

December 2012

# INMATE REENTRY PROGRAMS

## Enhanced Information Sharing Could Further Strengthen Coordination and Grant Management



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## Why GAO Did This Study

About 700,000 inmates are released from federal and state custody each year, and another 9 million are booked into and released from local jails. Former inmates face challenges as they transition into, or reenter, society, such as finding housing and employment. According to the most recent data available, more than two-thirds of state prisoners are rearrested for a new offense within 3 years of release, and about half are reincarcerated. Federal reentry grants are available for state and local providers, as successful reentry reduces rearrest or reincarceration, known as recidivism. GAO was asked to review (1) the extent to which there is fragmentation, overlap, and duplication across federal reentry grant programs; (2) the coordination efforts federal grant-making agencies have taken to prevent unnecessary duplication and share promising practices; and (3) the extent to which federal grant-making agencies measure grantees' effectiveness in reducing recidivism. GAO identified and analyzed the grant programs and agencies that supported reentry efforts in fiscal year 2011; analyzed agency documents, such as grant solicitations; and interviewed agency officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOJ, Labor, and HHS enhance their information sharing on approaches for determining how effectively grantees reduce recidivism. In response, DOJ, Labor, and HHS reported that they would take actions to address our recommendation.

View [GAO-13-93](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or [maurerd@gao.gov](mailto:maurerd@gao.gov).

## INMATE REENTRY PROGRAMS

### Enhanced Information Sharing Could Further Strengthen Coordination and Grant Management

## What GAO Found

In fiscal year 2011, the Departments of Justice (DOJ), Labor (Labor), and Health and Human Services (HHS) separately administered nine fragmented but minimally overlapping reentry grant programs with low risk of duplication. Specifically, GAO found that these grant programs are fragmented since more than one federal agency is involved in administering the programs. Further, GAO found that overlap across the nine programs was minimal because the programs varied in (1) their applicant eligibility criteria, (2) the extent to which their funds solely benefit the reentry population, and (3) their primary services funded. For example, Labor's reentry program limits eligibility to private, nonprofit organizations that will use the funds primarily to assist current or former inmates—residing in or released from any facility—with their employment needs. In contrast, one of DOJ's reentry programs limits eligibility to governmental entities that will use the funds primarily to assist current or former inmates—residing in or released from state, local, or tribal facilities—with their substance abuse treatment needs. Given the variance across eligible applicants, beneficiaries, and primary services, the overlap across the nine programs is minimal and the risk of duplication—when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities, provide the same services to the same beneficiaries, or provide funding for the same purpose—is low.

DOJ, Labor, and HHS have acknowledged where some overlap exists and therefore have taken steps to coordinate their reentry efforts to further prevent unnecessary duplication and share promising practices. For example, in 2011, the U.S. Attorney General convened the Federal Interagency Reentry Council—a group of federal agencies whose mission is to make communities safer; assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive, taxpaying citizens; and save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration. Further, agency officials from all three agencies reported that they share grant solicitations with one another before issuing them, and in 2009, DOJ and HHS established a memorandum of agreement to formally coordinate funding activities related to reentry. In addition, all three agencies have taken action, or have actions under way, to require their grant applicants to report other federal funds they are receiving, or plan to receive, and consider this information before they will make new award decisions.

DOJ, Labor, and HHS are measuring grantee performance and conducting program evaluations, but they could enhance information sharing about the methods they use to collect and analyze data to determine how effectively grantees reduce recidivism. To monitor grantee performance, DOJ, Labor, and HHS collect different performance information, such as rearrest, reincarceration, and employment rates, through several web-based grant management systems, each with varying strengths and limitations. However, the agencies have not formally discussed these systems with one another, or how they analyze the data they collect, despite engaging in collaborations during which such discussions would be practical and useful. Consistent with effective interagency coordination practices, sharing information like this could help the agencies better leverage existing practices and improve their approaches to determining and reporting on grantee effectiveness.

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# Contents

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Letter		1
	Background	7
	Federal Reentry Grant Programs Are Fragmented but Minimally Overlapping, Reducing the Risk for Duplication	13
	Agencies Have Taken Steps to Coordinate Their Reentry Programs and Further Reduce the Potential for Unnecessary Duplication in Funding	21
	Agencies Are Measuring Grantee Performance and Conducting Program Evaluations, but Additional Information Sharing Could Be Beneficial	28
	Conclusions	38
	Recommendations for Executive Action	39
	Agency Comments	39
Appendix I	The Role of the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Reentry	41
Appendix II	Federal Interagency Reentry Council Accomplishments	44
Appendix III	Summary of Ongoing Agency Reentry Program Evaluations	50
Appendix IV	Comments from the Department of Justice	53
Appendix V	Comments from the Department of Labor	55
Appendix VI	Comments from the Department of Health & Human Services	57
Appendix VII	GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	59
Tables		
	Table 1: Four Phases of the Federal Grant Life Cycle	10

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Table 2: Fragmentation across Federal Reentry Grant Programs in Fiscal Year 2011	14
Table 3: Variations in Applicant Eligibility across Federal Reentry Grant Programs, Fiscal Year 2011	16
Table 4: Variations in Population Targets across Federal Reentry Grant Programs, Fiscal Year 2011	17
Table 5: Variations in Primary Services Funded across Federal Reentry Grant Programs, Fiscal Year 2011	18
Table 6: Federal Agencies' Recidivism-Related Measures	31
Table 7: Agencies' Use of Grant Management Systems for Performance Reporting and Analysis	32
Table 8: Selected BOP Inmate Reentry Programs and Activities	42
Table 9: Federal Interagency Reentry Council Accomplishments	46
Table 10: DOJ and Labor Reentry Grant Program Evaluations	50

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## Figures

Figure 1: Potential Needs of the Reentry Population	9
Figure 2: Issues Related to Reentry	45

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## Abbreviations

BOP	Federal Bureau of Prisons
CFDA	Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
DOJ	Department of Justice
GMS	Grants Management System
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
MIS	Management Information System
PMT	Performance Measurement Tool
PRI	Prisoner Reentry Initiative
ORP	Offender Reentry Program
RExO	Reintegration of Ex-Offenders
SAIS	Service Accountability Improvement System
SCA	Second Chance Act
SVORI	Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative

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United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

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December 14, 2012

The Honorable Lamar Smith  
Chairman  
The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary  
House of Representatives

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.  
Chairman  
The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security  
Committee on the Judiciary  
House of Representatives

About 2.2 million individuals were incarcerated in state, federal, and local facilities in 2011, and the United States spent more than an estimated \$82.7 billion on federal, state, and local corrections, according to the most recently available data.<sup>1</sup> About 700,000 inmates are released from federal and state custody each year, and another 9 million are booked into and released from local jails. These former inmates face considerable challenges as they transition into, or reenter, society after incarceration. When successful reentry fails, rearrest or reincarceration may result. According to the most recent data available, more than two-thirds of state prisoners are rearrested for a new offense within 3 years of their release and about half are reincarcerated—this is known as recidivism.<sup>2</sup> Assisting the reentry population—former inmates or inmates preparing for release

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<sup>1</sup>For data on the number of individuals incarcerated, see Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2011* (Washington, D.C.: November 2012). Bureau of Justice Statistics' data on correctional expenditures are preliminary. The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the statistical agency of Department of Justice.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Special Report: Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*, (Washington, D.C.: June 2002). According to Department of Justice officials, the Bureau of Justice Assistance is currently working on a new national recidivism study that involved about 30 states and 75,000 former inmates. DOJ estimates that the report will be completed by December 31, 2012.

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from federal, state, and local correctional facilities—in successful reentry is essential, as the economic and societal costs of high incarceration rates are significant. High rates of recidivism mean more crime, more victims, and more pressure on an already overburdened and overcrowded criminal justice system. As we have recently reported, inmate crowding remains a significant concern, and federal prisons are nearly 40 percent over capacity.<sup>3</sup>

In 2011, the U.S. Attorney General convened the Federal Interagency Reentry Council—a group of federal agencies whose mission is to make communities safer; assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive, taxpaying citizens; and save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration.<sup>4</sup> Unlike some other executive branch councils, the Federal Interagency Reentry Council does not receive an appropriation from Congress and does not employ full-time staff.<sup>5</sup> Member agencies provide a range of services, from direct assistance with reentry to the administration of grants. For example, the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is the sole agency responsible for the custody of more than 218,000 federal inmates, and considers the process of reentry to begin the day the inmate is incarcerated. Accordingly, BOP is involved in the direct provision of reentry services, such as vocational training, faith-based programs, and substance abuse treatment, which help current inmates prepare for

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<sup>3</sup>GAO, *Bureau of Prisons: Growing Inmate Crowding Negatively Affects Inmates, Staff, and Infrastructure*, [GAO-12-743](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 12, 2012).

<sup>4</sup>Agencies included on the Federal Interagency Reentry Council and the council’s working group are the Department of Justice, Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Education, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Social Security Administration, Domestic Policy Council, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Office of Personnel Management, Office of Management and Budget, Internal Revenue Service, Federal Trade Commission, Interagency Council on Homelessness, Small Business Administration, and Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency—the last of which is only on the Federal Interagency Reentry Council’s working group. Collateral costs quantify the size of the effect of incarceration to both the individual and the individual’s family.

<sup>5</sup>The Federal Interagency Reentry Council has no separate budget, and council representatives participate in council activities while also fulfilling their respective responsibilities at their home agencies. In contrast, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness receives a separate appropriation from Congress and employs full-time staff.

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release. For fiscal year 2012, BOP estimates spending about 9 percent, or \$604 million of its \$6.6 billion operating budget, on reentry-related services. In contrast, DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Departments of Labor (Labor) and Health and Human Services (HHS) all administer grant funding to state and local reentry service providers so that they may, for example, assist the reentry population train for and find jobs, obtain substance abuse treatment, and locate housing as needed. Collectively, these three federal agencies were appropriated over \$165 million in fiscal year 2012 and nearly \$185 million in fiscal year 2011 for three of their respective reentry grant programs. These three funding streams—the Second Chance Act (SCA) program, the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) program, and the Offender Reentry Program (ORP)—support both the adult and the juvenile reentry population.<sup>6</sup>

We have previously reported on the importance of sound federal grant management practices.<sup>7</sup> We have also published annual reports on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication across the government since 2011, emphasizing opportunities to achieve greater efficiencies and more effective delivery of government services,<sup>8</sup> and have studied grants management at DOJ in particular.<sup>9</sup> In 2012, we reported that DOJ's grant programs overlap across 10 justice areas, contributing to the risk of unnecessarily duplicative grant awards for the same or similar purposes.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the DOJ, Labor, and HHS Inspectors General

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<sup>6</sup>The SCA program is carried out through the authority provided in the Second Chance Act of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-199, 122 Stat. 657 (2008). The RExO program is carried out through authority provided in Section 171 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-220, 112 Stat. 936, 1031-34, and Section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-199, 122 Stat. 657, 680-83. HHS's ORP grants are authorized under Section 509 of the Public Health Service Act, as amended.

<sup>7</sup>GAO, *Federal Grants: Improvements Needed in Oversight and Accountability Processes*, [GAO-11-773T](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 23, 2011).

<sup>8</sup>GAO, *Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue*, [GAO-11-318SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2011), and *2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue*, [GAO-12-342SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012).

<sup>9</sup>GAO, *Justice Grant Programs: DOJ Should Do More to Reduce the Risk of Unnecessary Duplication and Enhance Program Assessment*, [GAO-12-517](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 12, 2012).

<sup>10</sup>The actions we suggested that would help address this issue are discussed later in this report, along with the agency's position.

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have listed grant management or grant accountability among their respective departments' top 10 management challenges from at least 2007 through 2011. The DOJ Inspector General has also included detention and incarceration on its list since 2006.

Given the importance of inmate rehabilitation and the variety of federal initiatives, including grants, to facilitate successful reentry, you asked us to review the role various federal agencies play in helping to reduce recidivism, and what agencies know about the effectiveness of the programs they administer. Specifically, this report addresses the following questions (1) To what extent is there fragmentation across the federal grant programs that exist to support inmates' reentry into society, and to what extent do these grant programs overlap or duplicate? (2) What coordination efforts have federal grant-making agencies taken, if any, to prevent unnecessary duplication and share information on promising reentry approaches? (3) To what extent do federal grant-making agencies measure grantees' effectiveness in reducing recidivism?

Using the framework established in our prior work addressing overlap, fragmentation, and duplication, we use the following definitions for analysis of reentry grant programs:

- Fragmentation: when more than one federal agency (or more than one organization within an agency) is involved in the same broad area of national interest.
- Overlap: when programs have similar goals, devise similar strategies and activities to achieve those goals, or target similar users. Overlap may result from statutory or other limitations beyond an agency's control.
- Duplication: when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries. When granting agencies do not identify overlap, assess its impact, or coordinate their activities in acknowledgment of the overlap, there is a heightened risk of unnecessary duplication because one granting agency may not be knowledgeable of the ways in which its funding decision duplicates another's. At times, federal funding is leveraged by design to achieve a single purpose through multiple federal funding streams. These funding arrangements are not characterized as unnecessary duplication for purposes of this review so long as federal agencies are aware of them and have deliberately planned for grant programs to be complementary. Duplication also occurs when a single grantee uses grant funds from different federal sources to pay for the exact same expenditure.

