. According to recent trends, the age of persons released from jail will proportionally increase in the future. The proportion of county inmates under age 30 was projected to decrease at about 3.5 percent per year while the proportion of older county inmates was projected to increase.

In sum, with the exception of releases of female state inmates and older inmates from both the state and county levels, both of which are projected to show a modest increase, there are few remarkable trends in the projected demographics of inmates to be released to rural areas over the next 5 years. For most demographic categories, few if any changes are projected, and most changes are projected to be gradual.

### Interview and Survey Results Critical Rural Reentry Challenges

Table 3 presents the mean scores from the results of the interviews with state corrections officials and the survey of county jail wardens.

The responses from the state and county corrections officials are quite consistent. The shaded rows in Table 3 indicate items where there was a statistically significant differ-

**Table 3: State Corrections Officials and County Jail Wardens Ratings of Rural Reentry Topic Areas as Key Challenges (1 = No Challenge; 10 = Very Significant Challenge)**

Reentry Topic	County Mean	State Mean
Job opportunities available to returning inmates	7.17	7.69
Wages available to returning inmates	6.46	7.42
Employer receptivity to hiring returning inmates	6.13	7.17
Employment restrictions for “hard to place” offenders	8.00	9.54
Job training provided and available to returning inmates	6.71	7.55
“Soft skills” of employment (i.e. find and keep a job)	5.71	6.75
Availability of housing for returning inmates	6.48	6.08
Cost of housing	6.52	6.00
Housing restrictions for “hard to place” offenders	7.79	8.50
Ability of families to provide support	4.96	5.08
Support given to families to assist returning inmates	5.46	7.25
Parenting duties facing returning inmates	5.71	7.00
Deficits in key life skills (e.g. time/money management)	6.42	6.42
Availability of treatment services and programs in your county	5.13	8.50
Availability of and access to medical health services	4.56	5.30
Availability of and access to mental health services	4.96	7.92
Ability to pay for health services in rural areas	5.27	8.13
Transportation availability	5.81	8.75
Thinking errors (e.g., antisocial attitudes) and emotional readiness	6.59	7.33
Antisocial peers	6.39	6.40

Source: Interviews with 13 state corrections officials and survey administered to 24 rural jail wardens. Note: Shaded columns indicate a statistically significant difference (at least  $p < 0.05$ ).

ence between the ratings given by state officials and county jail wardens (at least at the  $p < 0.05$  level). Both groups agreed on 14 of the 20 reentry topics (70 percent). This suggests that both state and county corrections officials share a common understanding of the challenges related to rural reentry, and that this likely reflects a set of core rural reentry issues that cut across all levels of corrections in Pennsylvania. If this study had found little or no agreement between state and county officials, the conclusions about the challenges surrounding rural reentry would have been less clear.

Looking first at areas of agreement, the most critical challenges facing rural reentry are housing restrictions for hard to place offenders, and job opportunities available to returning inmates. Both items were rated at least a 7 by both state corrections officials and county

wardens. Conversely, the reentry topics rated as least challenging by both groups of respondents were the ability of families to provide support to their returning loved ones, and the availability of and access to medical health services (note this is distinct from mental health services, which was rated as a more important issue).

In all six topic areas where the state corrections official and the wardens disagreed significantly in their ratings – (1) employment restrictions for hard to place offenders, (2) support given to families to assist returning inmates, (3) availability of treatment services and programs in your county, (4) availability of and access to mental health services, (5) ability to pay for health services in rural areas, and (6) transportation availability – state officials rated these areas as more of a problem than the county

wardens. One explanation may be that state officials have a statewide perspective on reentry. Moreover, they are presumably better able to make comparisons between rural and urban reentry issues, than are rural wardens who are working only within a single county. In addition, state corrections (PADOC and PBPP) seem to operate more reentry programs than county jails, so the state corrections officials may have explored these issues more closely. A competing explanation is that the county wardens are “closer to the ground” and may have a more finely tuned perspective on local reentry conditions. In any event, even though the state corrections officials consistently rated these six issues higher than the county wardens, the wardens’ scores nonetheless round to at least a 5 on all of these issues, suggesting that these issues are important.

In addition to the quantitative, forced-choice questions asked of the state corrections officials during the interviews, they were also given the opportunity to provide their own comments on the challenges to reentry. The wardens’ survey allowed the respondents to write their comments as well. The researchers identified common themes to this qualitative data.

One of the strongest themes to emerge centered on the notion of stigma. Respondents argued that offenders returning to rural areas often face stigmatization for their status as ex-offenders, and that this influences their ability to secure employment and housing (landlords refuse to rent to them). Sex offenders, especially, have significant issues in securing housing because landlords do not want to rent to them, and they can even face great difficulties in getting jobs due to negative attitudes of potential employers. While the respondents acknowledged that stigma can be an issue even in urban reentry, the relative anonymity of urban life and the greater density of ex-offenders in many urban areas may make the mark of a criminal record less of an issue there. But in rural areas, released inmates’ status as ex-offenders is often widely known and seen as a violation of community norms. Thus, the released inmate “stands out” as the subject for disapproval. On a related point, several respondents noted that the close ties within many rural communities can actually work in favor of ex-offenders who were highly regarded prior to incarceration and thus make reentry easier for these higher status individuals. But, respondents argued that this is not the case for most offenders returning to rural areas, so stigma emerges as a key issue for them.

Closely related to the issue of stigma was the challenge presented by the so called “hard-to-place” ex-offenders. These include the mentally ill, violent

offenders and, most especially, sex offenders. Most respondents made a point of emphasizing that reintegration of “hard to place” offenders is one of the most significant challenges for reentry for their agencies.

Transportation was also universally identified as a key rural reentry issue, as it received a high rating on the forced choice question dealing with this topic, but was the subject of some degree of discussion by nearly all respondents. Respondents noted that limited transportation in rural areas intersects with many other reentry challenges, making it more difficult for released offenders to search for and get to work, attend treatment groups and even make meetings with their parole agents. Respondents also widely agreed that transportation is much more of an issue for rural reentry than for urban.

As noted in the quantitative findings, respondents endorsed the lack of treatment programs in rural communities as a key issue, but they also widely noted that programs specifically addressing core criminogenic needs, such as anti-social attitudes and poor decision making skills, were almost entirely absent in rural areas. While there is also a deficit of such programs in urban areas, the Community Corrections Centers/Facilities operated by PADOC run some such programming, and most of these centers are clustered in urban areas, thus providing some options for ex-offenders in urban areas who need those services. Of course, these centers serve only state inmates paroled from State Correctional Institutions, so they do not represent a resource for inmates released from county jails, nor for the 21 percent of state inmates who are released at the completion of their sentence with no parole supervision (“max-outs”), which represents nearly 21 percent of all state releases (Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 2012b).

Respondents also widely noted that mental health services are often lacking in rural areas, and said that some rural counties may not even have a practicing psychiatrist, thus making continuity-of-care a significant impediment to reentry for seriously mentally ill ex-offenders. The respondents noted that this is much less of an issue in urban areas, where there is a greater density of mental health clinics and providers.

