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# FY2011 Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects: Evaluability Assessment of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Healthy Environments, Loving Parents (HELP II) Program

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## ***Evaluability Assessment of the FY 2011 Bureau of Justice Assistance Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects***

### ***Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Healthy Environments, Loving Parents Program***

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## **Glossary**

BJA—Bureau of Justice Assistance  
CSH—Corporation for Supportive Housing  
EA—Evaluability Assessment  
FMC—Franklin Medical Center  
HELP—Healthy Environments, Loving Parents  
H.I.R.E.—Help In Reentry Employment  
NIJ—National Institute of Justice  
ODRC—Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction  
ORAS—Ohio Risk Assessment System  
ORAS-CST—Community Supervision Risk Assessment Tool  
ORAS-PIT—Prison Intake Tool  
ORAS-RT—Reentry Tool  
ORW—Ohio Reformatory for Women  
RTI—RTI International  
SCA—Second Chance Act  
SVORI—Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative  
TANF—Temporary Assistance for Needy Families  
TTA—Training and Technical Assistance  
UI—Urban Institute

## ***Evaluability Assessment of the FY 2011 Bureau of Justice Assistance Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects***

### ***Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Healthy Environments, Loving Parents Initiative***

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#### **Evaluability Assessment Summary**

In 2008, the Second Chance Act (SCA): Community Safety Through Recidivism Prevention was signed into law with the goal of increasing reentry programming for offenders released from state prisons and local jails. Programs funded through Title I of the SCA must create strategic, sustainable plans to facilitate the successful reentry of individuals leaving incarceration facilities. Other key requirements include collaboration among state and local criminal justice and social service systems (e.g., health, housing, child services, education, substance abuse and mental health treatment, victim services, and employment services) and data collection to measure specified performance outcomes (i.e., those related to recidivism and service provision). Further, the SCA states that program reentry plans should incorporate input from local nonprofit organizations, crime victims, and offenders' families. It also requires that grantee programs create reentry task forces—comprised of relevant agencies, service providers, nonprofit organizations, and community members—to use existing resources, collect data, and determine best practices for addressing the needs of the target population.

Consistent with the objectives of the Second Chance Act, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) funded 22 adult offender reentry demonstration grants in FY 2011. Eight FY 2011 SCA projects<sup>1</sup> were selected by BJA for this evaluability assessment (EA). These projects target adult offenders under state or local custody (and about to return to the community) for comprehensive reentry programming and services designed to promote successful reintegration and reduce recidivism. Intended to proactively address the multiple challenges facing former prisoners upon their return to the community, the grants may be used to provide an array of pre-and post-release services, including education and literacy programs, job placement, housing services, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. Risk and needs assessments, transition case planning, case management, and family involvement are key elements of grantees' SCA projects. The goals of the SCA projects are to measurably (1) increase reentry programming for returning prisoners and their families, (2) reduce recidivism and criminal involvement among program participants by 50 percent over five years, (3) reduce violations among program participants, and (4) improve reintegration outcomes, including reducing substance abuse and increasing employment and housing stability. (See Appendix A for the initiative's SCA logic model.)

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<sup>1</sup> Boston Reentry Initiative (MA); Hudson County (NJ) Community Reintegration Project; Johnson County (KS) Reentry Project; Minnesota DOC Revocation Reduction Demonstration; Missouri DOC Second Chance in Action Initiative; New Haven (CT) Reentry Initiative; Ohio DRC Healthy Environments, Loving Parents (HELP) Initiative; and Solano County (CA) Women's Reentry Achievement Program (WRAP). In March 2013, the EA study expanded to include two additional FY 2011 sites: the Beaver County (PA) ChancesR program and Palm Beach County (FL) RESTORE Initiative.

## Evaluability Assessment Objectives and Activities

Evaluability assessment is crucial in determining if a project is a candidate for meaningful evaluation (Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer 2004). At minimum, an evaluable program must have well-defined program goals, target populations, and eligibility criteria, as well as reliable and accessible performance data, and a defensible counterfactual (Barnow and The Lewin Group 1997). The current EA study, conducted by the Urban Institute (UI) in partnership with RTI International, is designed to determine what level of future evaluation activity is supportable in each of the eight<sup>2</sup> SCA sites and to identify the most appropriate research design and methods for each site. While most EAs seek to determine whether a program is evaluable, the EA study's funder, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), is interested in some level of evaluation in *all* eight adult SCA sites; therefore, EA data collection must support more nuanced evaluation recommendations than "Evaluate: Yes or No." Specifically, the EA aims to answer two questions: Is the program evaluable? And if so, how, and at what level of effort?<sup>3</sup> Design options must address both the recommended level *and* type of evaluation, including the suggested mix of process, outcome, impact, and cost analyses.