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To address our first and second objectives, we first identified federal grant programs that supported reentry efforts in fiscal year 2011. Specifically, we identified grant programs that provided either new or continuation funds to support direct services for the adult reentry population. In order to be included in our scope, the grant program—or a grant solicitation under this program—must have either (1) specifically targeted the reentry population for its services, included the reentry population as a target population, or (2) included an element specific to reentry or corrections for which the funding could be used. We identified the grant programs meeting these criteria through key word searches in federal databases—the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA), Grants.gov, and USASpending.gov—as well as a review of agency documents.<sup>11</sup> We excluded programs that did not meet all our criteria, including programs that the reentry population may benefit from but are not specifically targeted. Utilizing the framework established in our prior work addressing fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, we then reviewed the grant solicitations issued under these grant programs to make determinations about the extent to which they were fragmented, overlapping, or duplicative.<sup>12</sup> In making these determinations, we considered, collectively, three factors: (1) which applicants were eligible for the grant programs, (2) the extent to which the reentry population is the sole target of the grant programs' services, and (3) the primary services these grant programs funded. Further, we interviewed agency officials from DOJ, Labor, and HHS to gauge their awareness of other federal reentry funds and where they were being allocated. We also interviewed officials from the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Association of State Correctional Administrators, and examined a number of federal agency and industry reports on the services needed to ensure effective

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<sup>11</sup>CFDA is a government-wide compendium of federal programs, projects, services, and activities that provide assistance or benefits to the American public. Grants.gov serves as the central grant identification and application portal for more than 1,000 federal grant programs. USASpending.gov displays data pertaining to federal grants.

<sup>12</sup>[GAO-11-318SP](#) and [GAO-12-342SP](#).

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reentry.<sup>13</sup> To determine how agencies coordinate with one another in the administration of these programs, we reviewed agency documents, such as a memorandum of understanding between DOJ and HHS, and Federal Interagency Reentry Council reports, such as the 2011 Reentry Council Accomplishment Report. In addition, we conducted interviews with officials from DOJ, Labor, and HHS, as well as the Federal Interagency Reentry Council to obtain a better understanding of what grant programs they operate and how they coordinate with one another.<sup>14</sup> We compared agencies' coordination activities with best practices for interagency collaborations.<sup>15</sup> Further, we conducted visits to three states—New York, California, and Texas. We selected these three states based on the size of each state's inmate population and the concentration of reentry grants provided in 2011 within their specific jurisdictions. We interviewed nine grantees in these states because they were located in jurisdictions that received multiple grants. While we cannot generalize the results of our interviews with these grantees to all grantees, we were able to obtain more specific information on the types of services funded with federal grants funds and the grantees' views on coordination activities. To add additional context to our audit work, during our visits to California and Texas, we also met with officials in nearby BOP facilities to discuss their reentry efforts. Our observations from these visits cannot be generalized, but our discussions with the BOP officials illuminated the challenges with which inmates are faced upon their release and the reentry programs specific prisons are providing while inmates are in their custody.

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<sup>13</sup>The Council of State Governments Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels from all branches of government. We spoke to officials on the Association of State Correctional Administrators Reentry and Community Corrections Committee, which works to identify and implement best practices in reentry and community-based programs to reduce the number of inmates returning to prison after release. We met with these organizations because of their experience with the reentry field.

<sup>14</sup>Specifically, we met with officials from DOJ's Office of Justice Programs, including the Bureau of Justice Assistance; Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management; and National Institute of Justice; DOJ's BOP, including the National Institute of Corrections; Labor's Employment and Training Administrations and Office of Grants Management; and HHS's Administration for Children and Families, National Institutes of Health, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation; and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

<sup>15</sup>GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, [GAO-06-15](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

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To analyze the extent to which DOJ, Labor, and HHS use grant monitoring and assessments to determine program effectiveness in reducing recidivism, we analyzed agency documentation, such as 2011 grant solicitations that outline grantee reporting requirements, grant management policy guidance, and the agencies' most recently available reports on grant program evaluations. We also interviewed officials from DOJ, Labor, and HHS to learn more about their grant-monitoring and evaluation practices, as well as their grant management systems. We reviewed guidance to federal agencies from the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 and best practices for interagency collaborations.<sup>16</sup> Further, during our visits, we asked grantees about their experiences in collecting recidivism data and providing performance information to the federal agencies that funded them. We also analyzed these grantees' most recent quarterly performance reports—reports that grantees are required to submit to their federal granting agency describing the ways in which they have used the grant funds and their specific accomplishments.

We conducted this performance audit from January 2012 through December 2012 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Background

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### Reentry Population Needs

The potential needs of the reentry population vary and generally cross over several areas, as shown in figure 1. For example, according to the BOP Director's statement to Congress in March 2012, most inmates need assistance with things such as job skills, vocational training, education, substance abuse treatment, and parenting skills if they are to successfully

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<sup>16</sup>Pub. L. No. 111-352, 124 Stat. 3866 (2011). The GPRA Modernization Act amends the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-62, 107 Stat. 285 (1993).

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reenter society.<sup>17</sup> Further, according to the Federal Interagency Reentry Council, about 66 percent of inmates have substance abuse or dependence issues, and 24 percent have mental illness issues. In addition, according to various Urban Institute reports on reentry, between 54 and 40 percent of former inmates were not able to obtain employment within 7 to 10 months of release.<sup>18</sup> In addition, former inmates are subject to a wide variety of legal and regulatory sanctions and restrictions, which are referred to as collateral consequences.<sup>19</sup>

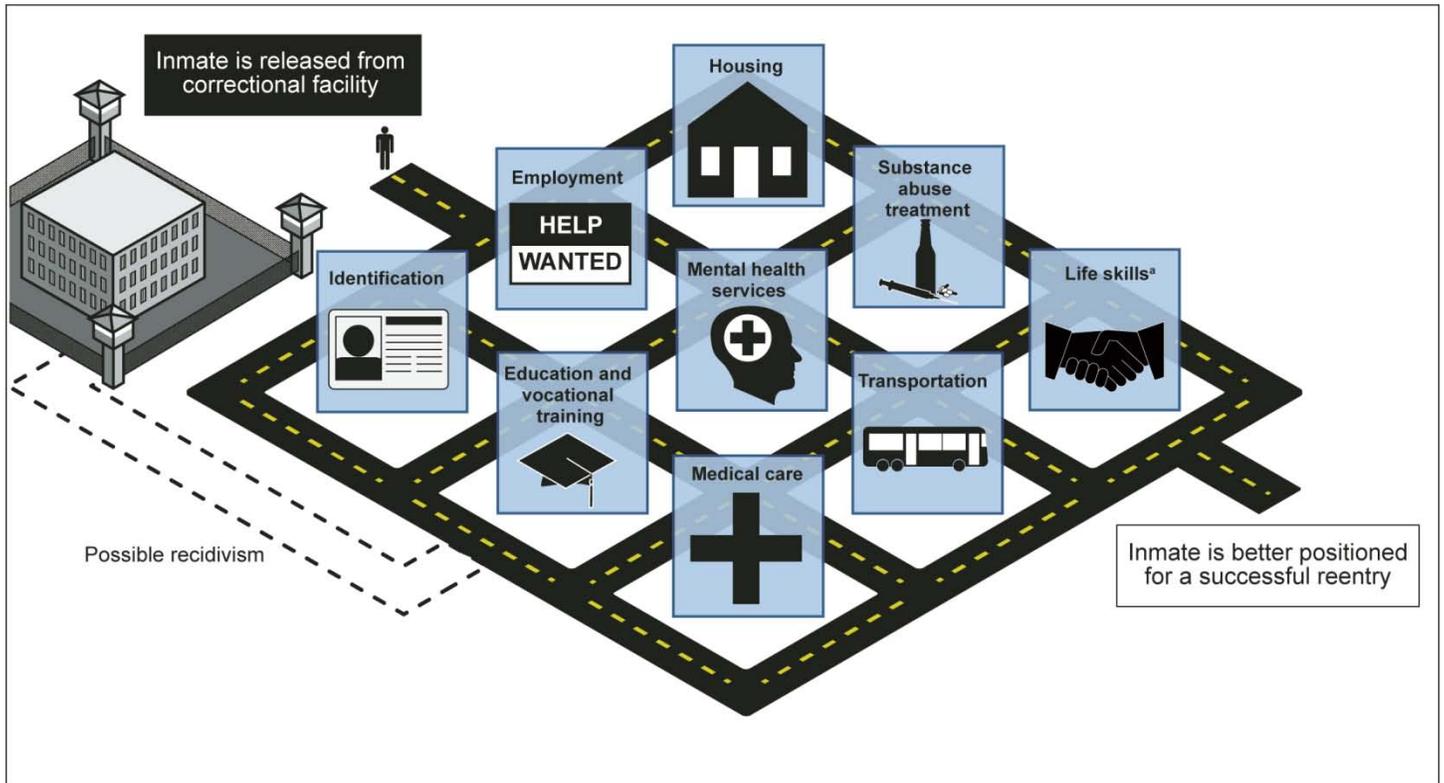
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<sup>17</sup>*Federal Bureau of Prisons FY 2013 Budget Request, Before the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee of Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, 112th Cong. 203 (2012)* (statement of Charles E. Samuels, Jr., Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons).

<sup>18</sup>Urban Institute, *Life After Prison: Tracking the Experiences of Male Prisoners Returning to Chicago, Cleveland, and Houston* (Washington, D.C.: May 2010), and *One Year Out: Tracking the Experiences of Male Prisoners Returning to Houston, Texas*, (Washington, D.C.: June 2009).

<sup>19</sup>In September 2012, DOJ's National Institute of Justice established a public website to inventory state and federal legal and regulatory sanctions and restrictions that result in collateral consequences of conviction.

**Figure 1: Potential Needs of the Reentry Population**



Source: GAO. Art Explosion (graphics).

<sup>a</sup>Life skills services are provided through mentoring and counseling and address issues such as parenting and behavioral/anger management.

BOP provides reentry services to inmates within federal prisons (see app. I for a list of services). Other federal agencies, through their reentry grant program funds, assist state and local entities in providing reentry services to the reentry population that may return to their communities.<sup>20</sup> For example, a community nonprofit organization may receive a federal grant to assist members of the reentry population in their job training skills following inmates' release from prison. Such services funded through the

<sup>20</sup>According to various research, as well as federal officials, reentry programs are essential for those former inmates who are at a high risk for recidivism; however, research on low-risk offenders shows that it can be detrimental to their reentry success to provide too much intervention.

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grant may include job placement or vocational training, such as construction.

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## Grant Program Administration and Reentry Grant History

Federal grant programs are generally created by statute and funded through appropriations. Competitive grants are announced through solicitations—or announcements to applicants of funding opportunities—and a single program may award funding through multiple solicitations. Once a grant is awarded, statutes may require that a primary grant recipient—that is, the one to whom the federal agency makes the original award—then award a portion of its grant to a subgrantee. Where statutes do not require subgranting, a grantee may voluntarily choose to award all or a portion of its funds to subgrantees. Further, federal agencies' monitoring of grantee performance is important to help ensure that grantees are meeting program and accountability requirements. Table 1 describes the phases of the federal grant life cycle and the common activities agencies engage in within each phase.

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**Table 1: Four Phases of the Federal Grant Life Cycle**

Grant phase	Common activities
Preaward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Announce the opportunity</li><li>• Receive and review applications</li></ul>
Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Notify the grantee</li><li>• Publicly announce the awarding of funds</li></ul>
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disburse payment</li><li>• Collect and review grantee progress reports</li><li>• Conduct site visits to monitor for compliance</li></ul>
Closeout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reconcile financial data and other reports</li></ul>

Source: GAO.

Federal grants to assist with reentry efforts have been in place for several years and have had a number of incarnations. Two of these former efforts are the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) and the Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI).<sup>21</sup> SVORI—a \$300 million collaborative effort among DOJ, Labor, HHS, and the Departments of Education and Housing and Urban Development—began in 2002. The goal of the SVORI grant program was to reduce recidivism among high-risk

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<sup>21</sup>Both programs were implemented under the authority granted by the reentry program codified at 42 U.S.C. § 3797w.

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offenders—those who faced multiple challenges upon returning to the community from incarceration. SVORI concluded in fiscal year 2005, but its goals continued through the PRI, which DOJ and Labor administered. The PRI grant program focused on reducing recidivism by helping former inmates find work and providing them access to other critical services in their communities. PRI concluded in fiscal year 2008 when its appropriation expired.

Since PRI's conclusion, DOJ, Labor, and HHS each have implemented grant programs that support reentry services at the state and local levels. The Second Chance Act of 2007 authorizes the Attorney General to administer federal grants to state and local government agencies, territories, or Indian tribes, or any combination thereof, in partnership with stakeholders, service providers, and nonprofit organizations to provide employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing, mentoring, and other services that can help reduce recidivism.<sup>22</sup> DOJ administers these grants through the SCA program and has awarded funding through a number of SCA solicitations.<sup>23</sup> Under the Second Chance Act of 2007 and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Labor implemented its RExO program and has awarded funding through a few RExO solicitations.<sup>24</sup> RExO is designed to strengthen communities to which the majority of former inmates return to through an employment-centered program that incorporates mentoring, job training, and other comprehensive transitional services. This program seeks to reduce recidivism by helping former inmates find work when they return to their communities. Finally, HHS developed the ORP solicitation under its Programs of Regional and National Significance grant program.<sup>25</sup> The purpose of ORP is to expand

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<sup>22</sup>Pub. L. No. 110-199, 122 Stat. 657 (2008).