There was some disagreement between the state corrections officials and county jail wardens on the issue of family support. The state level respondents felt that family support was often stronger in rural areas, and that offenders returning to these areas often rely heavily on family to fulfill needs that might be met by community or public agencies in rural areas, such as housing

and employment assistance. County wardens, on the other hand, were less confident in their observations about the assistance that families can or do provide during reentry, noting that the families themselves are often struggling with their own issues and problems. Respondents did indicate, though, that there are few support services for families themselves in rural areas as they try to help their loved ones who are returning from prison.

As noted in the quantitative interview/survey findings, employment is endorsed by most respondents as a key challenge, both in rural and urban areas, but especially in rural. Closely related to this was their frequent observation that there are very few opportunities for vocational training for ex-offenders in rural areas, although respondents from PBPP noted that their agency is working to develop training opportunities for ex-offenders at local community colleges, but that this effort was just beginning.

Finally, the respondents also frequently commented that criminogenic needs are a challenge for both rural and urban reentry. There was some disagreement over whether antisocial peers were more of an issue for rural reentry than urban, with some respondents arguing that the urban environment offers a denser network of deviant peers, but with other respondents arguing that isolation in rural areas can leave ex-offenders with few alternatives for social outlets besides their old antisocial peers (and even family).

### **Available Reentry Programs and Services PADOC, PBPP and County Jails**

At the time of the study, PADOC was modifying its reentry programming. For much of the past 10 years, PADOC's core reentry preparation program was known as the Community Orientation Reintegration (COR) program. Originally developed in 2001, COR was a two-phased reentry initiative. Phase 1 involved 2 weeks of full-time services delivered in a State Correctional Institution (SCI) near the expected time of the inmate's release. The specific services included in this phase focused heavily on job readiness, such as job hunting skills, resume writing, and preparing for interviews. Other issues covered were money management, finding housing, family reunification and accessing social services in the community. Phase 2 of COR also lasted approximately 2 weeks and was delivered in a Community Corrections Center/Facility after an inmate was released. Services delivered in this phase were not as regimented as those in Phase 1 and could include family issues and on-going job readiness.

PADOC completed a comprehensive evaluation of the COR program in 2008 (note: this evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluator and was led by the principal investigator for the current study). The evaluation found that the COR program was not producing any significant reductions in recidivism among the inmates who participated in the program (Smith and Suttle, 2008). The evaluation concluded that COR was attempting to deliver too many services in too short a period of time to too many inmates, using ineffective techniques. This is a problem that has plagued other attempts to deliver brief, broad-based reentry preparation programs to soon-to-be-released inmates (Wilson and Davis, 2006).

As a result of the COR evaluation, PADOC decided to gradually phase out the program and replace it with new reentry services, called Transitional Housing Units (THUs), or Reentry Offices. At the time of this research, the new reentry programs were being piloted at SCI Graterford, SCI Camp Hill, SCI Muncy and SCI Albion. The intended design of these units was for inmates to be placed at the SCI nearest to their home six months prior to their expected parole or other release date so that they could be introduced to community resources. The pilot ended in November 2013. (*Editor's note: According to follow-up correspondence between the researchers and PADOC, new THUs were launched in January 2014 at SCI Graterford, SCI Chester, SCI Camp Hill, SCI Mahanoy, SCI Pine Grove, SCI Laurel Highlands, SCI Muncy, SCI Cambridge Springs, SCI Pittsburgh, SCI Albion, and the Quehanna Boot Camp. The original THU concept was adjusted since, from a practical standpoint, all inmates could not be housed close to home. Therefore, PADOC established some THUs in appropriate institutions, and Reentry Offices in those sites where the housing unit concept wasn't as practical. According to PADOC, reentry parole agents are in place at Graterford, Albion and Camp Hill. New positions were not expected in all sites, but PADOC expected to receive parole support in some form at all sites. Through the pilot, PADOC found that inmates responded well to the presence of an agent, who actually worked with them on the housing unit or the reentry office. Through the presence of an agent, inmates were able to interact, ask questions, and take part in workshops designed by parole to assist the inmates in preparing for release.*)

Other elements to PADOC's reentry process are the 53 Community Corrections Centers and Contract Facilities that operate statewide. Fourteen are operated directly by PADOC (Community Corrections Centers,

or CCCs), with the remaining 39 operated by private providers on behalf of the state (Community Contract Facilities, or CCFs), although some of the CCFs may also house offenders for other clients, such as the federal Bureau of Prisons<sup>7</sup>. Primarily, CCC/Fs provide inmates who have just been paroled with transitional housing and other basic reentry assistance for up to several months after their release. Some CCC/Fs limit their services largely to housing and monitoring, whereas others provide more in-depth rehabilitative services, such as residential drug treatment. At the time of the research, the CCC/F system was in a period of flux. PADOc had conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the entire CCC/F system, which was completed in 2009 (note: this evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluator and was led by the principal investigator for the current study). This evaluation included every CCC/F in operation at the time and compared outcomes for inmates sent to the CCC/Fs to outcomes for similar inmates paroled directly to the street. The evaluation found that, overall, the CCC/Fs were not producing any reductions in recidivism, and, in many cases, individual CCC/Fs were actually showing increased recidivism rates compared to control parolees (Latessa, et al., 2009). The evaluation also found that the quality of treatment programs offered in most CCC/Fs was low. As a result of this study, PADOc announced in March 2013 that it would suspend the contracts for all privately run CCFs and require rebidding under a new performance based contracting system<sup>8</sup>. Payments to the new vendors selected would be tied to the recidivism rates of the facilities that they operate<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the researchers could not project exactly what the “new” community corrections system would look like when the new contracts took effect later in 2013.

PADOc was also undertaking several other smaller initiatives and experiments designed to improve reentry. Within the state run Community Correction Centers, corrections counselors, who work within these centers, would become oriented more towards serving as outreach agents, working with local community organizations and employers to leverage resources and opportunities for released inmates. Another initiative involved training specially selected inmates within some SCIs to

become Certified Peer Specialists, which is a relatively new but rapidly growing initiative within the mental health field that allows individuals who themselves have been diagnosed with some sort of mental disorder to become certified as para-professionals, providing support and ancillary services to their peers who are undergoing treatment. The goal of the Certified Peer Specialist initiative is to better prepare inmates with mental disorders to return to the community, and also to provide the inmates who are trained as the Certified Peer Specialists to acquire a marketable skill and experiences that may lead to employment opportunities in the community upon release. Finally, PADOc received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, to revamp and expand reentry services provided to female inmates who are diagnosed with co-occurring mental disorder and substance abuse<sup>10</sup>.