The following criteria (Barnow and The Lewin Group 1997; Wholey et al. 2004) guided EA work in the eight SCA sites.

1. **Measurable outcomes.** Program goals must be clearly stated, consistently understood by staff and partner agencies, and translatable into measurable results.
2. **Defined program components and their hypothesized relationship to outcomes.** An underlying theoretical model and logic model must indicate how program components, both in-facility and community-based elements, contribute to outcomes.
3. **Case flow and attrition.** How clients enter the program, as well as when, how, and why they discharge (either successfully or unsuccessfully) from the program must be documented to inform sample size estimates, comparison group construction, and evaluation recruitment timelines.
4. **Precise target population and eligibility criteria.** The EA must document how eligible participants are defined in each SCA site and how closely projects and their partners adhere to delineated eligibility criteria, including when and why sites deviate from established parameters. Eligibility criteria must be well-defined and consistently applied to minimize selection bias that might arise from arbitrary enrollment rules.
5. **Intake procedures.** Related to items 3 and 4, it will be critical to map how potential participants are identified and referred to the program, including the point at which this referral occurs; this will have implications for planning

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<sup>2</sup> Eight sites were selected by BJA and NIJ for study, however, one site (Johnson County, KS) declined further participation in the grant program after the EA study began. In March 2013, NIJ and BJA, in conjunction with the EA, identified two additional sites—Beaver County (PA) and Palm Beach County (FL)—for the EA. Ultimately, the EA study conducted site visits to nine projects and compiled nine site-specific EA reports. A brief memorandum describing the Johnson County program was also compiled.

<sup>3</sup> If the program is not evaluable, we will indicate what would be required to bring it in line with evaluation requirements.

random assignment (RA) procedures (i.e., what point in program operations should RA occur) should the program warrant such rigor and for identifying appropriate comparison subjects if quasi-experimental alternative designs are necessary.

6. **Ability to collect and maintain data.** An accurate management information system that includes data needed for the evaluation must be available. For impact evaluations, comparable data must exist (or be possible to create during the evaluation timeframe) for both treatment and comparison group subjects; site support for primary data collection must be evident.
7. **Presence of a clear counterfactual.** Impact evaluation designs also must consider appropriate comparison or control groups. Clearly documenting the services that are available to such individuals is therefore critical.

Likewise, the EA examined whether the program was mature and stable enough to warrant evaluation (Zedlewski and Murphy 2006); core program elements must be sufficiently fixed (static) to allow for meaningful evaluation.

The forthcoming Evaluation of the FY 2011 BJA SCA Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Project, which also will be conducted by RTI and UI, entails a research design (subject to revisions based on the Evaluability Assessment of the sites selected by BJA and NIJ for further study) that envisions (1) process/implementation evaluation in all eight sites, (2) recidivism outcome (treatment group only) or impact evaluation (treatment and comparison groups) based on administrative records (secondary data) of arrest and incarceration, (3) more intensive impact evaluation that collects primary data (three waves of interviews) for both treatment and comparison groups, and, where feasible, uses random assignment to construct treatment and control groups, and (4) two different levels of cost analysis (cost studies 1 and 2), in which the sites selected for the intensive impact evaluation would also participate in a more intensive cost study given the ability to use the primary interview data to generate more information about benefits other than recidivism outcomes.

Cognizant of this design,<sup>4</sup> EA data collection activities consisted of

- **Review of program materials and documents**, including program and partner materials such as blank intake and assessment forms, orientation materials, program handbooks, redacted transition case plans, annual reports, and program logic models to document operations.
- **Analysis of BJA aggregate performance data** including process measures, recidivism outcomes, and other reintegration indicators that may underscore program performance.

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<sup>4</sup> UI and RTI partnered on both the EA work (Focus Area 1 of the evaluation solicitation) and the full evaluation (Focus Area 2), and proposed to use the same teams for both evaluation projects to facilitate critical efficiencies (knowledge, resources, execution, celerity) while building a solid knowledge base of the sites and their capacity for evaluation to the benefit of Focus Area 2 work.