<sup>23</sup>Specifically, in fiscal year 2011, DOJ issued eight solicitations that provided funding for direct services for the adult reentry population under the SCA program: (1) Adult Mentoring Grants to Non-Profit Organizations; (2) Adult Offender Reentry Program for Planning and Demonstration Projects; (3) State, Local, and Tribal Reentry Courts; (4) Adult Offenders with Co-occurring Substance Abuse and Mental Health Disorders; (5) A Family-Based Offender Substance Abuse Treatment Program; (6) Technology Careers Training Demonstration Projects for Incarcerated Adults and Juveniles; (7) The Honest Opportunity Probation with Enforcement Demonstration Field Experiment; and (8) Demonstration Field Experiment: Fostering Desistance Through Effective Supervision.

<sup>24</sup>Pub. L. No. 105-220, 112 Stat. 936.

<sup>25</sup>42 U.S.C. § 290bb-2.

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or enhance substance abuse treatment and related recovery and reentry services to former inmates returning to the community.

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### Prior Findings Related to Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication across DOJ Grant Programs

In 2010, we were directed to identify programs, agencies, offices, and initiatives with duplicative goals and activities within departments and government-wide and report annually to Congress.<sup>26</sup> In March 2011 and February 2012, we issued our first two annual reports in response to this requirement.<sup>27</sup> In our 2012 report and a subsequent follow-on report, we found that of the 253 grant solicitations that DOJ issued in fiscal year 2010, there was overlap across 10 justice areas, including corrections, recidivism, and reentry. We reported that this overlap contributed to the risk of unnecessarily duplicative grant awards for the same or similar purposes.<sup>28</sup> We also reported that DOJ generally lacked awareness of the extent to which its grant programs overlapped and thus was not positioned to minimize the risk of potential unnecessary duplication before making grant awards. In the July 2012 report that expanded on these findings, we recommended, among other things, that DOJ assess its grant programs for overlap and that DOJ require its grant applicants to report past, current, and prospective federal funding it has or plans to receive.<sup>29</sup> DOJ agreed with our recommendations and has begun to take steps to implement them, such as exploring options to carry out an assessment to determine the extent of unnecessary duplication, if any, and the risk associated with unnecessary program duplication.

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<sup>26</sup>Pub. L. No. 111-139, § 21, 124 Stat. 8, 29-30 (2010).

<sup>27</sup>[GAO-11-318SP](#) and [GAO-12-342SP](#).

<sup>28</sup>[GAO-12-517](#) and [GAO-12-342SP](#).

<sup>29</sup>[GAO-12-517](#).

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## Federal Reentry Grant Programs Are Fragmented but Minimally Overlapping, Reducing the Risk for Duplication

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### Nine Reentry Grant Programs Are Fragmented across Three Federal Agencies

DOJ, Labor, and HHS separately provided new or continuation grant funding to support direct services to the adult reentry population through nine grant programs in fiscal year 2011. Since more than one federal agency is involved in this same broad area of national interest, these programs are fragmented. As shown in table 2, these agencies awarded about \$630 million to new grantees in that year.<sup>30</sup> In some cases, the program is exclusively for reentry—as is the case with Labor’s RExO program. In other instances, such as DOJ’s Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program, grantees may use the money for reentry-related services, but they may also use it for other criminal justice-related matters, such as indigent defense.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>This amount includes funding for “new” awards—awards for grantees that are not currently receiving funds, and does not include funding for “continuation” awards—awards made to grantees to continue a program that was initially awarded funding in a prior year. Some of the grant solicitations that awarded funds in fiscal year 2011 were open to both juvenile and adult reentry populations.

<sup>31</sup>Indigent defense refers to the defense of individuals accused of a crime and unable to afford representation.

**Table 2: Fragmentation across Federal Reentry Grant Programs in Fiscal Year 2011**

Department/agency	Grant program	Number of new grantees	Funding awarded to new grantees	Number of new grantees specific to reentry	Funding for new grantees specific for reentry
Justice/Bureau of Justice Assistance	Second Chance Act	99	\$40,983,248	99	\$40,983,248
	Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners	55	\$22,817,755	N/A <sup>a</sup>	
	Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant	56	\$246,018,352	N/A <sup>a</sup>	
	Justice and Mental Health Collaboration	40	\$7,757,426	N/A <sup>a</sup>	
Labor/Employment and Training Administration	Reintegration of Ex-Offenders	25 <sup>b</sup>	\$30,227,870	25	\$30,227,870
Health and Human Services/Various Agencies	Programs of Regional and National Significance (includes the Offender Reentry Program) (Agency: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)	262	\$160,854,143	N/A <sup>c</sup>	
	Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood Grants (Agency: Administration for Children and Families)	134 <sup>d</sup>	\$121,393,729	5	\$6,744,690
	The Linkage to Life Program: Rebuilding Broken Bridges for Minority Families Impacted by HIV/AIDS (Agency: Office of the Secretary)	N/A <sup>e</sup>			
	Health Improvement for Re-entering Ex-offenders Initiative (Agency: Office of the Secretary)	N/A <sup>f</sup>			

Source: GAO analysis of information obtained from DOJ, Labor, and HHS.

<sup>a</sup>Not applicable; according to DOJ officials, they are not able to separate out grant funds provided for reentry-related services.

<sup>b</sup>Department of Labor Reintegration of Ex-Offenders funds are awarded on a program-year basis.

<sup>c</sup>Not applicable; no new grants were awarded in fiscal year 2011, only continuation funding was provided in this year. HHS provided continuation funds totaling \$16,373,000 to 41 grantees.

<sup>d</sup>This includes 14 child welfare grants issued under this grant program.

<sup>e</sup>Not applicable; no new grants were awarded in fiscal year 2011, only continuation funding was provided in this year. HHS provided continuation funds totaling \$2,840,000 to six grantees. According to HHS officials, all six grantees provide services to the reentry population, as well as other target populations. However, the funds cannot be separated out by target population.

<sup>f</sup>Not applicable; no new grants were awarded in fiscal year 2011, only continuation funding was provided in this year. HHS provided continuation funds totaling \$1,977,511 to eight grantees—all that provide services to the reentry population.

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Fragmentation of these federal grant programs is due in part to the legislative creation of the programs. For example, under the Second Chance Act of 2007, DOJ is directed to administer federal grants to provide employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing, mentoring, and other services that can help reduce recidivism.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, DOJ developed the SCA grant program, and issued a variety of solicitations under this grant program. While HHS is required to address priority substance abuse treatment needs of regional and national significance, the Secretary may carry out these activities directly or through grants or cooperative agreements, and accordingly, HHS developed the ORP solicitation.<sup>33</sup>

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### Grant Program Overlap Is Minimal and the Risk of Duplication Is Low

When considering, collectively, which applicants are eligible for the grant programs, the extent to which the reentry population is the sole target of the grant programs' services, and the primary services these grant programs fund, we found that overlap across the nine programs was minimal. Therefore, the risk of duplication—when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities, provide the same services to the same beneficiaries, or provide funding for the same purpose—is low.

With respect to applicant eligibility, because there are three primary categories of applicants—state and local governments; tribal governments; and private, nonprofit, and community-based organizations—there is some overlap in this area. Specifically, as illustrated in table 3, five of the nine grant programs extended eligibility to all three categories of applicants.<sup>34</sup> However, one allowed only state and local government applicants, and another allowed only private, nonprofit, or community-based applicants. Analyzing the data from the vantage point of the applicants themselves, state and local government agencies could apply to eight of the nine programs; tribal governments could apply to seven; and private, nonprofit, or community-based could apply to six.

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<sup>32</sup>42 U.S.C. § 3797w.

<sup>33</sup>42 U.S.C. § 290bb-2.

<sup>34</sup>Included in the five grant programs that were open to all categories of applicants is the SCA grant program; however, only one of the eight solicitations for that program in fiscal year 2011 was open to nonprofit organizations. This solicitation required grant applicants to partner with a governmental agency.

**Table 3: Variations in Applicant Eligibility across Federal Reentry Grant Programs, Fiscal Year 2011**

Department	Grant program	Eligible entity		
		Governmental agencies (state, local)	Tribal government	Private, nonprofit, or community-based organizations
Justice	Second Chance Act	X	X	X <sup>a</sup>
	Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners	X		
	Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant	X	X	
	Justice and Mental Health Collaboration	X	X	
Labor	Reintegration of Ex-Offenders			X
Health and Human Services	Programs of Regional and National Significance (includes the Offender Reentry Program)	X	X	X
	Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood Grants	X	X	X
	The Linkage to Life Program: Rebuilding Broken Bridges for Minority Families Impacted by HIV/AIDS	X	X	X
	Health Improvement for Re-entering Ex-offenders Initiative	X	X	X

Source: GAO analysis of grant solicitations.

<sup>a</sup>Only one of the eight grant solicitations issued in fiscal year 2011 for adult former inmates under the Second Chance Act was open to nongovernmental agencies.

Nevertheless, with respect to the extent to which the grant programs targeted the reentry grant population, we found greater variation and less overlap. Across the nine programs, as table 4 illustrates, three restricted, or targeted, their funds exclusively for use in assisting the reentry population. These were DOJ’s SCA program, Labor’s RExO program, and HHS’s Health Improvement for Re-entering Ex-offenders Initiative. Another five programs offered a range of solicitations, but at least one of these programs’ solicitations exclusively targeted the reentry population. For example, HHS issued a solicitation for ORP under its Programs of Regional and National Significance Program. Last, one program—DOJ’s Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program—was so broad as to encompass reentry amongst a number of other criminal justice or corrections uses. Since more than half of the programs target populations other than the reentry population, the overlap in this area is minimal.

**Table 4: Variations in Population Targets across Federal Reentry Grant Programs, Fiscal Year 2011**

Department	Grant program	Reentry population is the exclusive target of the program and all solicitations	At least one grant solicitation targets the reentry population	Corrections or criminal justice is the target but funds can be used for reentry
Justice	Second Chance Act	X		
	Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners		X	
	Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant			X
	Justice and Mental Health Collaboration		X	
Labor	Reintegration of Ex-Offenders	X		
Health and Human Services	Programs of Regional and National Significance (includes the Offender Reentry Program)		X	
	Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood Grants		X	
	The Linkage to Life Program: Rebuilding Broken Bridges for Minority Families Impacted by HIV/AIDS		X	
	Health Improvement for Re-entering Ex-offenders Initiative	X		

Source: GAO analysis of grant solicitations.

We also found greater variation, and thus less overlap, when assessing the primary services these nine grant programs fund, as shown in table 5. Across the nine programs, one grant program covered a wide range of reentry services; two programs' primary services were mental health and substance abuse; one program's primary services were employment and life, family, and parenting skills; and the remaining five programs had one or no primary use of funding. For example, DOJ's Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners primarily funded substance abuse treatment for state prisoners, and Labor's RExO program primarily funded services for employment assistance. Analyzing the data from the vantage point of the primary services, the greatest number of programs—four of the nine—focused funding primarily on substance abuse treatment, a different grouping of three programs focused its funding for health issues, another set of three focused on mental health and substance abuse treatment, and another set of three focused on employment. Because of the range in primary services that these programs fund, the overlap in this area is minimal as well.

**Table 5: Variations in Primary Services Funded across Federal Reentry Grant Programs, Fiscal Year 2011**

Department	Grant program	Primary services funded							None, general corrections that could be used for reentry
		Employment (Includes education and vocational training)	Housing	Health	Mental or behavioral health	Substance abuse	Life, family, and parenting skills	Reentry courts <sup>a</sup>	
Justice	Second Chance Act	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners					X			
	Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant								X
	Justice and Mental Health Collaboration				X	X			
Labor	Reintegration of Ex-Offenders	X							
Health and Human Services	Programs of Regional and National Significance (includes the Offender Reentry Program)				X	X			
	Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood Grants	X					X		
	The Linkage to Life Program: Rebuilding Broken Bridges for Minority Families Impacted by HIV/AIDS			X					
	Health Improvement for Re-entering Ex-offenders Initiative			X					

Source: GAO analysis of grant solicitations.

<sup>a</sup>According to the SCA solicitation for reentry courts, a reentry court is designed to leverage partnerships among courts, social services, and the community to facilitate successful reentry. Reentry courts necessitate considerable cooperation between corrections and local judiciaries, since

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they require the active involvement of community corrections agencies or parole boards in transitioning former inmates back into the community through active judicial or executive branch oversight. On its solicitation, DOJ does not define a specific model for reentry courts.

When considering the three areas together—applicant eligibility, targeting of services, and primary services funded—the overall overlap is minimal. Specifically, there were variations in the applicant eligibility standards and target populations, even when grant programs allowed spending for the provision of similar services. For example, Labor’s reentry program limits eligibility to private, nonprofit organizations that will use the funds primarily to assist current or former inmates—residing in or released from any facility—with their employment needs. In contrast, one of DOJ’s reentry programs limits eligibility to governmental entities that will use the funds primarily to assist current or former inmates—residing in or released from state, local, or tribal facilities—with their substance abuse treatment needs. As we have previously reported, having multiple agencies with varying expertise involved in delivering services can be advantageous.<sup>35</sup> For example, agencies may be better able to tailor programs to suit their specific missions and needs. We have also previously reported that overlap among grant programs may be desirable because such overlap can enable granting agencies to leverage multiple funding streams to serve a single purpose. For example, according to DOJ officials, they encourage grantees to use multiple streams of funding to fully implement their projects when local and federal funding is limited.