At the time of the research, PBPP was also undergoing changes to its reentry practices. Traditionally, PBPP relied heavily on programs and services offered through the CCC/F system, run by PADOc. PBPP in large part brokered services for parolees in the community, such as through the Single County Authorities. Given that PBPP’s mission is centered on supervising released inmates in the community, it can be said that everything it does is focused on reentry. Core elements of this mission include processing inmate applications for parole and delivering orientation sessions to inmates prior to parole. The development of the parole “home plan” is also a critical piece of PBPP’s reentry strategy. The home plan must be developed by the inmate, with assistance from institutional parole staff, prior to parole approval. The home plan codifies key conditions of parole release, such as living arrangements, family support, employment options, and ongoing treatment and human services in the community if needed. Once paroled, parolees are also supervised by parole agents, including mandated visits by the parolees to their local parole office, as well as visits by the parole agent to the parolees’ homes or other relevant venues, such as work. In addition, many parolees undergo random drug testing for at least some period of their parole.

Turning to specific reentry initiatives operated by

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7. For a complete listing of these CCC/F’s, see <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=14823&mode=2>.

8. “Prison reform ties contractors’ profits to public safety.” *The Patriot-News*, March 3, 2013, p. A5.

9. On a related note, Latessa and colleagues also conducted a very similar evaluation of the Ohio halfway house system prior to their evaluation of the DOC CCC/F system, with results very similar to what was found here. Ohio also moved to a performance-based contracting system for its halfway houses in the wake of that evaluation. See: Lowenkamp, C.T., and Latessa, E.J. (2005). *Evaluation of Ohio’s CCA Programs*. Cincinnati, OH: Center for Criminal Justice Research, University of Cincinnati.

10. The principal investigator for this study is leading an evaluation of this co-occurring disorder initiative, but results were not available in time for this report.

Table 4: Reentry Programs Reported by County Jails

County	Alcohol and Drug Services	Life Skills	Employment and Vocational Guidance	Financial Aid and Insurance/Medical Assistance	Housing and Transportation Assistance	Mental Health Assistance	Parenting Services and Family Related	Other
Blair	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Carbon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Clearfield	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	3
Clinton	1	0	1	0	2	1	1	5
Columbia	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Crawford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elk	4	0	2	0	0	3	1	2
Franklin	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Greene	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Lycoming	1	0	3	1	0	1	1	0
Mercer	4	1	2	2	0	2	3	3
Northumberland	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Pike	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Schuylkill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tioga	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Union	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Venango	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	2
Warren	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wayne	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	18	3	17	4	3	10	8	27

Data source: Survey of county jail wardens.

PBPP, the Reentry Program is similar to a reentry or drug court, where selected parolees who have a history of substance use will be enrolled in a 12-18 month program involving regular meetings (usually monthly) at the county courthouse with a PBPP board member, judge, parole agent, county drug and alcohol service personnel and other staff, as needed. These meetings help to assess the parolee’s compliance and progress with the individualized plan for supervision, substance abuse treatment, and other recommended treatment services developed for him/her prior to release and to administer rewards or corrections based on that progress. The Reentry Program can be used in any county if there are parolees in need of this service in that county. The exact nature of the Reentry Program can vary from county to county, and also from one parolee to another, but the overarching goal is to provide a structured and supportive reentry process for seriously addicted parolees.

PBPP also developed the Assess-

ment, Sanctioning, and Community Resource Agents (ASCRA) initiative that is geared toward more direct provision of reentry services to parolees in both rural and urban communities. The initiative involves specialized parole agents who do not maintain a regular list of parolees whom they are responsible for supervising, but instead focus specifically on reentry planning and assistance for parolees in the community. ASCRAs work to develop ties with providers and potential employers in the community to assist parolees with needed services and employment leads and serve as referral resources for other parole agents, assisting them in connecting parolees on their caseloads with needed services.

ASCRA themselves also run treatment groups for selected parolees focusing on employment, cognitive skills training, substance use, family education, violence prevention and life skills (other parole agents in general do not run treatment groups, so ASCRA represent a new direction in the direct provision

of treatment services to parolees in the community). At the time of the research, there were only 17 ASCRA agents. According to state parole officials interviewed for this study, preliminary research by PBPP seems to find recidivism reductions associated with the ASCRA initiative, although no report was available.

The researchers also explored the reentry programs offered by the 43 rural county jails. Table 4 presents a summary of the types of reentry programs that the county

wardens reported operating. It should be noted that this table does not include those counties that simply did not respond to the survey, nor those counties that responded but did not answer the specific question. Therefore, the table represents only those county jails that provided some sort of direct answer to that question. Also, as Juniata County closed its jail midway through this study, its responses were not included in the table.

The researchers grouped the responses into eight program categories, as shown in Table 4. These categories correspond as closely as possible with the other categories of reentry programs discussed in the next section. Note that some counties may offer more than one program within a given category. The “other” category includes a wide variety of miscellaneous services, such as veterans’ programs and gender specific services.

Drug and alcohol programs are the most common type of reentry program reported by the jails. Employment and vocational guidance

Table 5 – Community-Based Programs in Pennsylvania Rural Counties

County	Alcohol and Drugs Services	Employment and Vocational Guidance	Financial Aid and Insurance/ Medical Assistance	Food Assistance	Housing and Transportation Assistance	Mental Health Assistance	Parenting Services and Education	Sex Offender Programs	Total
Adams	3	10	11	4	8	3	10	0	49
Armstrong	4	7	14	6	4	6	11	0	52
Bedford	3	4	10	6	7	2	3	0	35
Blair	11	12	22	10	13	8	15	0	91
Bradford	5	8	11	6	7	5	5	0	47
Butler	8	8	13	23	10	7	15	2	86
Cambria	7	9	11	8	9	6	11	2	63
Cameron	6	4	5	4	3	4	4	0	30
Carbon	15	12	30	10	14	19	16	0	116
Centre	7	7	23	10	12	4	12	1	76
Clarion	3	4	3	11	3	2	1	0	27
Clearfield	2	7	17	6	10	8	8	1	59
Clinton	9	6	8	7	9	4	6	1	50
Columbia	11	4	7	4	7	3	4	0	40
Crawford	3	10	34	4	7	9	16	0	83
Elk	2	5	8	1	3	2	6	2	29
Fayette	5	9	13	7	7	5	4	0	50
Forest	2	3	5	1	3	2	2	0	18
Franklin	6	0	24	13	14	13	22	0	92
Fulton	6	5	14	4	4	8	8	0	49
Greene	10	10	18	10	9	5	5	0	67
Huntingdon	1	5	12	6	7	7	5	0	43
Indiana	5	15	19	8	15	10	11	0	83
Jefferson*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-
Juniata	3	9	24	5	8	8	20	0	77
Lawrence	5	9	14	0	13	3	7	1	52
Lycoming	15	12	30	13	25	16	39	0	150
McKean	2	8	11	2	5	9	3	0	40
Mercer	11	6	21	8	12	6	9	1	74
Mifflin	2	3	21	4	6	7	15	0	58
Monroe	9	7	19	9	15	7	17	0	83
Montour	9	8	7	8	5	8	6	0	51
Northumberland	6	10	5	8	12	5	11	0	57
Perry	3	7	12	5	7	4	5	0	43
Pike	6	10	31	7	10	9	16	0	89
Potter	2	10	13	7	5	4	3	0	44
Schuylkill	4	9	17	13	12	5	10	1	71
Snyder	9	6	7	7	6	8	8	0	51
Somerset	2	2	8	9	3	2	4	1	31
Sullivan	4	6	26	5	9	4	8	0	62
Susquehanna	3	7	13	9	8	2	7	0	49
Tioga	8	7	10	4	8	5	7	0	49
Union	10	8	6	5	8	7	6	0	50
Venango	5	6	17	5	7	8	9	1	58
Warren	6	6	10	8	8	4	7	0	49
Washington	18	13	21	7	12	11	13	0	95
Wayne	9	11	37	11	16	12	27	0	123
Wyoming	9	5	13	5	9	5	5	0	51
Total	294	349	725	333	414	301	462	14	2,892