- **Pre-visit phone interviews** with SCA coordinators and project directors in each site were conducted to outline EA objectives and obtain updated project information.
- **Site visits and semi-structured interviews** with policy-level stakeholders and program staff and partners to assess capacity and readiness for evaluation across multiple EA domains and to collect supplemental information on training and technical assistance (TTA) needs. Specifically, interviews with individual stakeholders at the policy-level within the criminal justice system tracked the SCA initiative’s efforts, evolution, and adaptation over the earlier funding period, and the impact of the grant on cross-systems coordination, collaboration, and data exchange, as well as changes in policies and procedures. Semi-structured interviews with program and partner staff documented screening, assessment, case planning, transition planning, case flow, business-as-usual, and other critical program operations. Additional site visit activities included
  - **Review of program case files and administrative records** to determine data quality, verify the scope and content of client-level data routinely collected, and generate case flow and sample size estimates.
  - **Direct observation of program operations to determine logistics** that may inform subject recruitment and enrollment procedures for the full evaluation.

Drawing on the data collected from the above activities, this report (1) describes the SCA program including the implementation status of the site’s SCA program operations, activities, and characteristics, including adherence to stated policies and protocols and fidelity to the SCA reentry model, (2) examines program maturity, stability, and readiness for evaluation, (3) describes “business as usual” and identifies defensible, viable comparison groups, where possible, (4) documents site capacity for evaluation, including data availability (sources, data format, and technological capabilities) and quality to support process, outcome, impact and cost analyses, (5) examines the scope of any local evaluation efforts, and (6) concludes by presenting the range of viable study design options and evaluation recommendations.

From January 28 through January 30, 2013, the EA team visited the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) and its partners in Columbus, OH to learn about their Healthy Environments, Loving Parents (HELP) II program. The visit included meetings with ODRC administrative staff, HELP II program staff and partners as well as one observation of a core program session with HELP II participants and the collection of programmatic materials. These meetings included explanations of the HELP II program structure, services, and operations as well as ways in which HELP II has built upon ODRC’s experiences implementing a previous version of the program called HELP I. HELP I was implemented from fall 2010 through fall 2012, including one no-cost extension, while HELP II began implementation in fall 2011 and is expected to continue through fall 2013.

## Healthy Environments, Loving Parents Project Summary

The current HELP II program evolved from what is referred to locally as HELP I, which was funded under a prior SCA grant. The HELP program was first initiated by ODRC in fall 2010 (now known as HELP I), following ODRC's development and release of a reentry blueprint called the *The Ohio Plan for Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction* in 2002. Led by ODRC's Office of Policy and Offender Reentry, the blueprint called for a number of reforms within the ODRC related to reentry. The blueprint called for the following reforms.

- Developing tools to target criminogenic risk.
- Establishing community networks for reentry, such as reentry coalitions.
- Implementing evidence-based programming.
- Offering incentives for prisoners (e.g., coupons in prisons, extended visits, an increased commissary spending limit, after-hours phone privileges).
- Partnering with the University of Cincinnati to evaluate programs and to produce the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS).

To further its criminal justice system planning and reentry reforms, Ohio also worked on legislative reforms that gave the state the authority to administer ORAS and its counterpart for juveniles (the Ohio Youth Assessment System), established the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition, and created a framework to address collateral sanctions for former prisoners, such as drivers' licenses' holds due to child support arrearages.

Through the development of the blueprint and associated activities, ODRC also recognized the importance of working closely with local reentry coalitions to serve returning prisoners. Ohio has 19 fully established reentry coalitions covering 51 of Ohio's 88 counties. Each of the 19 coalitions has developed a strategic plan and partnerships with a wide range of community organizations. ODRC also formed an association of local reentry coalitions to provide technical assistance to jurisdictions with coalitions and to counties that want to create a coalition. ODRC's goal is to establish a reentry coalition in each county of the state.

Through the development of the blueprint, ODRC realized that their grant programs were gender biased, focusing mostly on issues faced by men. They believed that female prisoners should receive additional attention from ODRC since—as compared to male offenders—they often faced unique and additional reentry challenges. Additionally, the number of women and pregnant/new mothers in ODRC prisons was increasing over time. As a result, ODRC wanted to implement a program that was specific to women with minor children. To develop the program, they relied on lessons learned through participation in the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI)—specifically, the importance of addressing barriers to employment and housing. ODRC also drew on lessons learned from a prior Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grant which highlighted the provision of developing parenting skills and competencies among participants. HELP I incorporated both employment readiness and parenting classes as core program components.

## HELP I Program: 2010–12

HELP I targeted women in the Franklin Medical Center (FMC) and the Ohio Reformatory for Women (ORW) who expected to return to Franklin County and were (1) pregnant, (2) had a biological child under the age of 4, or (3) were participating in the ABC Nursery program at ORW. HELP I intended to provide mothers with parenting and job readiness classes pre-release and with case management services and housing post-release.