Further, federal agency officials from DOJ, Labor, and HHS stated that reentry can be enhanced by coinvestment—where a variety of entities in one community are receiving funds from multiple sources to assist with reentry—as these reentry programs can complement one another. We observed the benefits of this coinvestment when we interviewed grantees. For example, one of the nine grantees we interviewed received funds in 2011 from two different grant programs—ORP and RExO. These two funding streams helped the grantee provide both substance abuse treatment and employment assistance to the reentry population it served. Another grantee received a HHS Healthy Marriage Promotion and

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<sup>35</sup>GAO, *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Education: Strategic Planning Needed to Better Manage Overlapping Programs across Multiple Agencies*, [GAO-12-108](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 20, 2012); *Homelessness: Fragmentation and Overlap in Programs Highlight the Need to Identify, Assess, and Reduce Inefficiencies*, [GAO-12-491](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 10, 2012); and *Financial Literacy: Overlap of Programs Suggests There May Be Opportunities for Consolidation*, [GAO-12-588](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 23, 2012).

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Responsible Fatherhood Grant in fiscal year 2011, and also received a RExO grant in 2012. The former assisted fathers reentering the community to develop parenting, relationship, and money management skills, while the latter grant would be used to assist both male and female former inmates with obtaining employment. Further, a few grantees stressed that the reentry population had various needs and that it is important that not just one need be met, but that the full array of services be available to prevent recidivism. According to Labor officials, given the volume of ex-offenders that are released each year, competition for limited reentry assistance from service providers in their communities is stiff. Of the more than 700,000 inmates released each year, according to each agency's most recent annual data, the SCA program provided services to approximately 6,600; the RExO program provided services to about 7,500; and the ORP program provided services to about 3,300.<sup>36</sup>

Although the overlap is minimal across applicant eligibility, program targeting, and the services the grant programs fund—and the risk for duplication is therefore low—we have previously reported that the existence of overlapping grant programs is an indication that agencies should increase their awareness of where their funds are going.<sup>37</sup> We have also reported that in addition to increasing their individual awareness, granting agencies should coordinate to ensure that any resulting duplication in grant award funding is purposeful rather than unnecessary. According to DOJ officials, it is in the best interest of each agency to know where there is active overlap between existing inmate reentry projects, as this allows for coordination of service delivery and the leveraging of federal resources, if appropriate. As we discuss in the next section of this report, DOJ, Labor, and HHS have implemented a number of mechanisms, partly in recognition of the overlap that does exist, to coordinate their granting efforts. Furthermore, officials acknowledge that even more can be done to increase awareness over the flow of federal funds and manage the risk, however low it may be, of unnecessary duplication.

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<sup>36</sup>Data for the SCA and ORP program are from 2011, and data for the RExO program are from 2010—the most recent annual data available.

<sup>37</sup>[GAO-12-517](#).

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## Agencies Have Taken Steps to Coordinate Their Reentry Programs and Further Reduce the Potential for Unnecessary Duplication in Funding

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### Agencies Have Acknowledged Where Overlap Exists and Have Taken Steps to Coordinate Efforts

With acknowledgment of some overlap, DOJ, Labor, and HHS have taken a variety of steps to coordinate their reentry efforts as a means to prevent unnecessary duplication and share promising practices. The steps are consistent with best practices for interagency collaboration,<sup>38</sup> and include intra- and interagency working groups, the collective Federal Interagency Reentry Council, and a national resource center to obtain information, such as promising practices.

**Intra-agency coordination.** Recognizing some overlap across their grant programs, both DOJ and HHS developed intra-agency working groups to internally coordinate their reentry efforts. For example, DOJ launched Project Reentry in 2010 to “focus federal resources on increasing public safety and maximizing the efficient use of public safety dollars by reducing recidivism rates.” According to DOJ officials, DOJ has some of the same members on Project Reentry as it has on the Federal Interagency Reentry Council to ensure that communication and collaboration is in place between the two groups. According to DOJ officials, Project Reentry provides opportunities for DOJ components to communicate; coordinate; brainstorm; and implement projects, initiatives, and ideas focused on improving outcomes in prisoner reentry. Efforts of Project Reentry include organizing workshops on reentry issues and supporting reentry courts by developing a tool kit on reentry. According to HHS officials, in 2010, its working group developed an agency-wide inventory of HHS efforts to assist incarcerated and reentering individuals and their families. According to a HHS official from the office that

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<sup>38</sup>[GAO-06-15](#).

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coordinated the inventory efforts, the primary purpose of the inventory is to serve as a resource document so that HHS officials are aware of what projects are going on and who is working on them. Although the official stated that the working group no longer has regular meetings, members now informally coordinate and participate in the Federal Interagency Reentry Council.

**Interagency coordination.** Agency officials from DOJ, Labor, and HHS report that they have developed strong partnerships with their counterpart grant makers as a result of prior collaborative initiatives, such as SVORI and PRI. Although officials from DOJ and HHS reported that some of this grant coordination is informal and ad hoc, DOJ, Labor, and HHS have developed more formal and ongoing coordination mechanisms, as well. For example, DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance and HHS's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration first developed a memorandum of understanding in 2009 to improve formal coordination and communication in various programmatic areas, including reentry. Specifically, the agreement states that these agencies will coordinate on the development of grant solicitations, grantee conferences, and the vetting of relevant publications, among other things. Reference to this agreement is also included in subsequent ORP grant solicitations, stating that these agencies "share a mutual interest in supporting and shaping offender reentry-treatment services, as both agencies fund 'offender reentry' programs . . . ORP grantees will be expected to seek out and coordinate with any local federally-funded offender reentry initiatives including 'Second Chance Act' offender reentry programs, as appropriate." The memorandum assists these agencies in establishing a mutually reinforcing or joint strategy, consistent with best practices for interagency collaboration. Agency officials reported that their interagency coordination has encouraged personal relationships among grant-administering staff and as a result, they are in contact at various phases in the grant life cycle. For example, officials from all three agencies said they are sharing some draft grant solicitations with one another to obtain feedback before issuing them. DOJ and Labor officials stated that they share the solicitations when the subject matter is relevant and not on a routine basis with all federal agencies. DOJ officials also stated that they are sharing lists of funded grant recipients with Labor, and that they publicly announce grant award decisions.

**Federal Interagency Reentry Council.** To enhance coordination across the federal agencies involved in reentry activities, the council's working group has taken several actions since its inception in 2011. Consistent with best practices for interagency collaboration, the council has helped

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agencies to define and articulate a common outcome, establish mutually reinforcing or joint strategies, identify and address needs by leveraging resources, and agree on roles and responsibilities. Specifically, the Federal Interagency Reentry Council has

- Inventoried all major federal reentry programs, including grant programs that supported reentry services in fiscal years 2009 and 2010, and Federal Interagency Reentry Council officials stated that they continue to update the inventory to include resources available in 2011 and future years. According to HHS officials, the council modeled this effort after HHS's initiative to develop its intra-agency inventory. Further, HHS officials stated that understanding what resources are available is the first step to preventing unnecessary duplication.
- Convened research staff from 12 of its member agencies to regularly share information about reentry research and identify opportunities for research collaboration. Supporting the collaborative efforts of the council, officials from HHS, DOJ, and the Department of Commerce's Census Bureau convened a research conference in January 2012 to discuss developing and improving federal household survey measures relating to incarceration. According to a HHS official, such measures would increase knowledge of the effects of incarceration and reentry on individuals and their families.
- Working with the Office of Management and Budget, developed an interagency intranet site for the council, which allows all federal agencies to share key documents and resources. Information included on the site includes PowerPoint briefings and reentry-related recommendations.

In addition to its efforts to coordinate across federal reentry grant programs, according to member agency officials, the Federal Interagency Reentry Council has been focused on reducing the barriers that exist for the reentry population. For example, the council has taken several actions to address collateral consequences of criminal convictions—these are the laws and policies that restrict former inmates from things such as employment, welfare benefits, access to public housing, and eligibility for student loans for higher education. Such collateral penalties place substantial barriers to an individual's social and economic advancement and can challenge successful reentry. Appendix II provides a summary of the council's efforts to reduce reentry barriers and to achieve its other goals.

**The National Reentry Resource Center.** The Second Chance Act provided for the establishment of the National Reentry Resource Center,

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which was established in 2008.<sup>39</sup> DOJ partially funds the center, and under a cooperative agreement, the Council of State Governments Justice Center manages it.<sup>40</sup> The center's staff provide education, training, and technical assistance to states, tribes, territories, local governments, service providers, nonprofit organizations, and corrections institutions working on reentry issues. The National Reentry Resource Center's mission is to advance the reentry field through knowledge transfer and dissemination and to promote evidence-based best practices. Some of the activities the National Reentry Resource Center staff, along with key stakeholders, have undertaken include the development of the Reentry Services Directories, National Criminal Justice Initiatives Map, a library of reentry resources, and a website known as the What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse, among other things.

- **Reentry Service Directories.** In 2009, the National Reentry Resource Center catalogued state-led reentry efforts and launched a nationwide online directory of state reentry coordinators. Understanding the important role local governments play in reentry, in partnership with other stakeholders, the center has expanded the directories to include city- and county-led initiatives.
- **National Criminal Justice Initiatives Map.** Taking the inventory on federal reentry resources that the Federal Interagency Reentry Council assembled, the National Reentry Resource Center developed an online, interactive map that highlights major federal reentry initiatives and identifies reentry grantees in every state. The map seeks to provide a place-based catalog of national initiatives and programs designed to reduce the recidivism rates of people returning from prison, jail, and juvenile facilities. According to Federal Interagency Reentry Council and Council of State Governments Justice Center officials, this resource allows both federal staff and local stakeholders to identify reentry resources in their jurisdictions and coordinate more effectively at the local level. However, at present, the map does not include the flow of funds to subgrantees. For example, one grantee we interviewed in New York stated that its program did not provide direct services in the New York area—

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<sup>39</sup>Pub. L. No. 110-199, § 101, 122 Stat. 657, 666-667 (2008) (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 3797w).

<sup>40</sup>The National Reentry Resource Center is funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, DOJ; the Public Welfare Foundation; the Annie E. Casey Foundation; the Open Society Institute; and the Joyce Foundation.

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although the grantee is listed on the map as being a provider in New York. Rather, the grantee stated that its program provided funds to four of its affiliates in other states. Council of State Governments Justice Center officials stated that the map is based on the Federal Interagency Reentry Council's inventory and is for informational purposes. Further, Federal Interagency Reentry Council officials stated that they continually work to update the inventory, and associated map, and that these efforts mark the first step to visually depicting the general flow of federal dollars. Five of the nine grantees we interviewed reported utilizing the map and finding it very useful. For example, three grantees reported that it was useful in helping them identify other resources in their jurisdictions. Three other grantees that had not used the map stated that they think it would be useful for future use.

- **Library of reentry resources.** The web-based library includes documents of interest to state and local policymakers, community and faith-based organizations, and the reentry population. Resources are organized by topic, such as juveniles, sex offenders, substance abuse, and mental health and include publications authored by organizations, researchers, service providers, and practitioners working in the reentry field.
- **What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse.** This website—launched in 2012—offers access to research on the effectiveness of a wide variety of reentry programs and practices. According to the website, it provides a one-stop shop for practitioners and service providers seeking guidance on evidence-based reentry interventions, as well as a useful resource for researchers and others interested in reentry. The clearinghouse currently includes information on employment, housing, and mental health, and the National Reentry Resource Center has plans to add additional issue areas. Since the site was recently launched, it is too soon to assess how grantees are using this website to inform their program design and implementation.

**Other efforts to share promising practices across agencies.** In addition to some of the efforts listed above, DOJ, Labor, and HHS have, for example, held conferences or meetings for their grantees so that they may meet with one another, learn from panelists and presenters, and share information. DOJ officials stated that for the first time, in May 2012, its SCA conference was open to other federal agency reentry grantees. The grantees we interviewed stated that this type of coordination with other grantees has been, or would be, very useful, and that they learn information about other grantees through mechanisms such as conference calls and through their technical advisers. In addition, all three agencies share information on their agency websites about promising

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practices to sustain successful reentry efforts. Specifically, DOJ maintains the Crime Solutions website—[CrimeSolutions.gov](http://CrimeSolutions.gov)—which includes information to assist users with practical decision making and program implementation on specific justice-related programs, including reentry, and presents the existing evaluation research against standard criteria. The [CrimeSolutions.gov](http://CrimeSolutions.gov) and What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse are linked to each other. Further, Labor maintains a website for its RExO grantees to share information, such as stories of efforts of grantees, and HHS officials stated that they are in the process of fully implementing a similar website. Finally, the Council of State Governments Justice Center, with support from DOJ, launched a reentry program database in 2010, which highlights community-based reentry programs that self-report promising practices and policies that facilitate successful reentry.

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**Agencies Have Taken Action, or Have Actions Under Way, to Further Reduce the Risk of Unnecessary Duplication**

In addition to the steps that DOJ, Labor, and HHS have taken— independently and through the Federal Interagency Reentry Council—to coordinate reentry efforts, they have also taken, or plan to take, further action to reduce the potential that grantees are using funds from different agencies or programs for the same purpose. As our prior work at DOJ has shown, if an applicant, either as a grantee or as a subgrantee, receives multiple grant awards from overlapping programs, the risk of unnecessary duplication increases, since the applicant may receive funding from more than one source for the same purpose without federal agencies being aware that this situation exists. Such duplication may be unnecessary if, for example, the total funding received exceeds the applicant’s need, or if neither granting agency was aware of the original funding decision.<sup>41</sup> To help guard against this, HHS requires its reentry grantees to provide current or potential funding information from applicants. Officials stated that they have used this information for some grant programs to help ensure that funds will not be awarded for activities that are already supported by other agencies. Further, in response to our findings and recommendations from prior work, which specifically addressed issues of overlap and the importance of DOJ having awareness of the other sources of funds that applicants may have applied for or are receiving, DOJ has plans under way to assess all of its grant programs to determine the extent of any unnecessary duplication.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>[GAO-12-517](#).