Data source: PADO and PBPP, supplemented by searches of county websites. \*Data were not available for most program categories for this county.

are almost as common. The other program categories are much less in evidence, most notably housing and financial assistance. The researchers had no information available about the quality of these programs, or their effects on recidivism. As part of the wardens' survey, the county jails were also asked about any new reentry initiatives they might be developing. Only six jails indicated that they had any new reentry initiatives

underway. These initiatives focused on creating drug courts (Carbon, Columbia), parenting programs (Carbon, Lycoming), housing assistance (Franklin), expanding jobs assistance efforts (Lycoming, Pike) and efforts to study what they are currently doing with entry to inform future planning (Clinton).

The data collected through this survey suggest a relative dearth of reentry programs being offered by rural

county jails. As noted earlier, and in Zajac and Kowalski (2012), county jails often lack the resources and staff capacity to offer extensive programming, which is exacerbated when dealing with very small jails. Clearly, there is much greater capacity within the state prison system to provide formal, structured reentry services. As a corollary to that, there may be a greater need for such services for state inmates, as they typically have been incarcerated for longer periods than county jail inmates (Zajac and Kowalski, 2012).

### Community-Based Programs in Rural Counties

Following is a discussion of the number and types of programs available in each county. It was beyond the resources available to this research to assess the quality or capacity of these programs, given that there are nearly 2,900 programs listed for rural counties. While Table 5 (Page 13) may show that one county has more programs than another, the numbers say nothing about the relative quality of the programs. On a related point, it was not always clear from the program description whether a given program provider is public, private, or non-profit, what sort of fees may be charged for services, or how these disparate programs coordinate their services. These are important issues, but would have required a comprehensive survey of all programs. Still, the following analysis offers some indica-

tion of the social service menu available to ex-offenders in rural Pennsylvania.

Also, these community programs are, for the most part, available to anyone in the community. Therefore, ex-offenders must share access to these services with non-offenders. Again, this study was not able to collect information on the client mix that is served by each program. It is also important to note that these community programs are not necessarily geared specifically towards addressing the core criminogenic needs of ex-offenders, such as anti-social attitudes and association with criminal peers. While the researchers could not conduct an actual evaluation of each program, they did review the brief program descriptions (if provided).

Table 6 – Community-Based Programs Per Capita (rate per 10,000) in Pennsylvania Rural Counties

County	Alcohol and Drug Services	Employ. and Vocational Guidance	Financial Aid and Insurance/ Medical Assistance	Food Assistance	Transportation Assistance	Mental Health Assistance	Parenting Services and Education	Sex Offender Programs	Total
Adams	0.30	0.99	1.08	0.39	0.79	0.30	0.99	0.00	4.83
Armstrong	0.58	1.02	2.03	0.87	0.58	0.87	1.60	0.00	7.54
Bedford	0.60	0.80	2.01	1.21	1.41	0.40	0.60	0.00	7.03
Blair	0.87	0.94	1.73	0.79	1.02	0.63	1.18	0.00	7.16
Bradford	0.80	1.28	1.76	0.96	1.12	0.80	0.80	0.00	7.51
Butler	0.44	0.44	0.71	1.25	0.54	0.38	0.82	0.11	4.68
Cambria	0.49	0.63	0.77	0.56	0.63	0.42	0.77	0.14	4.38
Cameron	11.80	7.87	9.83	7.87	5.90	7.87	7.87	0.00	59.00
Carbon	2.30	1.84	4.60	1.53	2.15	2.91	2.45	0.00	17.78
Centre	0.45	0.45	1.49	0.65	0.78	0.26	0.78	0.06	4.94
Clarion	0.75	1.00	0.75	2.75	0.75	0.50	0.25	0.00	6.75
Clearfield	0.24	0.86	2.08	0.73	1.22	0.98	0.98	0.12	7.23
Clinton	2.29	1.53	2.04	1.78	2.29	1.02	1.53	0.25	12.74
Columbia	1.63	0.59	1.04	0.59	1.04	0.45	0.59	0.00	5.94
Crawford	0.34	1.13	3.83	0.45	0.79	1.01	1.80	0.00	9.35
Elk	0.63	1.57	2.50	0.31	0.94	0.63	1.88	0.63	9.08
Fayette	0.37	0.66	0.95	0.51	0.51	0.37	0.29	0.00	3.66
Forest	2.59	3.89	6.48	1.30	3.89	2.59	2.59	0.00	23.33
Franklin	0.40	0.00	1.60	0.87	0.94	0.87	1.47	0.00	6.15
Fulton	4.04	3.37	9.43	2.69	2.69	5.39	5.39	0.00	33.01
Greene	2.58	2.58	4.65	2.58	2.33	1.29	1.29	0.00	17.32
Huntingdon	0.22	1.09	2.61	1.31	1.52	1.52	1.09	0.00	9.37
Indiana	0.56	1.69	2.14	0.90	1.69	1.13	1.24	0.00	9.34
Jefferson*								0.00	-----
Juniata	1.22	3.65	9.74	2.03	3.25	3.25	8.12	0.00	31.26
Lawrence	0.55	0.99	1.54	0.00	1.43	0.33	0.77	0.11	5.71
Lycoming	1.29	1.03	2.58	1.12	2.15	1.38	3.36	0.00	12.92
McKean	0.46	1.84	2.53	0.46	1.15	2.07	0.69	0.00	9.21
Mercer	0.94	0.51	1.80	0.69	1.03	0.51	0.77	0.09	6.34
Mifflin	0.43	0.64	4.50	0.86	1.29	1.50	3.21	0.00	12.42
Monroe	0.53	0.41	1.12	0.53	0.88	0.41	1.00	0.00	4.89
Montour	4.93	4.38	3.83	4.38	2.74	4.38	3.28	0.00	27.92
Northumberland	0.63	1.06	0.53	0.85	1.27	0.53	1.16	0.00	6.03
Perry	0.65	1.52	2.61	1.09	1.52	0.87	1.09	0.00	9.35
Pike	1.05	1.74	5.40	1.22	1.74	1.57	2.79	0.00	15.51
Potter	1.15	5.73	7.45	4.01	2.86	2.29	1.72	0.00	25.20
Schuylkill	0.27	0.61	1.15	0.88	0.81	0.34	0.67	0.07	4.79
Snyder	2.27	1.51	1.76	1.76	1.51	2.02	2.02	0.00	12.85
Somerset	0.26	0.26	1.03	1.16	0.39	0.26	0.51	0.13	3.99
Sullivan	6.22	9.33	40.45	7.78	14.00	6.22	12.45	0.00	96.45
Susquehanna	0.69	1.61	3.00	2.08	1.85	0.46	1.61	0.00	11.30
Tioga	1.91	1.67	2.38	0.95	1.91	1.19	1.67	0.00	11.67
Union	2.22	1.78	1.33	1.11	1.78	1.56	1.33	0.00	11.12
Venango	0.91	1.09	3.09	0.91	1.27	1.45	1.64	0.18	10.55
Warren	1.43	1.43	2.39	1.91	1.91	0.96	1.67	0.00	11.72
Washington	0.87	0.63	1.01	0.34	0.58	0.53	0.63	0.00	4.57
Wayne	1.70	2.08	7.00	2.08	3.03	2.27	5.11	0.00	23.29
Wyoming	3.18	1.77	4.60	1.77	3.18	1.77	1.77	0.00	18.04
Total	0.88	1.04	2.17	1.03	1.28	0.90	1.36	0.04	8.67