Under HELP I, ODRC sought to build on the community partnerships it developed through SVORI in Franklin County—the only jurisdiction believed to include all of the program partners and program elements critical to both program and participant success. Core HELP I partners included:

- **Easter Seals Disability Services**, an agency focused on child development issues.
- **Goodwill Industries International of Columbus**, an agency focused on building independence, quality of life, and work opportunities for individuals with disabilities and other vulnerabilities.
- **Amethyst, Inc.**, a treatment agency that uses supportive housing to assist women with addiction and trauma histories achieve sobriety and self-sufficiency.
- **Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)**, an agency that promotes the use of supportive housing as a platform for vulnerable populations.

Easter Seals was expected to provide pre-release parenting services, while Goodwill would offer pre-release job readiness services. Amethyst was to supply structured post-release housing services. (Amethyst had an existing partnership with ODRC through an ODRC/CSH supportive housing pilot program called Returning Home-Ohio and was expected to use some of these supportive housing units for HELP.) CSH was expected both to identify additional housing providers for HELP I women and to provide oversight of the housing units administered by Amethyst.

Approximately 20 women were enrolled in HELP I at FMC and ORW. Only a handful remained with the program following release, with approximately three mothers moving to Amethyst housing. ODRC attributes participant attrition at release to reticence in returning to Franklin County<sup>5</sup> (i.e., where the post-release services were located) and to resistance to the highly structured environment at Amethyst housing.

Stakeholders identified additional challenges with HELP I implementation.

- **Difficulty working with some community partners.** In particular, the job readiness service provider became unable or unwilling to travel into the institutions to lead the job readiness sessions and subsequently decided to end their partnership with ODRC in summer 2012. These factors led ODRC to recruit additional service providers for the program’s pre-release job readiness.
- **Participant recruitment.** ODRC found that many of the women were not appropriate for or did not want to agree to the intensive case management and

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<sup>5</sup> Although HELP II staff verify a participant’s intent to return to Franklin County, some change their mind shortly before or at release.

treatment services offered by the housing provider. As a result, ORDC recruited additional post-release housing providers.

- **Access and logistics within the two prison facilities, particularly FMC.** These challenges limited the number of pre-release class sessions that could be held. Furthermore, at both ORW and FMC, the ODRC case managers did not have program materials to provide to potential participants, hindering outreach and adversely affecting subsequent enrollments. While fliers and posters advertising the program were eventually created and provided to potential participants, the program's overall enrollment suffered as a result.

### **HELP II Program: 2011–13**

HELP II was initiated in 2011 with the intent to continue to use a collaborative strategy to address the challenges faced by women with children as they returned to the community from prison. Based on the lessons learned during HELP I and HELP II implementation in 2010 and 2011, ODRC made a number of changes to the overall HELP program<sup>6</sup> in November 2012. Modifications included strengthening the recruitment strategy, refining eligibility criteria, and restructuring core staffing and community partnerships. Specifically, under HELP II,

- **Women are recruited from ORW only.** HELP II halted recruitment from FMC due to challenges accessing inmates and providing pre-release classes.
- **Women with children under the age of 10 are now eligible.** Additionally, residence in the ABC Nursery at ORW is no longer a requirement for program participation.
- **ODRC increased program oversight via a reentry administrator** who spends more than half-time on the program.

While the HELP II program remains a partnership between ODRC and four community-based providers, two partners are new: Alvis House replaced Goodwill to provide job readiness services at ORW, and Alvis House and the Exit Program were added to the program to provide a post-release housing alternative to Amethyst's program (neither requires structured services as a condition of housing placement). The HELP II program retained partnerships with Easter Seals and Amethyst, Inc. Below is a brief profile of HELP II partners.

- **Easter Seals Disability Services**, an agency focused on child development issues. Under HELP II, Easter Seals continues to provide pre-release parenting classes to women at ORW, and may provide case management post-release.
- **Alvis House**, a transitional housing agency focused on using programming and services to foster personal responsibility and healthy lifestyles, Alvis House conducts pre-release job readiness classes for HELP II participants and provides housing support for up to six months post-release.

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<sup>6</sup> HELP I and HELP II were operating simultaneously, and ODRC made changes to HELP in general—in November 2012.

- **The Exit Program**, an agency focused on providing transitional housing and treatment services to formerly incarcerated men and women; HELP II clients are anticipated to access housing through the Exit Program.
- **Amethyst, Inc.**, a treatment agency that uses supportive housing to assist women with addition and trauma histories achieve sobriety and self-sufficiency; HELP II clients access structured, supportive housing through Amethyst.