<sup>42</sup>[GAO-12-517](#).

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Further, DOJ plans to use the results of this assessment to determine how it will require grant applicants to report on other federal funding for the same purposes that they currently receive or have recently applied for in their grant applications.<sup>43</sup> DOJ is also currently piloting such a requirement for a limited number of programs. Although Labor currently makes funding decisions without asking for information about and regularly considering other sources of an applicant's federal funding to carry out the same or similar activities, it also has plans under way to collect and incorporate this information into its future grant solicitations. Labor officials acknowledged the benefits of collecting this information in helping to further prevent duplication, and toward the end of our audit work, told us that they have held meeting with HHS officials to learn how HHS collects this information from its grantees. As of early November, 2012, Labor officials revised one of the department's RExO grant solicitations to include a requirement that prospective grantees report other federal funding sources in their applications. Revisions to this solicitation were in final review, and officials stated that once it is approved, they plan to include this requirement in all future RExO grant applications

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<sup>43</sup>Additionally, DOJ reported in September 2012 that all fiscal year 2012 solicitations issued through its Office of Justice Programs now include a clause that grantees must report to DOJ any federal funds they receive that have been, are being, or will be used, in whole or in part, for one or more of the identical cost items for which the Office of Justice Programs granted them funds for already.

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## Agencies Are Measuring Grantee Performance and Conducting Program Evaluations, but Additional Information Sharing Could Be Beneficial

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### Agencies Require Grantees to Collect Information on a Variety of Metrics to Assess Grantees' Performance

To assess individual grantee performance, DOJ, Labor, and HHS require their SCA, RExO, and ORP grantees to collect information on a variety of metrics, including those specific to recidivism.<sup>44</sup> According to DOJ's Bureau of Justice Statistics, there is no single definition of recidivism that is used universally.<sup>45</sup> Instead, recidivism is composed of multiple measures, including, rearrest, reconviction, or a return to jail or prison with or without a new sentence—all of which indicate an individual's return to the criminal justice system.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, agencies require grantees to collect information on measures such as the number of program participants who are arrested or reincarcerated. In some cases, federal agencies may include all these measures in their assessment of how well grantees are doing to help inmates successfully transition to nonprison life. In other cases, an agency may use fewer measures.

For the SCA grant program, DOJ defines recidivism as “a return to prison and/or jail with either a new conviction or as a result of a violation of the terms of supervision within 12 months of initial release.” Although DOJ officials have established a goal that SCA programs should reduce

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<sup>44</sup>Under the Second Chance Act of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-199, § 101, 122 Stat. 657, 664-667 (2008) (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 3797w), grantees are required to measure their progress toward increasing public safety by reducing rates of recidivism.

<sup>45</sup>The Bureau of Justice Statistics conducted two studies of recidivism of released prisoners that provide national estimates of the recidivism rate of prisoners in the 1980s and 1990s.

<sup>46</sup>Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994* (Washington, D.C.: 2002), and *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983* (Washington, D.C.: 1989).

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recidivism, they have not set a specific numeric target. Instead, officials stated that they compare the results individual grantees report in reducing recidivism with the average across all SCA grantees. DOJ officials stated that they are waiting for the results of an ongoing SCA program evaluation, which we discuss later in this report, so that they will have more information to determine what, if any, numerical targets would be most appropriate and what effect the SCA program has had on recidivism. Although DOJ officials have been collecting recidivism data from SCA grantees quarterly, they stated that they cannot use these data to determine the program's impact on recidivism because they have concerns with the validity and reliability of data. Specifically, according to DOJ officials, some SCA grantees experienced difficulties accessing recidivism data, and as a result, data may not accurately reflect the criminal justice outcomes of the participants after they receive reentry services. For example, a grantee that is a county jail facility may not have access to criminal justice data outside its jurisdiction, which makes it difficult to track if a participant commits another crime in a different jurisdiction.

To help address data reliability challenges, DOJ officials stated that, as of October 2012, they will require SCA grantees to report on recidivism measures once at the end of their grant period rather than every quarter, as previously required. DOJ officials told us that they believe the reduced frequency in reporting will give grantees more time to access and review data they acquire from secondary sources and result in numbers that more accurately reflect recidivism outcomes. In addition, DOJ officials stated that this change will provide DOJ staff with more time to provide SCA grantees targeted technical assistance in data collection and reporting, which they believe will help mitigate the challenge of acquiring data from secondary sources. In another step to help ensure the reliability of data DOJ collects, the department requires SCA grantees to report on the source of their data, as well as any steps taken to ensure its validity.

For the RExO grant program, Labor defines recidivism as those cases in which an individual is "re-arrested for a new crime or re-incarcerated for revocation of the parole or probation order within 1 year of their release from prison." If a participant is rearrested and subsequently released without being convicted of a new crime during that time, Labor stipulates that RExO grantees may remove these participants from the recidivism rate. Using this definition, Labor has set a target goal for its grantees that

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no more than 22 percent of all the participants a grantee serves should recidivate, which is half the national rate of recidivism at 12 months.<sup>47</sup> Labor reported to Congress as part of its fiscal year 2013 Congressional Budget Justification that RExO grantees have achieved this goal with an average of 14 percent of RExO participant's recidivating. However, Labor officials stated that recidivism can be a difficult outcome measure to track and they have had some concerns about the accuracy of data reported by grantees. As a result, according to Labor officials, they require RExO grantees to maintain documentation supporting the recidivism outcomes they report. During RExO program operations site visits, Labor officials stated that they review case files to ensure grantees are maintaining this documentation. Further, on an annual basis, Labor officials stated that they review all the performance data RExO grantees submit to ensure program outcomes have been reported for all participants. Additionally, Labor officials stated that the ongoing RExO program evaluation, discussed later in this report, will independently verify the recidivism outcomes reported by grantees.

Although HHS officials stated that the department does not collect data on recidivism from its ORP grantees because no single definition of recidivism is used universally, HHS does require ORP grantees to report on the "criminal justice status" of program participants, which includes information on their arrest or incarceration. Using its definition, HHS has set a target goal for its grantees that 95 percent of all participants will have reported having no involvement with the criminal justice system for the 30 days prior to the reporting period—or no more than 5 percent of all participants reporting involvement with the criminal justice system during this time. HHS reported to Congress in its fiscal year 2013 Congressional Budget Justification that its ORP grantees active in fiscal year 2011 achieved this goal with 4.8 percent of participants' reporting involvement with the criminal justice system during the 30 days prior to the reporting period. In contrast to Labor's requirement that RExO grantees maintain documentation supporting the recidivism outcomes they report, HHS requires ORP grantees to have their participants self-report any interaction with the criminal justice system for the 30 days prior to each reporting period. According to HHS officials, they take steps to validate data and perform periodic audits to ensure their validity. Table 6 provides

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<sup>47</sup>Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*.

an overview of the measures each agency collects from its grantees to indicate recidivism.

**Table 6: Federal Agencies' Recidivism-Related Measures**

Department	Grant program	Recidivism-related measures
Justice	Second Chance Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of participants who were arrested for a new offense</li> <li>Number of participants who were convicted of a new offense</li> <li>Number of participants who had a revocation of the terms of supervised release</li> <li>Number of participants who were reincarcerated<sup>a</sup></li> </ul>
Labor	Re-integration of Ex-Offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of participants who were rearrested for a new crime</li> <li>Number of participant reincarcerated for revocation of a parole or probation order</li> </ul>
Health and Human Services	Offender Reentry Program <sup>b</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of arrests</li> <li>Number of arrests for drug-related offenses</li> <li>Number of nights spent in jail or prison</li> </ul>

Source: GAO analysis of DOJ, Labor, and HHS data.

<sup>a</sup>Prior to fiscal year 2012, DOJ also required SCA grantees to report on the number of participants who had a technical violation of supervised release. DOJ officials stated that this measure was removed as of October 2012 because it was the most problematic for SCA grantees to report on consistently and the least likely to indicate criminal behavior.

<sup>b</sup>The Offender Reentry Program is a grant solicitation under HHS's Programs of Regional and National Significance.

In addition to recidivism-specific metrics, DOJ, Labor, and HHS also require grantees to collect and report on performance information related to other grant purposes. For example, Labor's RExO program is focused on reducing recidivism through employment assistance. Accordingly, Labor officials also require its grantees to monitor and report on the percentage of participants who enter employment, the employment retention rate, and the average earnings of program participants. Similarly, as HHS's ORP program aims to expand or enhance substance abuse treatment and related recovery, HHS officials require its grantees to monitor and report on the rate of substance abuse relapse and the number of participants who receive inpatient or outpatient treatment. Further, DOJ developed a core set of performance measures that all SCA grantees are required to report on, such as the rate of successful program completion, but it also includes metrics particular to the specific SCA solicitation. For instance, since the SCA Family-Based Prisoner Substance Abuse Treatment solicitation requires grantees to involve

families in treatment services, DOJ requires grantees to report on the number of family members who participate in services.

**Agencies Analyze Grantee Performance Data to Improve Operations but Additional Information Sharing Could Be Beneficial**

DOJ, Labor, and HHS analyze recidivism data to improve grant program operations in a variety of ways, but agencies could enhance information sharing about the methods they use to collect and analyze data to determine and report on overall program effectiveness. Agencies require their reentry program grantees to submit performance reports, at varying intervals, using their respective web-based grant management systems. According to officials from all three agencies, they use data grantees provide to determine the effectiveness of individual grantees. If data indicate a problem, officials stated that they may visit a grantee's operations in person or otherwise provide targeted technical assistance to improve program outcomes. Table 7 describes the systems each agency uses, the frequency with which grantees are required to report, and the frequency with which agencies analyze grantee data.

**Table 7: Agencies' Use of Grant Management Systems for Performance Reporting and Analysis**

Department	Grant management systems	Frequency grantees submit reports	Frequency agencies analyze data
Justice	Performance Measurement Tool (PMT) collects quantitative grantee performance information, such as data on recidivism outcomes and participant enrollment among others.	Quarterly, except recidivism data, which are required once during the grant period	Quarterly, except recidivism outcomes, which are considered once at the end of the grant period
	Grants Management System (GMS) collects narrative performance information, such as program successes and challenges over the reporting period <sup>a</sup>	Semiannually	Semiannually
Labor	Management Information System (MIS) collects quantitative information such as data on recidivism outcomes and employment rates.	Quarterly, although grantees can use MIS for case management and enter data more frequently	Weekly and quarterly
Health and Human Services	Service Accountability Improvement System (SAIS) collects quantitative information such as data on recidivism outcomes and substance abuse relapse.	Semiannually, although grantees can use SAIS for case management and enter data more frequently	Bimonthly and semiannually

Source: GAO analysis of DOJ, Labor and HHS data.

<sup>a</sup>For the semiannual reports, DOJ requires SCA grantees to provide narrative responses to seven questions: (1) What were your accomplishments within this reporting period? (2) What goals were accomplished, as they relate to your grant application? (3) What problems/barriers did you encounter, if any, within the reporting period that prevented you from reaching your goals or milestones? (4) Is there any assistance that [DOJ] can provide to address any problems/barriers identified in question #3? (5) Are you on track to fiscally and programmatically complete your program as outlined in your grant application? (6) What major activities are planned for the next 6 months? (7) Based on your knowledge of the criminal justice field, are there any innovative programs/accomplishments that you would like to share with BJA?

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The grant management systems DOJ, Labor, and HHS use to monitor grantee effectiveness have different functionalities that present different benefits to agencies and grantees in collecting and analyzing performance data to improve operations. Specifically, Labor and HHS require RExO and ORP grantees to use MIS and SAIS to submit performance reports. Although grantees are required to submit reports to Labor and HHS on a quarterly or semiannual basis, because the systems allow grantees to enter participant-level data directly, grantees may enter these data more frequently for case management purposes. In fact, both agencies expect their grantees to use the systems as case management tools. According to HHS officials, they require ORP grantees to regularly enter participant-level data and provide data analysis training so grantees can use data to inform program decisions. For instance, HHS officials stated that ORP grantees use SAIS to aggregate data to identify trends or gaps in services and then make adjustments as needed in their operations. Further, two RExO grantees we met with reported finding Labor's MIS system useful, as they could use a single system for both case management and grant-reporting purposes. In contrast, one SCA grantee we interviewed stated that it had to develop its own case management systems to track participant-level data, since DOJ requires its grantees to enter aggregate, rather than participant-level, data into DOJ's PMT.

Because RExO and ORP grantees can use MIS and SAIS to enter participant-level data and may do so on a more frequent basis, Labor and HHS officials can monitor and take action in response to those data. For instance, Labor officials use MIS to generate a weekly report that provides them with a snapshot of performance across all RExO grantees. According to officials, they can review data from the weekly report to see how many participants entered employment or who was arrested or reincarcerated. If data reveal that a particular grantee is showing a lower than expected rate of entered employment or other result indicating a program challenge, Labor officials stated that they take action to work with the grantee to identify resources and technical assistance that could improve the performance outcome. One RExO grantee we met with stated that Labor technical assistants visited its operations site about three or four times each year for the duration of its grant and provided helpful assistance that the grantee believes resulted in increased program participation. Similarly, according to HHS officials, they use SAIS on an ongoing basis to monitor performance across ORP grantees. According to program officials, if SAIS data indicate an issue, they can initiate on-site clinical or administrative technical assistance on an as-needed basis to improve a program outcome. In contrast, DOJ collects aggregate-level

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data through PMT, which DOJ officials stated that they review quarterly. In addition, for certain grant programs, DOJ employs a semiannual review process that it calls GrantStat. Officials stated that during a GrantStat review, they assess PMT performance data and other relevant information, such as grantees' semiannual narrative reports and input from DOJ's technical assistance providers. DOJ's goal during GrantStat is to determine how effective an overall grant program is in meeting its goals and which grantees may need targeted technical assistance, and in which areas, to improve their operations and participant outcomes. While DOJ has applied the GrantStat review process to several programs that it funds—as resources have permitted—officials stated that they used GrantStat specifically to assess the performance of selected SCA grantees in April and May 2011. As a result, DOJ officials stated that they had a better understanding of the quality of data that SCA grantees submit using PMT. They also stated that the assessment helped inform future funding decisions, such as which SCA grants funded in fiscal year 2009 should be continued. According to DOJ officials, planning is under way to determine the programs that will be prioritized next for GrantStat review.