Data source: PADOC and PBPP, supplemented by searches of county websites. \*Data were not available for most program categories for this county.

No evidence was found that any of these programs was delivering offender specific services, as would be found in a prison setting. The one exception was the sex offender programs offered in 11 counties, which by definition are oriented towards those who have committed sex crimes. However, there are very few such programs and they are targeted specifically to sex offenders. The lack of community programs that specifically address key criminogenic needs was noted as an issue during the interviews and surveys with state corrections officials and county wardens.

Finally, it is unclear how often released inmates take advantage of the community services that are, in theory, available to them. Some programs charge fees that released inmates may not be able to afford. Transportation to programs in rural areas was also noted as an issue.

The researchers learned during interviews with PADOc that it makes the community resource directories available in prison libraries for inmates to use, and inmates may request a copy. The PADOc Bureau of Treatment Services also provides copies to family members of inmates upon request, and these directories are on PADOc's website. During interviews with PBPP staff, it was noted that the specialized ASCRA also work with parolees to direct them towards appropriate community programs. And, as discussed below, several of the responding rural county jails provided some information about specific community programs to which they refer their inmates. Therefore, while the state and local corrections agencies in Pennsylvania are taking care to make released inmates aware of available programs in the community, it is unclear how these resources are being used by the released inmates.

Table 5 provides a simple count of the number of community-based programs in each rural county that could be accessed by released inmates, grouped into eight categories.

The number of programs per capita (rate per 10,000) was calculated for the programs in each rural county to provide a better representation of the density of services available in each county, according to how the program base within each county is spread across the population. For this analysis, the researchers used the rate for the entire population of the county, rather than the population of released inmates, because these community programs are available to everyone in the community, not just released inmates. Moreover, while this study

Table 7 - Programs Per Capita (rate per 10,000) in Rural and Urban Counties

	Rural	Urban
Alcohol and Drug Services	0.79	0.25
Employment and Vocational Guidance	0.93	0.28
Financial Aid and Insurance/Medical Assistance	1.94	0.43
Food Assistance	1.13	0.28
Housing and Transportation Assistance	0.80	0.27
Mental Health Assistance	1.21	0.31
Parenting Services and Education	0.04	0.04
Sex Offender Programs	7.75	2.25

Data source: PADOc and PBPP, supplemented by searches of county websites.

collected data on the number of inmates released to each rural county for each of the past 5 years, the researchers did not have any data on the total number of released inmates living in each county at any one time (including inmates who were released prior to the time period covered by this study).

Table 6 shows the per capita rate for programs for all rural counties.

While this study did not intend to examine program capacity in urban counties, the researchers had the same community program data for urban counties as for rural, thus allowing them to test the assertion made by the state corrections officials during the interviews that rural counties have less program capacity than urban. Table 7 shows that, across the board, rural counties seem to have equal or even greater program capacity than urban counties. Thus, the data seem to contradict the impression that rural counties overall are more challenged in their ability to offer services to returning offenders. However, it should be noted that the data presented in Tables 5 through 7 do not account for program quality or the actual ability of returning offenders to take advantage of these programs. Thus, the state corrections officials may have been reporting on more nuanced aspects of service capacity within these counties than are indicated by the data in these two tables.

Table 8 on Page 16 presents a summary of the community services the county wardens reported referring to their inmates. It should be noted that this table does not include the counties that did not respond to the survey or the question. The table also excludes the response from Juniata County, as its jail was closed midway through this study.

According to the survey results, drug and alcohol programs are the most common type of services to which the jails are referring released inmates. Alcohol and drug services were also the most common type of reentry program reported to be delivered within the jails. Other common referral targets include employ-

Table 8 - Community Services to Which County Jails Refer Released Inmates

County	Alcohol and Drug Services	Life Skills	Employment and Vocational Guidance	Financial Aid and Insurance/Medical Assistance	Housing and Transportation Assistance	Mental Health Assistance	Parenting Services and Education	Other
Adams*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Bradford	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Carbon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clinton	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Columbia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Elk	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Greene	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Franklin	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Lycoming	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Mercer	4	1	0	3	0	1	5	3
Northumberland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pike	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Schuylkill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sullivan	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Tioga	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Warren	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wayne	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total	8	1	4	4	1	6	6	16

Data source: Survey of county jail wardens. \*Note: Adams County attached an extensive directory of programs available in the multi-county area surrounding Adams County.

ment services, parenting, and mental health. What seems to stand out from the data is that county jails are making relatively few referrals to reentry services in the community. The counties that responded to this question reported a mean of only three community programs to which they make referrals. It may be that the relatively short-term nature of most county jail stays, and the challenge of rigorously classifying inmates under these conditions, limits the perceived need or capacity of the jails to make community service referrals in many cases (Zajac and Kowalski, 2012).

### Gap Analysis of Reentry Services

#### Gaps in Service Capacity

Table 9 shows the number of combined state prison and county jail inmates released to each rural county in 2011 to the number of programs available in each service category from Table 5, as well as the total number of programs per

capita in each county for 2011 (the most current release data at the time of the research). The researchers chose to examine the most recent year as a snapshot as opposed to using the cumulative releases over the 5-year period of release data available since it is not known how many inmates released in earlier years might still be living in each county. In addition, the program availability data were current to 2011, thus there was a logical match with the 2011 release data.

Table 9 specifically relates program availability to the number of released inmates, allowing for some conclusions about potential gaps in services for rural released inmates.