Although agency officials stated that they have had discussions about the capabilities of their systems, agencies have not formally met with one another, or through the Federal Interagency Reentry Council, to discuss the relative strengths and challenges of their systems, how frequently they collect and analyze grantee performance data, and how they determine overall program effectiveness. For example, according to Labor officials, they provided an informational overview of MIS to HHS officials, and provided HHS with access to MIS so officials could test the functionality of the system. In addition, DOJ officials stated that they had informational discussions with other members of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council, particularly Labor, about their performance measurement systems. Part of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council's mission is to enhance communication, coordination, and collaboration across federal agency reentry initiatives. Further, we have previously reported on the importance of interagency coordination and information sharing across federal entities.<sup>48</sup> We have also reported on the

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<sup>48</sup>GAO, *Bureau of Prisons, Improved Evaluations and Increased Coordination Could Improve Cell Phone Detection*, [GAO-11-893](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 6, 2011), and [GAO-06-15](#).

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importance of measuring performance.<sup>49</sup> By maximizing existing information-sharing and collaborative forums, such as the one the Federal Interagency Reentry Council affords, all three agencies would have an opportunity to share information on (1) what data they collect, (2) how often they review and analyze data, and (3) what decisions their analyses inform to improve program operations and report results, as well as to consider the feasibility of adopting any promising practices as appropriate. DOJ, Labor, and HHS generally agreed that information sharing of this kind would be useful. Discussions going forward would need to consider things such as the design of each system, the strengths and limitations of the respective grant management systems vis-à-vis each agency's grant management policies and requirements, and the cost and benefits of adopting promising practices.

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### DOJ and Labor Have Commissioned Program Evaluations, and Efforts Are Ongoing to Determine Program Effectiveness in Reducing Recidivism

In addition to the program-monitoring activities that agencies have taken at the individual grantee level, DOJ and Labor have spent approximately \$22 million to commission program evaluations to assess the effectiveness of selected reentry grant programs. Program evaluations are individual systematic studies conducted periodically or on an ad hoc basis to assess how well a program is working. They are often conducted by experts external to the program, inside or outside the agency, as well as by program managers. As we have previously reported, for programs where outcomes, such as reducing recidivism, may not be achieved quickly, or where their relationship to the program is uncertain, program evaluations may be needed in addition to performance measurement, to examine the extent to which a program is achieving its objectives.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, DOJ and Labor have commissioned program evaluations, examples of which are listed below.

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<sup>49</sup>GAO, *Managing for Results: A Guide for Using the GPRA Modernization Act to Help Inform Congressional Decision Making*, [GAO-12-621SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 15, 2012), and *Agencies' Annual Performance Plans under the Results Act: An Assessment Guide to Facilitate Congressional Decisionmaking*, [GAO/GGD/AIMD-10.1.18](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 1, 1998).

<sup>50</sup>GAO, *Performance Measurement and Evaluation, Definitions and Relationships*, [GAO-11-646SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2, 2011), and *Program Evaluation, Studies Helped Agencies Measure or Explain Program Performance*, [GAO/GGD-00-204](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 29, 2000).

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- The Second Chance Act authorizes DOJ's National Institute of Justice to evaluate the effectiveness of the SCA projects funded using a methodology that generates evidence of which reentry approaches and strategies are most effective.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, the National Institute of Justice commissioned evaluations of grant programs funded under two SCA solicitations—SCA Reentry Courts and SCA Adult Demonstration. DOJ estimates that a report providing final results for the SCA Reentry Courts will be completed in summer 2015 and that a report providing interim results of the SCA Adult Demonstration program will be completed in spring 2013. DOJ officials also told us that a report with final results of the SCA Adult Demonstration program should be completed in summer 2015.
  - Labor commissioned a program evaluation of its RExO grant program with officials expecting final results in June 2014. The evaluation began in fiscal year 2008 and examines impacts on participants' post-program labor market outcomes and rates of recidivism by comparing outcomes of RExO participants with the outcomes of randomly assigned individuals who are eligible for but do not receive RExO services.

See appendix III for summary information regarding ongoing DOJ and Labor ongoing program evaluations.

The findings of these evaluations will likely add to the information agencies have to demonstrate the overall effectiveness of these programs as currently implemented in reducing recidivism. But because these evaluations are ongoing, it limits the available evidence agencies' have to demonstrate their effectiveness in reducing recidivism. Nevertheless, agencies already have the results of program evaluations that Labor and DOJ commissioned for PRI and SVORI—predecessor reentry programs to SCA and RExO that were intended to reduce recidivism. In terms of recidivism, the final PRI program evaluation published in January 2009 concluded that recidivism rates across all grantees appeared low at 1 year postrelease.<sup>52</sup> However, the report noted that findings on recidivism should be interpreted with caution because “while [Labor] required grantees to verify and document that participants

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<sup>51</sup>Pub. L. No. 110-199, § 101, 122 Stat. 657, 667 (2008) (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 3797w(n)).

<sup>52</sup>*Evaluation of the Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative*. A report prepared at the request of the Department of Labor, Jan. 13, 2009.

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were not re-arrested before entering data into MIS, site visits revealed that some grantee staff used a 'no news is good news' approach by recording that participants had not recidivated, even if they were not able to verify the outcome." The report stated that recidivism outcome data were missing for about 12 percent of PRI program participants. Additionally, as noted in the evaluation report, the study did not include a control or comparison group and therefore was not intended to assess the effectiveness of PRI at improving program outcomes. DOJ's National Institute of Justice's evaluation of the SVORI program concluded that when compared with nonprogram participants, SVORI participants showed no discernible differences on outcomes with respect to recidivism.<sup>53</sup> A subsequent report funded by DOJ concluded in February 2012 that additional research was necessary into the sequencing and effects of specific combinations of reentry services and that a longer follow-up period with program participants may be necessary to observe the positive effects of the SVORI program on participants' criminal behavior and interactions with the criminal justice system.<sup>54</sup> According to DOJ officials, the design of the ongoing SCA Adult Demonstration evaluation includes assessing the types, intensity, and quality of the services being provided over 3 years.

Further, a 2010 DOJ Inspector General report identified program deficiencies with both PRI and SVORI.<sup>55</sup> For instance, the report found that SVORI and PRI grantees were not required to identify a baseline recidivism rate that would be needed to calculate any changes in recidivism rates as a result of the program. Additionally, SVORI solicitations issued between 2002 and 2004 did not specify a time frame after release in which to track a program participant's recidivism. As noted in the Inspector General report, a time frame after release in which to track recidivism outcomes is needed so that progress can be demonstrated and outcomes compared at varying points during the

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<sup>53</sup>Pamela K. Lattimore and Christy A. Visher, *The Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI: Summary and Synthesis*. A report prepared at the request of the Department of Justice, December 2009.

<sup>54</sup>Pamela K. Lattimore and Christy A. Visher, et al. *Prisoner Reentry Services: What Worked for SVORI Evaluation Participants?* (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 2012). The Department of Justice provided federal funds for this report to be prepared.

<sup>55</sup>DOJ Office of the Inspector General, *Office of Justice Programs' Management of Its Offender Reentry Initiatives* (Washington, D.C.: July 2010).

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monitoring period. In addition, the report recommended, among other things, that agencies require reentry grantees to establish baseline recidivism rates to facilitate comparison of recidivism rates between participants of reentry programs and nonparticipants. For both the SCA and RExO reentry grant programs, DOJ and Labor have taken steps to address some of the deficiencies. For example, DOJ requires its SCA grantees to provide a baseline recidivism rate they can use later to determine program impact, if any, on recidivism. Additionally, both DOJ and Labor have specified a 12-month time frame after release from prison or jail by which to measure recidivism. Further, according to Labor officials, as a result of the deficiencies identified with the PRI and SVORI programs, the department implemented several steps, including annually reviewing data, to ensure the reliability and validity of the recidivism data that RExO grantees report.

In contrast, HHS officials stated that although they do conduct program evaluations, they have not done this for ORP because of its size compared with other HHS grant programs. According to HHS's Office of the Inspector General, HHS is the largest grant-making organization in the federal government, awarding \$370 billion in grants in fiscal year 2010.<sup>56</sup> However, HHS does permit ORP grantees to spend up to 20 percent of their grant funds on program evaluations and data collection. According to HHS officials, they collect and periodically review these evaluations and have used the findings, alongside other research, to change elements of program design. For example, officials stated that they changed the ORP solicitation to require that grantees work with correctional facilities to ensure a smoother transition and greater continuity of treatment services as an inmate transitions to community-based treatment. However, officials stated that the majority of performance data they use to analyze ORP's overall program effectiveness is gathered through the information individual grantees report using SAIS.

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## Conclusions

Given the number of federal agencies involved in reentry, the high levels of recidivism, and current resource constraints facing the federal government, it is important that federal agencies be well aware of how

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<sup>56</sup>HHS Office of the Inspector General, *Top Management and Performance Challenges Facing the Department of Health and Human Services in Fiscal Year 2011*, (Washington, D.C.: November 2011).

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their grant funds are spent and monitor grantee performance to ensure the highest return on federal investment. Accordingly, federal agencies have taken a variety of actions to enhance coordination to prevent unnecessary duplication and monitor grantees performance. These actions include developing a memorandum of understanding to improve formal coordination and communication, sharing draft grant solicitations with one another to obtain feedback before issuing them, and inventorying all major federal reentry programs. Additionally, as multiple agencies are involved in federal efforts to reduce recidivism, they have an opportunity to learn from one another about promising approaches for collecting and analyzing data and making determinations about individual grantee and overall grant program effectiveness. Given that the effect of prior reentry efforts—SVORI and PRI—on recidivism was inconclusive, effective analysis of recidivism data gathered from current reentry programs is particularly important. However, DOJ, Labor, and HHS officials have not formally shared information on the relative strengths and limitations of the respective grant management systems and their unique approaches to monitoring outcomes. By taking action to share information on how well their grantees reduce recidivism, agencies could leverage existing collaborations, such as the Federal Interagency Reentry Council, and further strengthen their program management.

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

To better utilize the performance information they collect from grantees, enhance the capacity of their respective grant management systems, and improve overall management of reentry programs designed to reduce recidivism, we recommend that the Attorney General, the Secretary of Labor, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services maximize existing information-sharing forums, such as the Federal Interagency Reentry Council, to (1) share details on how agencies collect and analyze their data, as well as how they determine program effectiveness, and (2) consider the feasibility of adapting any promising practices in the future.

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## Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to DOJ, Labor, and HHS for comment. We received written comments from each that are reproduced in appendixes IV through VI, respectively. In addition, DOJ and HHS provided technical clarifications, which we incorporated where appropriate.

DOJ concurred with the recommendation in this report. Labor and HHS did not specifically state whether they concurred with our recommendation. All three departments reported that they would

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establish a subcommittee of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council Staff Working Group in the first quarter of fiscal year 2013 to (1) share performance measures, (2) assess and monitor grant performance information collected from grantees with a goal of improving overall management of reentry programs designed to reduce recidivism, and (3) communicate best practices for improving the coordinated delivery of evidenced-based services. These proposed steps, if implemented, would address the intent of our recommendation.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Attorney General, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, selected congressional committees, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-9627 or [maurerd@gao.gov](mailto:maurerd@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix VII.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David C. Maurer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

David C. Maurer, Director  
Homeland Security and Justice Issues

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# Appendix I: The Role of the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Reentry

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According to the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), the process of reentry begins the day an inmate is incarcerated, and generally should continue after an inmate is released. BOP considers reentry to be a high priority and includes it in its mission: "The mission of the BOP is to protect society by confining offenders in the controlled environments of prisons and community-based facilities that are safe, humane, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure, and to provide inmates with a range of work and other self-improvement programs that will help them adopt a crime-free lifestyle upon their return to the community."

BOP estimated that about \$640 million of its \$6.6 billion fiscal year 2012 operating budget is dedicated to reentry activities. According to BOP officials, the estimate is based on the costs of larger programs that specifically support reentry, such as education and vocational training initiatives and drug treatment programs. But officials stated that because reentry is a process and not a specific program, some initiatives that support reentry would not be captured in this estimate. For example, at a minimum, all BOP institutions offer the General Equivalency Diploma or English as a Second Language programs and therefore BOP included the costs of these programs as part of its reentry activities budget. However, the estimate does not include BOP-sponsored activities that are relevant to reentry that may be held on more of an ad hoc basis at individual BOP institutions. As we reported in September 2012, according to BOP officials, growth in the inmate population has led to increased waiting lists for programs.<sup>1</sup> For instance, as of the end of fiscal year 2011, about 2,400 inmates in male medium security institutions participated in residential drug treatment, almost 3,000 more inmates were on the waiting list to participate, and the average wait for enrollment exceeded 3 months. Table 8 illustrates the variety of reentry-related programs BOP provides.

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<sup>1</sup>GAO, *Bureau of Prisons: Growing Inmate Crowding Negatively Affects Inmates, Staff, and Infrastructure*, [GAO-12-743](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 12, 2012).

**Table 8: Selected BOP Inmate Reentry Programs and Activities**

<b>Reentry program categories</b>	<b>Examples of BOP reentry programs/activities<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Number of correctional facilities offering the program, fiscal year 2011</b>	<b>Program participants, fiscal year 2011</b>
Drug treatment	<p>Programs include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residential Drug Abuse Treatment Program: 9- to 12-month intensive drug abuse treatment program.</li> <li>Non-Residential Drug Abuse Treatment Program: flexible program geared toward inmates with low-level substance abuse treatment needs.</li> <li>Drug Abuse Education: program for inmates with a history of drug abuse that encourages self-examination on drug abuse and the cycle of crime.</li> <li>Community Transition Drug Abuse Treatment: program supports the continuation of drug abuse treatment for inmates through their period of community transition.</li> </ul>	<p>Residential: 63                      Non-Residential : all                      Drug Abuse Education: all                      Community Drug Transition is provided at Residential Reentry Centers.</p>	<p>Residential: 18,757                      Non-Residential: 15,211                      Drug Abuse Education: 41,243                      Community Transition: 16,973</p>
Education/vocational training	<p>Programs include General Equivalency Diploma, English as a Second Language, and Adult Continuing Education (includes classes such as computer literacy and financial planning, among others).</p>	<p>All correctional facilities offer General Equivalency Diploma, English as a Second Language, and Adult Continuing Education. Certain facilities may offer additional classes or workshops to supplement the primary curriculum.</p>	<p>General Equivalency Diploma: 20,979                      English as a Second Language: 2,862                      Continuing Education: 17,946</p>
Psychology services and sex offender management	<p>Programs include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-Residential Sex Offender Management: moderate intensity program primarily for first-time sexual offenders.</li> <li>Residential Sex Offender Management: intensive program designed for sexual offenders convicted of multiple offenses.</li> <li>Challenge: residential treatment program for high-security inmates with a history of substance abuse or mental illness.</li> <li>Resolve: treatment program for female inmates with trauma-related mental illness.</li> </ul>	<p>Non-Residential Sex Offender Management: 5                      Residential Sex Offender Management: 1                      Challenge: 14                      Resolve: 10</p>	<p>Non-Residential: 455                      Residential: 112                      Challenge: 1,979                      Resolve: 2,198</p>
Residential Reentry Centers	<p>BOP contracts with Residential Reentry Centers to help facilitate an inmate's community transition. Centers provide inmates with employment counseling and job placement assistance, financial management assistance, and substance abuse treatment or counseling as well as other services, which may vary by facility.</p>	<p>All Residential Reentry Centers</p>	<p>72,494</p>

**Appendix I: The Role of the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Reentry**

<b>Reentry program categories</b>	<b>Examples of BOP reentry programs/activities<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Number of correctional facilities offering the program, fiscal year 2011</b>	<b>Program participants, fiscal year 2011</b>
Faith-based programs	<p>Programs include Life Connections and Threshold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life Connections: 18-month multifaith-based residential program that includes mentoring and community service, among other things.</li> <li>Threshold: 6- to 9-month nonresidential version of Life Connections.</li> </ul>	<p>Life Connections: 5 Threshold: 78</p>	<p>Life Connections: 394 Threshold: 757</p>
Release preparation program	Program includes classes or presentations providing employment assistance such as résumé preparation and job search strategies.	117	62,236

Source: GAO analysis of BOP documents.

<sup>a</sup>For residential programs, inmates live in a unit separate from the general BOP population. For nonresidential programs, inmates are typically housed among the general population.

Further, BOP developed a plan in 2011 to implement the Inmate Skills Development Initiative. Through this initiative, BOP intends to measure skills inmates acquired through effective programs with the goal of reducing rates of recidivism. Once fully implemented, the process will involve identifying inmate strengths and weaknesses using a standardized assessment tool, linking programs used to identify specific deficit areas, and tracking the inmates' progress on their individualized plans throughout incarceration. According to BOP officials, correctional facilities are currently utilizing an assessment tool to measure inmates' skills, and consider the initiative's plan to be a living document that they will continue to update and improve. In 2010, we reported on BOP's progress in implementing the Inmate Skills Development Initiative.<sup>2</sup> In that report, we recommended that BOP develop a plan for implementing the initiative that includes key tasks, responsibilities and timelines, as well as a comprehensive cost estimate. BOP has since taken actions to implement these recommendations.

<sup>2</sup>GAO, *Federal Bureau of Prisons: BOP Has Mechanisms in Place to Address Most Second Chance Act Requirements and Is Working to Implement an Initiative Designed to Reduce Recidivism*, [GAO-10-854R](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2010).

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# Appendix II: Federal Interagency Reentry Council Accomplishments

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The Attorney General convened the Federal Interagency Reentry Council for its first meeting on January 5, 2011. At that meeting, the council adopted a mission statement to (1) make communities safer by reducing recidivism and victimization, (2) assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive citizens, and (3) save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration. In addition, the council developed the following goals:

- identify research and evidence-based practices, policies, and programs that advance the council's mission around prisoner reentry and community safety;
- identify federal policy opportunities and barriers to improve outcomes for the reentry population;
- promote federal statutory, policy, and practice changes that focus on reducing crime and improving the well-being of formerly incarcerated individuals, their families, and communities;
- identify and support initiatives in the areas of education, employment, health, housing, faith, drug treatment, and family and community well-being that can contribute to successful outcomes for formerly incarcerated individuals;
- leverage resources across agencies that support this population in becoming productive citizens, and reducing recidivism and victimization; and
- coordinate messaging and communications about prisoner reentry and the administration's response to it.

According to the council, reentry is not only a public safety issue, but it also involves a variety of other issues, as shown in figure 2.

**Appendix II: Federal Interagency Reentry Council Accomplishments**

**Figure 2: Issues Related to Reentry**

<p><b>An employment issue</b></p> <p>Two of three men were working/financial contributors before incarceration. Incarceration substantially reduces earnings.</p>	<p><b>A public health issue</b></p> <p>Individuals released from prisons and jails represent a sizable share of the U.S. population carrying communicable diseases.</p>	<p><b>A housing issue</b></p> <p>Homelessness is associated with a higher risk for incarceration and incarceration contributes to an increased risk of homelessness.</p>	<p><b>An education issue</b></p> <p>Of the 20 fastest-growing occupations, 13 require postsecondary education. Yet, only 22 percent of prisoners have any postsecondary experience, compared with 51 percent of the general population.</p>
<p><b>A behavioral health issue</b></p> <p>Two-thirds of people in prison meet criteria for substance abuse or dependence and 24 percent have a mental illness. Few receive needed treatment while incarcerated or after returning to the community.</p>	<p><b>A family/fatherhood issue</b></p> <p>One in 28 children has a parent behind bars. One in 9 African-American children has a parent incarcerated.</p>	<p><b>A community issue</b></p> <p>A large number of incarcerated people come from—and return to—a relatively small number of already disadvantaged neighborhoods.</p>	<p><b>A juvenile justice issue</b></p> <p>Approximately 100,000 juveniles are released from custody facilities each year. Fifty percent have not completed 8th grade; 66 percent never return to school. Juvenile recidivism rates are estimated at 50-75 percent.</p>
<p><b>A veterans issue</b></p> <p>Over 200,000 veterans are incarcerated in the nation's prisons and jails. Among state prisoners, 30 percent of veterans were first-time offenders, compared with 23 percent of other state prisoners.</p>		<p><b>A tribal issue</b></p> <p>American Indian/Alaska Native people are incarcerated at higher rates than the general population. Additionally, Indian country unemployment rates average 49 percent, with a high of up to 80 percent, depending on the reservation.</p>	

Source: Federal Interagency Reentry Council.

To address this wide range of issues, at its first meeting, the council developed a number of short-term issues on which to focus. These included

- providing visibility and transparency to federal reentry programs and policies,
- coordinating and leveraging federal resources for reentry, and
- removing federal barriers to reentry.

Appendix II: Federal Interagency Reentry Council Accomplishments

Council working group members, who currently represent 20 federal agencies, reported in 2011 and 2012 accomplishing several activities to achieve these short-term goals, some of which are highlighted in table 9.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 9: Federal Interagency Reentry Council Accomplishments**

Short-term goals	Accomplishments
Providing visibility and transparency to federal reentry programs and policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reentry public education materials.</b> Council agencies developed and disseminated a set of public education materials, including the Reentry Council Overview, and the Reentry MythBusters series. Reentry MythBusters are fact sheets designed to clarify existing federal policies that affect formerly incarcerated individuals and their families in areas such as public housing, access to benefits, parental rights, employer incentives, and more.</li> <li>• <b>Website.</b> Council agencies launched a website, which is housed within the Department of Justice-funded National Reentry Resource Center. The website provides public access to materials, activities, agency contacts, an interactive map of federal reentry resources, and a broad set of informational resources including the What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse.</li> <li>• <b>Leadership and visibility.</b> Leaders and staff from many of the council agencies highlighted reentry in speeches, meetings, congressional briefings, and testimonies in Washington, D.C. and around the country. They also held reentry-focused events and met with key stakeholder organizations, including the major state, city, and county associations; faith-based groups; research and policy organizations; foundations; advocates; and others. Council agencies have also contributed to recent statewide Reentry Summits.</li> </ul>
Coordinating and leveraging federal resources for reentry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Federal reentry inventory.</b> Council agencies inventoried the major federal reentry resources going to states and localities. The National Reentry Resource Center then developed an interactive map that describes the major federal reentry initiatives and identifies active reentry grants in every state and by each federal agency.</li> <li>• <b>Intranet site.</b> The Office of Management and Budget developed an interagency intranet site for the council, which allows all agencies to share material in one place.</li> <li>• <b>Collaborative reentry solicitations.</b> Several agencies have collaborated to (1) develop new solicitations that reflect the reentry priorities of their agencies and/or (2) solicit input into and enhance joint planning for their existing funding streams.</li> <li>• <b>Reentry Researcher Network.</b> Council agencies convened research staff from 12 federal agencies to share information about reentry research and identify opportunities for collaboration. The reentry researcher network is developing an inventory of reentry research under way and is hosting a series of research briefings</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>Agencies include the Department of Justice, Department of Interior, Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Education, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Social Security Administration, Domestic Policy Council, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Office of Personnel Management, Office of Management and Budget, Internal Revenue Service, Federal Trade Commission, Interagency Council on Homelessness, Small Business Administration, and Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency.

**Appendix II: Federal Interagency Reentry Council Accomplishments**

Short-term goals	Accomplishments
Removing federal barriers to reentry	<p>on agency-funded projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National Reentry Conference.</b> The Department of Justice-funded conference expanded its 2012 national conference of Second Chance grantees to include grantees from other federal agencies.</li> <li>• <b>Women and reentry.</b> The Department of Health and Human Services convened a conference focused exclusively on the reentry needs of women.</li> <li>• <b>Reentry Policy Guidance and Toolkit for U.S. Attorneys.</b> The Department of Justice issued new guidance about U.S. Attorney involvement in reentry efforts. The Department of Justice also developed a Reentry Toolkit for U.S. Attorneys, who are increasingly engaging in reentry efforts as part of their antiviolence strategies.</li> <li>• <b>Federal Inter-branch Reentry Focus.</b> The Department of Justice convened the U.S. Sentencing Commission, Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the Federal Judicial Center, and Bureau of Prisons to share information and consider coordinated reentry strategies for the federal criminal justice population.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reducing housing barriers and homelessness.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Housing and Urban Development Secretary and Assistant Secretary sent a letter to executive directors of public housing authorities explaining current federal regulations and informing local public housing authorities that in many circumstances, formerly incarcerated people who have served their time should not be denied that access. Stating that “people who have paid their debt to society deserve the opportunity to become productive citizens and caring parents, to set the past aside and embrace the future. Part of that support means helping former inmates gain access to one of the most fundamental building blocks of a stable life—a place to live.”</li> <li>• The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness published <i>Searching Out Solutions: Constructive Alternatives to Criminalization</i>, which focuses, in part, on effective housing strategies for the reentry population.<sup>a</sup></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Collateral consequences.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Attorney General wrote to state attorneys general asking them to review the collateral consequences of criminal convictions in their states and consider eliminating those that prevent reentering individuals from becoming productive members of their communities.</li> <li>• The Department of Justice is leading a multiagency effort to modify or eliminate federal regulations that may impose unnecessary collateral consequences on individuals with criminal records.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Federal barriers to employment.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An interagency working group identified critical opportunities for reducing federal barriers to employment. It developed an action plan that includes a broad set of strategies to promote model policies; enhance existing training, enforcement, and compliance monitoring authorities in this area; create public education materials; and increase companion services to help remove barriers to reentry.</li> <li>• The Secretary of Labor hosted a Roundtable on Workforce Development and Employment Strategies for people with criminal records.</li> <li>• The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission held a meeting examining private and government employers’ use of arrest and conviction records in employment, the applicable legal standards, and best practices of employers.</li> <li>• The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission updated enforcement guidance on the use of arrest and conviction records in employment decisions. The revised guidance calls for employers to assess applicants on an individual</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Appendix II: Federal Interagency Reentry  
Council Accomplishments**