#### Gaps in Types of Services Needed

To examine the relationship between available programs in each county and the specific needs of released inmates, the researchers used data from PADOC on the needs of released state inmates in three service categories: education,

mental health and alcohol and drug addiction. No detailed information about specific needs of county inmates was available.

Table 10 shows the number of released inmates in 2011 in each category of service need per the available programs in each category, by county. It should be noted that this analysis draws inferences about possible needs for services in each of the three categories based on known diagnostic information supplied by PADOC. But, recommendations for ongoing service are individualized to each client. Therefore, the analysis presented here represents a best estimate of the relationship between specific services needed and services available in each county.

Rural counties varied in the number of released state inmates for each available community program. As a general rule, effective correctional programs maintain a ratio of no more than 10 participants for each program/group (Latessa, 2005;

Table 9 - Program Availability per 1,000 State and County Inmates Released into Rural Counties in 2011

County	Alcohol and Drug Services	Employment and Vocational Guidance	Financial Aid and Insurance/Medical Assistance	Food Assistance	Housing and Transportation Assistance	Mental Health Assistance	Parenting Services and Education	Sex Offender Programs	Total
Adams	1.35	4.49	4.93	1.79	3.59	1.35	4.49	0.00	21.98
Armstrong	3.77	6.60	13.21	5.66	3.77	5.66	10.38	0.00	49.06
Bedford	4.43	5.91	14.77	8.86	10.34	2.95	4.43	0.00	51.70
Blair	4.33	4.72	8.65	3.93	5.11	3.15	5.90	0.00	35.78
Bradford	4.03	6.45	8.86	4.83	5.64	4.03	4.03	0.00	37.87
Butler	3.00	3.00	4.88	8.63	3.75	2.63	5.63	0.75	32.28
Cambria	2.03	2.61	3.19	2.32	2.61	1.74	3.19	0.58	18.27
Carbon	14.53	11.63	29.07	9.69	13.57	18.41	15.50	0.00	112.40
Centre	5.67	5.67	18.64	8.10	9.72	3.24	9.72	0.81	61.59
Clarion	4.85	6.47	4.85	17.80	4.85	3.24	1.62	0.00	43.69
Clearfield	1.28	4.48	10.88	3.84	6.40	5.12	5.12	0.64	37.75
Clinton	4.66	3.11	4.14	3.63	4.66	2.07	3.11	0.52	25.89
Columbia	8.99	3.27	5.72	3.27	5.72	2.45	3.27	0.00	32.71
Crawford	1.98	6.60	22.43	2.64	4.62	5.94	10.55	0.00	54.75
Elk	5.25	13.12	21.00	2.62	7.87	5.25	15.75	5.25	76.12
Fayette	13.02	23.44	33.85	18.23	18.23	13.02	10.42	0.00	130.21
Franklin	2.13	0.00	8.53	4.62	4.97	4.62	7.82	0.00	32.68
Greene	13.12	13.12	23.62	13.12	11.81	6.56	6.56	0.00	87.93
Huntingdon	1.70	8.49	20.37	10.19	11.88	11.88	8.49	0.00	73.01
Indiana	3.93	11.80	14.95	6.29	11.80	7.87	8.65	0.00	65.30
Jefferson*								0.00	
Juniata	9.49	28.48	75.95	15.82	25.32	25.32	63.29	0.00	243.67
Lawrence	2.84	5.12	7.96	0.00	7.39	1.71	3.98	0.57	29.58
Lycoming	5.72	4.57	11.43	4.95	9.53	6.10	14.86	0.00	57.16
McKean	2.68	10.71	14.73	2.68	6.69	12.05	4.02	0.00	53.55
Mercer	5.49	2.99	10.47	3.99	5.99	2.99	4.49	0.50	36.91
Mifflin	1.74	2.60	18.23	3.47	5.21	6.08	13.02	0.00	50.35
Monroe	3.16	2.46	6.68	3.16	5.27	2.46	5.98	0.00	29.17
Montour	31.69	28.17	24.65	28.17	17.61	28.17	21.13	0.00	179.58
Northumberland	3.24	5.41	2.70	4.33	6.49	2.70	5.95	0.00	30.83
Perry	3.92	9.14	15.67	6.53	9.14	5.22	6.53	0.00	56.14
Pike	2.79	4.65	14.41	3.25	4.65	4.18	7.44	0.00	41.38
Potter	8.51	42.55	55.32	29.79	21.28	17.02	12.77	0.00	187.23
Schuylkill	2.08	4.67	8.82	6.75	6.23	2.59	5.19	0.52	36.84
Snyder	16.16	10.77	12.57	12.57	10.77	14.36	14.36	0.00	91.56
Somerset	2.79	2.79	11.17	12.57	4.19	2.79	5.59	1.40	43.30
Susquehanna	5.92	13.81	25.64	17.75	15.78	3.94	13.81	0.00	96.65
Tioga	15.24	13.33	19.05	7.62	15.24	9.52	13.33	0.00	93.33
Union	20.75	16.60	12.45	10.37	16.60	14.52	12.45	0.00	103.73
Venango	3.60	4.33	12.26	3.60	5.05	5.77	6.49	0.72	41.82
Warren	7.14	7.14	11.90	9.52	9.52	4.76	8.33	0.00	58.33
Washington	63.83	46.10	74.47	24.82	42.55	39.01	46.10	0.00	336.88
Wayne	14.56	17.80	59.87	17.80	25.89	19.42	43.69	0.00	199.03
Wyoming	18.11	10.06	26.16	10.06	18.11	10.06	10.06	0.00	102.62
Total	5.13	6.10	12.66	5.82	7.23	5.26	8.07	0.24	50.51

Data source: PADOC and PBPP; and county jail data compiled by Zajac and Kowalski (2012). \*Data were not available for most program categories for this county.

Van Voorhis, et al., 2009). With larger participant ratios, it becomes more difficult to maintain the integrity of program implementation and client service delivery. With this in mind, the mean ratio across all rural counties for education/vocational programs was 9, which is ideal. For mental health programs, the mean ratio was

13, which is close to the ideal of 10 or less. The ratio for alcohol and drug treatment programs was 22, which is considerably higher than the ideal.

The important caveats to this discussion are (1) that these figures do not account for the needs of returning county jail inmates (for which no data were available),

Table 10 – Density of Programs for State Prison Inmates Released in 2011 Needing Specific Services in Rural Counties

County	Education		Mental Health		Alcohol and Drug Addiction	
	# of Inmates <12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Ratio of Inmates Needing Service to Community Programs	# of Inmates with MH Needs	Ratio of Inmates Needing Service to Community Programs	# of Inmates with Substance Abuse Problems	Ratio of Inmates Needing Service to Community Programs
Adams	90	9	85	28	145	48
Armstrong	13	2	21	4	21	5
Bedford	26	7	35	18	62	21
Blair	92	8	86	11	196	18
Bradford	34	4	36	7	79	16
Butler	41	5	83	12	127	16
Cambria	36	4	29	5	66	9
Cameron	6	2	4	1	7	1
Carbon	18	2	27	1	26	2
Centre	23	3	35	9	58	8
Clarion	12	3	17	9	31	10
Clearfield	57	8	92	12	157	79
Clinton	15	3	17	4	30	3
Columbia	17	4	17	6	26	2
Crawford	36	4	43	5	58	19
Elk	8	2	13	7	24	12
Fayette	154	17	127	25	258	52
Forest	3	1	4	2	6	3
Franklin	86	-	97	7	172	29
Fulton	16	3	15	2	26	4
Greene	30	3	19	4	45	5
Huntingdon	20	4	22	3	47	47
Indiana	23	2	18	2	48	10
Jefferson	31	-	50	-	89	-
Juniata	6	1	8	1	12	4
Lawrence	55	6	56	19	80	16
Lycoming	79	7	117	7	219	15
Mckean	28	4	43	5	53	27
Mercer	39	7	69	12	97	9
Mifflin	26	9	37	5	72	36
Monroe	67	10	70	10	124	14
Montour	7	1	14	2	21	2
Northumberland	51	5	59	12	101	17
Perry	22	3	27	7	44	15
Pike	19	2	27	3	42	7
Potter	2	0	5	1	7	4
Schuylkill	77	9	82	16	149	37
Snyder	28	5	34	4	54	6
Somerset	27	14	38	19	72	36
Sullivan	3	1	3	1	2	1
Susquehanna	13	2	20	10	25	8
Tioga	16	2	15	3	29	4
Union	27	3	31	4	51	5
Venango	50	8	71	9	124	25
Warren	28	5	33	8	63	11
Washington	63	5	78	7	190	11
Wayne	28	3	42	4	63	7
Wyoming	20	4	17	3	36	4
Total	1,668	9	1,988	13	3,534	22

Data source: PADOC.

and (2) non-offenders in these communities are also presumably competing with released inmates for these services. Thus, the “true” ratios of returning inmates needing specific services to programs available in rural counties may likely be higher than those reported in Table 10.

## Conclusions

According to the study findings, rural reentry will continue to be an important issue in Pennsylvania, as projections indicated a slight increase over time in the number of inmates returning to rural areas, especially inmates released from state prisons.

Employment, housing, and transportation emerged from this study as key challenges facing inmates returning to rural areas. The stigma of the released inmate being an “ex-con” also contributes to difficulties in the areas of employment and housing, as identified by the state corrections officials interviewed. There are several restrictions for those with criminal records when trying to obtain employment and housing. For employment, offenders are restricted from working with children, as well as prohibited to work as aircraft/airport employees, nursing home workers, private detectives, bank employees, and more. As for housing, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has specific protocol for those with criminal records or suspected of conducting criminal activity in the household that restricts offenders from obtaining housing, including guidelines for when sex offenders should be prohibited from being given housing. Transportation in rural areas is an important issue considering the lack or even complete absence of public transit to aid released inmates in getting to work, treatment appointments and meetings with their parole agents.

This study found that social services for released inmates are unevenly distributed between rural counties, with some counties being in a much better position than others to offer a variety of human and social services to released inmates. Moreover, this study found that social services may be more readily available in rural counties as opposed to urban areas, although the evidence on this question is mixed. But, released offenders must compete with non-offenders for community social services that are available. And, much more needs to be learned about the actual capacity and quality of the programs that are available in rural Pennsylvania.

While there appears to be a reasonably large number of programs in rural Pennsylvania targeting needs, such as substance abuse, there are very few, if any, cognitive-behavioral programs that address key criminogenic needs, such as anti-social attitudes and poor decision making skills, that are common to many offenders. There are also very few specialized community reentry programs for returning sex offenders.

## Policy Considerations

Based on the data collected for this study, the researchers offer the following policy considerations that may inform efforts to enhance reentry for state and county inmates being released to rural Pennsylvania.

### Enhance Efforts to Address Transportation Challenges

One of the most prominent themes to emerge from this study is how important transportation is to the reentry experience of rural inmates. While there was some disagreement between state level corrections officials and county jail wardens over the challenges posed by transportation, it appears that limited transportation (especially public transit) presents a significant obstacle to inmates returning to rural areas, compared to urban areas.

While PADOE indicates that it has been making efforts to provide more transportation for paroled inmates while they live in Community Corrections Centers/ Facilities, the efforts do not help released inmates once they leave the CCC/Fs, nor does this provide any help to inmates who have maxed out on their sentences and are under no supervision. It is also unclear whether either PADOE or PBPP have the resources to serve as the “one stop shop” for the transportation needs of released inmates.

Transportation challenges faced by released inmates are of course embedded within the larger problem of transportation infrastructure for all citizens living in rural areas. A recent report by the American Society of Civil Engineers found that 45 percent of Americans have no access to public transit of any sort, and that millions more have only limited access<sup>11</sup>. This report offers no clear answers to the broader transportation challenges facing rural areas. Clearly, though, any efforts made to enhance general mass transit systems within rural areas will benefit released inmates. Short of that,

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11. See: “Engineering group gives nation a “D+” on infrastructure.” Post-Gazette.com March 19, 2013. <http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/news/us/engineering-group-gives-nation-a-d-on-infrastructure-679915/>.

funding options may be made available to PADO and PBPP to enhance their existing efforts to assist released inmates with transportation.

### Expand Capacity for Community Mental Health Services

Interviews with state and local corrections officials also suggest that there is a lack of mental health services for returning inmates in rural areas. Most notably, interviewees noted a lack of psychiatrists in these areas, requiring returning inmates with serious mental illness to travel great distances for intensive mental health services. In addition, aftercare programs for sex offenders, and support services for family members of returning inmates were also noted as lacking. Therefore, efforts to expand the capacity for community mental health services, sex offender programs, and family support programs, such as counseling programs to assist families in meeting the needs of their returning loved ones, would promote successful reentry within these rural communities.

### Expand Programs that Address Offenders' Criminogenic Needs

This study documented the almost complete absence of community programs that directly and rigorously address the key criminogenic needs of offenders, such as antisocial attitudes and peer associates, decision making and problem solving skills and coping skills. Attention to these needs is critical to the rehabilitation of offenders and to the reduction of recidivism. Evidence-based program models attending to such needs clearly exist, and such programs are commonly operated in many prison systems, including PADO (MacKenzie, 2006). While such programs are offered in some of the CCC/Fs operated by PADO, the CCC/Fs are widely dispersed within rural communities and do not serve all released offenders. PBPP's ASCRA initiative may be one mechanism for delivering these services, at least to released offenders under parole supervision. While the ASCRA initiative had not yet been rigorously evaluated at the time of the research, expansion of the ASCRA initiative may be a policy consideration worth exploring to meet the important criminogenic needs of ex-offenders and to build upon these services delivered while in prison. PADO's revamped system of contracted CCFs may also become a vehicle for enhancing the provision of evidence-based services targeting these criminogenic needs. It seems likely that any effort to expand such services in the community will require the involvement

of PADO and PBPP, as well as county jails and probation departments, since these services, by their very nature, are of use only to offender populations.