Short-term goals	Accomplishments
	<p>basis rather than uniformly excluding those with criminal records from consideration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Labor finalized and distributed guidance to the public workforce system regarding employer job postings that contain hiring exclusions/restrictions based on criminal history.</li> <li>• The Office of Personnel Management is considering revising federal hiring practices to ensure that individuals with criminal records are not unnecessarily deterred from pursuing federal job opportunities.</li> <li>• <b>Access to federal benefits and treatment.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An interagency working group developed an action plan designed to improve access to federal benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, food assistance, veterans, Social Security, and others that can help stabilize the reentry population, and by extension their families, after release. The action plan includes concrete coordination, training, and public education opportunities that will improve access by clarifying policies; increasing communications across agencies at the federal, regional, and state levels; and providing information and tools to direct service providers.</li> <li>• The Department of Veterans Affairs issued a policy change in April that expands eligibility for its health care to include individuals in community-based settings.</li> <li>• The Department of Veterans Affairs revised its administrative policy limiting its prison outreach to the 6 months prior to a veteran's release. The revised policy will allow assessment and release planning with incarcerated veterans to begin earlier, thus enhancing the odds of successful reentry and reintegration.</li> <li>• The Department of Agriculture also surveyed its nationwide partners and their local affiliates to learn more about nutrition assistance services currently being provided and to build on promising practices in promoting benefit access to the reentry population. Department of Agriculture officials will research effective programs that collect information needed to apply prior to release, ensure that individuals have appropriate identification upon release, and conduct prerelease outreach on the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program,</li> <li>• The Social Security Administration is continuing to work with corrections officials to establish prerelease agreements for Social Security benefits and memorandums of understanding for replacement Social Security cards.</li> <li>• The Department of Health and Human Services is assisting the field in understanding how to improve access to health care and treatment for the returning population, including funding a pilot project with the Department of Justice's National Institute of Corrections to evaluate early access to Medicaid as a reentry strategy, and providing information about the Affordable Care Act and how its provisions might affect vulnerable populations, such as the reentry population.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Child support issues for incarcerated parents.</b> As part of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Child Support Enforcement is spearheading a subcommittee to identify child support barriers to reentry, to build new partnerships and enhance existing partnerships, and to coordinate and leverage resources for child support and reentry.</li> <li>• <b>Tax education products.</b> The Internal Revenue Service created new informational publications in English and Spanish that provide information on federal tax responsibilities, tax credits, and tax benefits and other information for the formerly incarcerated and consolidated this information on its designated Prisoner-Reentry Program webpage.</li> </ul>

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**Appendix II: Federal Interagency Reentry  
Council Accomplishments**

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**Short-term goals**

**Accomplishments**

- **Higher education policy.** The Department of Education engaged agency partners, internal stakeholders, and external advocacy groups to consider recent research on the now-widespread use of criminal background checks in the college admissions process.

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Source: GAO analysis of Federal Interagency Reentry Council documents.

<sup>8</sup>United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Searching Out Solutions: Constructive Alternatives to the Criminalization of Homelessness* (Washington, D.C.: 2012).

# Appendix III: Summary of Ongoing Agency Reentry Program Evaluations

Table 10 provides summary information about the Department of Justice and Department of Labor Second Chance Act (SCA) and Re-integration of Ex-offenders (RExO) evaluations of grant programs that support adult reentry services.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 10: DOJ and Labor Reentry Grant Program Evaluations**

Evaluation	Agency	Cost	Length	Description	Results Expected
SCA Evaluation of Honest Opportunity Probation with Enforcement Demonstration Field Experiment	DOJ National Institute of Justice	\$2,499,944	42 months	Multisite evaluation to include a process evaluation to document the changes necessary to implement the program, an outcome evaluation to determine the program's impact on offender recidivism and probation compliance, and a cost-effectiveness study to assess the programmatic costs and any potential savings achieved through reduced probation revocations.	March 2015

<sup>1</sup>There are multiple forms of evaluation studies including (1) process or implementation evaluation, which assesses the extent to which a program is operating as it was intended. It typically assesses program activities' conformance to statutory and regulatory requirements, program design, and professional standards or customer expectations; (2) outcome evaluation, which assesses the extent to which a program achieves its outcome-oriented objectives. It focuses on outputs and outcomes (including unintended effects) to judge program effectiveness but may also assess program process to understand how outcomes are produced; (3) impact evaluation, which is a form of outcome evaluation that assesses the net effect of a program by comparing program outcomes with an estimate of what would have happened in the absence of the program. This form of evaluation is employed when external factors are known to influence the program's outcomes, in order to isolate the program's contribution to achievement of its objectives; (4) cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis, which are analyses that compare a program's outputs or outcomes with the costs (resources expended) to produce them. When applied to existing programs, they are also considered a form of program evaluation. Cost-effectiveness analysis assesses the cost of meeting a single goal or objective and can be used to identify the least costly alternative for meeting that goal. Cost-benefit analysis aims to identify all relevant costs and benefits, usually expressed in dollar terms.

**Appendix III: Summary of Ongoing Agency  
Reentry Program Evaluations**

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Results Expected</b>
SCA Reentry Court Evaluation	National Institute of Justice	\$2,988,850	53 months	Multisite evaluation of the program to include a process evaluation to document and compare program models and implementation. An impact evaluation will examine rearrests, reconvictions, violations, and returns to incarceration using pre- and post-archival data and data from interviews and drug tests in select sites. Cost-benefit analyses will calculate avoided public costs by comparing program interventions with "business-as-usual" conditions.	Summer 2015
SCA Adult Demonstration Projects Evaluation	National Institute of Justice	\$3,656,357	53 months	Evaluation of a subsample of 15 SCA adult demonstration sites funded by DOJ in 2009. The evaluation will include impact, process, and outcome analyses and cost assessments of reentry services provided by the sites.	Summer 2015 (interim results in spring 2013) <sup>a</sup>
SCA Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects Evaluation	National Institute of Justice	\$2,934,589	39 months	The evaluation will include a process, outcome, and cost evaluation of eight programs that were funded in fiscal years 2010 and 2011. The evaluation will study the programs to determine whether they achieved the primary goals of reducing recidivism and increasing public safety, as well as other goals, including increased employment and education opportunities, reduced violations of conditions of release, increased payment of child support, increased housing opportunities, reduced drug and alcohol abuse, and increased access to substance abuse treatment and mental health services.	Spring 2016
SCA Evaluation of the Multisite Demonstration Field Experiment: What Works in Reentry Research	National Institute of Justice	\$3,000,000	48 months	In an effort to provide rigorous evidence of what works in reentry, the National Institute of Justice will conduct one or more experiments of promising reentry interventions, strategies, or programs. Reentering offenders will be randomly assigned to receive the experimental treatment or to receive "business-as-usual" reentry services (or some other clearly defined control treatment). The evaluation has been funded by the National Institute of Justice in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Assistance as part of the Demonstration Field Experiment program.	Winter 2016

**Appendix III: Summary of Ongoing Agency  
Reentry Program Evaluations**

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Results Expected</b>
Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Random Assignment Evaluation	Labor's Employment and Training Administration	\$6,964,569	64 months	Random assignment evaluation of a demonstration serving formerly incarcerated individuals through employment-centered programs. The impact evaluation began in fiscal year 2008 and examines impacts on participants' postprogram labor market outcomes and rates of criminal recidivism by comparing outcomes of RExO participants with the outcomes of randomly assigned individuals who are eligible for but do not receive RExO services.	June 2014

Source: GAO analysis of agency documents.

<sup>a</sup>This evaluation was originally scheduled to be completed in fall 2013. According to DOJ officials, the project was extended by 6 months to (1) allow for a 12-month post-treatment follow-up period for all SCA participants, and (2) allow grantees time to collect criminal history and administrative data for all offenders who received SCA services if the offenders' informed consent has been secured. These data will be used to create recidivism rates for the sample.

# Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Justice



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Washington, D.C. 20531

NOV 29 2012

Mr. David C. Maurer  
Director  
Homeland Security and Justice Issues  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Maurer:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled, "Inmate Reentry Programs: Enhanced Information Sharing Could Further Strengthen Coordination and Grant Management" (GAO-13-93). The U.S. Department of Justice (Department) appreciates the GAO's work in planning and conducting this review, and issuing the report.

The draft GAO report contains one Recommendation for Executive Action to the Department, which is restated in bold text below and is followed by our response.

**To better utilize the performance information they collect from grantees, enhance the capacity of their respective grant management systems, and improve overall management of reentry programs designed to reduce recidivism, we recommend that the Attorney General, the Secretary of Labor, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services maximize existing information-sharing forums, such as the Federal Interagency Reentry Council, to (a) share details on how agencies collect and analyze their data, as well as how they determine program effectiveness, and (b) consider the feasibility of adapting any promising practices in the future.**

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) agrees with the Recommendation for Executive Action. In response to this recommendation, a subcommittee of the Attorney General's Federal Interagency Reentry Council Staff Working Group, composed of key staff from components of the Departments of Justice, Labor, and Health and Human Services, which manage reentry programs, will be established in the first quarter of fiscal year 2013. This Reentry Program Management Subcommittee will meet quarterly to: 1) share performance measures; 2) assess and monitor grant performance information collected from grantees, with a goal of improving overall management of reentry programs designed to reduce recidivism; and 3) communicate best practices for improving the coordinated delivery of evidenced-based services.

If you have any questions regarding this response, you or your staff may contact  
Maureen Henneberg, Director, Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management, at  
(202) 616-3282.

Sincerely,



Mary Lou Leary  
Acting Assistant Attorney General

cc: James H. Burch, II  
Deputy Assistant Attorney General  
for Operations and Management

Denise O'Donnell  
Director  
Bureau of Justice Assistance

Dr. John Laub  
Director  
National Institute of Justice

Leigh Benda  
Chief Financial Officer

Maureen Henneberg  
Director  
Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management

Louise Duhamel, Ph.D.  
Acting Director, Audit Liaison Group  
Internal Review and Evaluation Office  
Justice Management Division

OJP Executive Secretariat  
Control Number 20121766

# Appendix V: Comments from the Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Labor

Assistant Secretary for  
Employment and Training  
Washington, D.C. 20210



NOV 30 2012

David C. Maurer  
Director  
Homeland Security and Justice  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G. Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Maurer:

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor, I want to thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) draft report entitled: "*Inmate Reentry Programs: Enhanced Information Sharing Could Further Strengthen Coordination and Grant Management*" (GAO-13-93). We were pleased to note GAO's findings that the programs administered by the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, and Labor are minimally overlapping and present a low risk of duplication. Our Department, under the leadership of Secretary Solis, is committed to assisting those re-entering society to become productive taxpaying citizens, which in turn makes our communities safer and reduces the direct and indirect costs of incarceration.

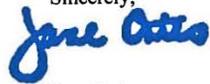
The GAO report recommends the following:

*To better utilize the performance information they collect from grantees, enhance the capacity of their respective grant management systems, and improve the overall management of reentry programs designed to reduce recidivism, we recommend that the Attorney General, the Secretary of Labor, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services maximize existing information-sharing forums, such as the Federal Interagency Council, to (a) share details on how agencies collect and analyze their data, as well as how they determine program effectiveness, and (b) consider the feasibility of adapting any promising practices in the future.*

In response to this recommendation, a subcommittee of the Attorney General's Reentry Council Staff Working Group, composed of key staff from components of the Departments of Justice, Labor, and Health and Human Services, which manage reentry programs, will be established in the first quarter of fiscal year 2013. This Reentry Program Management Subcommittee will meet quarterly to share performance measures and assess and monitor grant performance information collected from grantees, with a goal to improve overall management of reentry programs designed to reduce recidivism. The Subcommittee will share best practices to improve the coordinated delivery of evidenced-based services.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. If you would like additional information, please do not hesitate to call me at (202) 693-2700.

Sincerely,



Jane Oates  
Assistant Secretary

# Appendix VI: Comments from the Department of Health & Human Services



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Assistant Secretary for Legislation  
Washington, DC 20201

NOV 30 2012

David C. Maurer  
Director, Homeland Security and Justice  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Maurer:

Attached are comments on the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) report entitled, "Inmate Reentry Programs: Enhanced Information Sharing Could Further Strengthen Coordination and Grant Management" (GAO-13-93).

The Department appreciates the opportunity to review this report prior to publication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim R. Esquea".

Jim R. Esquea  
Assistant Secretary for Legislation

Attachment

**GENERAL COMMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS) ON THE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE'S (GAO) DRAFT REPORT ENTITLED, "INMATE REENTRY PROGRAMS: ENHANCED INFORMATION SHARING COULD FURTHER STRENGTHEN COORDINATION AND GRANT MANAGEMENT" (GAO-13-93)**

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on this report.

**GAO Recommendation**

GAO recommends that DOJ, Labor, and HHS enhance their information sharing on approaches for determining how effectively grantees reduce recidivism.

**HHS Response**

In response to this recommendation, a subcommittee of the Attorney General's Reentry Council Staff Working Group, composed of key staff from components of the Departments of Justice, Labor and Health and Human Services which manage reentry programs, will be established in the first quarter of fiscal year 2013. This Reentry Program Management Subcommittee will meet quarterly to share performance measures and assess and monitor grant performance information collected from grantees, with a goal to improve overall management of reentry programs designed to reduce recidivism. The Subcommittee will share best practices to improve the coordinated delivery of evidenced-based services.

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# Appendix VII: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

David C. Maurer, (202) 512-9627 or [maurerd@gao.gov](mailto:maurerd@gao.gov)

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## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contacts named above, Joy Booth, Assistant Director; Tracey Cross; Justin Dunleavy; David Alexander; Billy Commons, III; Katherine Davis; and Eric Hauswirth made key contributions to this report.

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