### Expand Reentry Resources for Sex Offenders

This study found that there are almost no community-based sex offender programs in rural counties. Only 11 of the 48 rural counties were found to have any sort of sex offender program, and in most of those counties it was only a single program. Moreover, most of these "programs" seemed to be simply individual counselors (often psychologists or social workers) who were listed as providing some sort of service to sex offenders. Thus, there are few offense-specific reentry services available to sex offenders returning to rural Pennsylvania. One option for expanding reentry resources for sex offenders is the growing Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) model (Hannem and Petrunik, 2007). The COSA approach is based on restorative justice principles and employs a network composed primarily of volunteers guided by a professional counselor that provides support services to returning sex offenders and establishes behavioral contracts with these offenders to enforce accountability to agreed-upon standards of behavior. While COSA has been used more extensively in the United Kingdom and Canada, it is relatively new to the United States. There is some preliminary research suggesting that COSA does reduce recidivism rates, but it must be cautioned that while this approach is promising, it is not yet fully proven (Elliott and Beech, 2012; Wilson, et al., 2009). But, it may be worth exploring as an option for sex offenders returning to rural Pennsylvania.

### Support Efforts to Enhance Reentry Programming

This study provides evidence that rural county jails currently offer relatively few reentry services prior to release. These jails should be supported in their efforts to enhance their capacity to deliver reentry programming to soon-to-be-released inmates. Such programming can and should include interventions addressing basic rehabilitative deficits, such as job readiness and life skills, but must not ignore the underlying thinking errors and poor decision making and problem solving skills that are so strongly related to reentry outcomes (Bucklen and Zajac, 2009; MacKenzie, 2006). It is important that new jail reentry programs do not simply replicate approaches that have been found to be inef-

fective. Moreover, the newer reentry initiatives within PADOc, and any new programs that may be fostered within county jails, should undergo thorough program evaluation to determine their effectiveness in promoting reintegration and reducing recidivism. Program development is not a once and done process, and rigorous program evaluation is key to sustaining successful reentry services.

### Undertake Population Projections

One of the more notable findings of this study is that no rural county jail reported undertaking any sort of population projections estimations. The county jail population projections presented in this report represent a basic start to estimating changes in the population of these jails. Population projections are extremely complex and technical activities. It is reasonable to suggest that the development of a rigorous projections system is likely to be beyond the resources of any individual small jail. These jails are not likely to have the in-house staff capacity, or the funds, to create such a system on their own. The development of a county jail population projections “dashboard” (serving both rural and urban counties) may be more feasibly supported by a statewide criminal justice planning agency, such as the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Such a dashboard could show up-to-date projections for admissions, instant population and releases for each county jail, out to whatever period is desired (e.g. 1 year, 5 years, 10 years) and including projected inmate demographics. Such an undertaking can be informed and guided by the efforts made by PADOc over the past several years in the refinement of its own projections system<sup>12</sup>. Another option may be for rural county jails to collaborate collectively, or at least regionally, on the development of the overall methodology and architecture for such a projections system, which can then be tailored to individual jails. It should be noted that such systems come at some cost, with PADOc having spent more than \$60,000 on the ongoing development of its own system<sup>13</sup>. But, population projections are a valuable component of any modern correctional system, given the importance of timely estimates of population changes for jail and prison policymaking, planning and budgeting.

### Development of PA 2-1-1 System

While PADOc and PBPP, and to a lesser extent the county jails, currently make directories of community based services available to returning inmates and their families, this approach may be less efficient than the evolving PA 2-1-1. PA 2-1-1 is a simple telephone service that connects all callers to information regarding health and human services available in their community. In Pennsylvania, the 2-1-1 program has been activated in six out of seven regions in the state, with the northwest region being the only region without a live 2-1-1 call center<sup>14</sup>. PA 2-1-1 is administered by a statewide board of directors, which has the authority to award “call center” status to units throughout the state.

A cost-benefit analysis regarding 2-1-1 was conducted by the University of Texas Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources in December 2011. It found that when an individual is looking for information or referral services, the individual tends to have little or no prior knowledge or experience; therefore, dialing 2-1-1 is much easier compared to other options, such as a handbook. It also found that general information systems, like 4-1-1, disseminate information that is too general and can have a fee. A national service, such as 2-1-1, is predicted to provide \$1.1 billion in net value nationally over the next 10 years (United Way and AIRS 2-1-1, 2012).

PA 2-1-1 then affords to released inmates (or anyone in the community) a one-stop-shop for information about and referral to a wide variety of community services and programs. It may be easier to instruct inmates to take advantage of PA 2-1-1 than to have them self-navigate a complex paper directory of community programs, which by its very nature is of limited value to released inmates with low literacy levels. Thus, an investment by the state in the full development and use of PA 2-1-1 may be an important advancement in the reentry process.

### Additional Considerations

While the current study explored rural reentry from a variety of angles, much more research is needed on this topic. For example, future research could gather data directly from released and soon-to-be released inmates to learn what they see as key challenges and concerns about their reentry. Data collection from offenders,

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12. See the following link to the DOC Key Indicators Dashboard as an example of how a dashboard could be structured: [http://www.cor.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/major\\_initiatives/21262](http://www.cor.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/major_initiatives/21262).

13. Communication with Bret Bucklen, Director of the Bureau of Planning, Research and Statistics, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, March 7, 2013.

14. For a map of the seven call center regions statewide, see <http://www.pa211central.org/locations.html>.

especially those in the community, is more difficult, expensive and time consuming than the work undertaken in this study. But, such offender-focused research holds the potential to contribute greatly to an understanding of rural reentry in Pennsylvania.

Also, several interviewees noted that some rural counties are much more “rural” than others, and thus pose their own set of challenges. Future research should take into account the variation not only between rural and urban counties, but also between rural counties themselves.

Another recurrent theme in the interviews and surveys with corrections officials was the obstacle that stigma may play in rural reentry. The reentry experience is jeopardized when released inmates are simply not accepted by others within their communities, or are viewed as second class citizens. It is difficult to legislate changes in prevailing attitudes. This report cannot

offer clear guidance on how to overcome the stigmatization of released inmates. However, efforts may be made to better prepare soon-to-be-released inmates on how to respond to challenges and suspicions by members of the communities to which they return, much as some job readiness programs teach them how to answer prospective employers’ questions about their criminal records by offering candid disclosure of their past mistakes and emphasizing the contributions that they can make as employees and citizens. Public education campaigns can also be developed to better inform community members of the contributions they can make to help released inmates succeed and thus to reduce the risk of future crimes. Offender reentry is a community effort. The benefits of successful reentry are enjoyed by the entire community, and conversely the costs of failed reentry are borne by that same community.

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**The Center for Rural Pennsylvania**  
625 Forster St., Room 902  
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Phone: (717) 787-9555  
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