Consistent with HELP I, participants are expected to release to Franklin County. HELP II may prioritize women assessed as moderate-to-high risk and who have about six months remaining until release, but neither of these factors is an eligibility criterion.

### **HELP II Implementation Status**

As of January 2013, not all HELP II program components were fully operational. In particular, Alvis House had not yet started the pre-release job readiness classes and the Exit Program was still finalizing its housing unit for the women. In general, the post-release component of the program was still under development, including the coordination of Easter Seals case management services with the housing providers' services.

As of January 2013, eight participants had been enrolled in HELP II and were taking parenting classes in ORW. Another two women participated in some of the pre-release classes, but were then released to the halfway house associated with the program (Alvis House<sup>7</sup>). ODRC anticipates being able to enroll a total of 30 females by March or April 2013, at which point they plan to stop enrollment in order to ensure participants have sufficient time in the community to complete the post-release housing component of the program (approximately six months) before the grant ends in September 2013. Currently, there are no plans to sustain the program should funding end or significantly reduce after September 2013.

The Franklin County Reentry Task Force, while not a direct service provider, has been advising ODRC's efforts on the program. The task force connects ODRC and HELP staff to service providers in Franklin County and informs them about new partners and resources for the reentry population in Franklin County.

ODRC and the program partners involved in HELP I and HELP II were forthcoming about its challenges with the HELP programs to-date. ODRC struggled to enroll participants in HELP I. Challenges included (1) identifying and locating eligible women in the facilities, (2) offering the requisite sessions pre-release, and (3) providing housing options in the community. ODRC used the lessons learned from HELP I and early implementation of HELP II to strengthen the design and implementation of the HELP II program that begin in fall 2012. It is important to point out that ODRC is still working to define and solidify key aspects of the HELP II program approach. Some aspects are still being developed. As a result, program operations are still in the formative stage.

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<sup>7</sup> ODRC contracts with Alvis House to serve offenders other than HELP II participants; as a result, women could be placed there although not all aspects of HELP II were yet operational or defined.

## **Program Logic**

As previously stated, Ohio's Second Chance Act program, HELP II, has undergone substantial changes to its program design and eligibility criteria since starting as HELP I in fall 2010. Many HELP II program components have not been fully implemented (e.g., pre-release employment classes), and some pre-release components are still being designed (e.g., coordination of case management services). Further, ORDC has not clearly articulated the program's short- and long-term goals, or how core interventions are tied to anticipated outcomes. Therefore, a fully coherent logic model has yet to be developed for this program.

To aid evaluation discussions, the EA team developed a basic program logic model. Appendix B portrays the EA team's initial assessment of the program logic, focused on the program inputs and activities articulated in January 2013 and projected outputs and outcomes. Indeed, it was unclear from the EA visit what the outputs of the program are outside of enrolling women in the program at ORW. Yet, we assume that HELP II proposes to connect women to post-release housing, treatment, job, and other support services, as well as reunifying them with their children.

The pre-release parenting and job readiness classes HELP II intends to offer imply that potential outcomes may include increased family support and communication, gainful employment and financial stability, and better child well-being and other positive outcomes for children.

The post-release housing component for HELP II suggests relevant outcomes may include residential stability for participants and their children, as well as reductions in recidivism.

Finally, given a focus on treatment among at least one of the HELP II housing providers, improvements in mental and physical health and increased self-sufficiency may be plausible short- or long-term outcomes for HELP II.

## **Program Operations**

The HELP II program staff largely consists of two positions: the reentry administrator and the family reentry specialist.

The reentry administrator, housed at ODRC headquarters, oversees the HELP II program. Hired in October 2011 and engaged with HELP II in October 2012, the reentry administrator closely monitors the HELP II program by serving as a liaison between the prison (ORW) and the community partners, overseeing eligibility screening processes, tracking participant case flow, and leading monthly meetings with the partners. The administrator does not provide direct services to the participants and is not involved with daily operations.

The primary HELP II staff member at the operational level is the family reentry specialist, an Easter Seals employee dedicated exclusively to the HELP II program. The current family reentry specialist joined the initiative in fall 2012 and therefore, is still relatively new to the HELP II program.

Each of the community partners provides its own staff for the HELP II program, but none of the partners have committed any full time positions to the program.

Case managers and unit administrators at ORW assist the family reentry specialist in finding potentially-eligible women in the facility and vetting their participation.

Exhibit A outlines the key characteristics of the HELP II program which are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

**Exhibit A. Healthy Environments, Loving Parents Site Characteristics**

SITE	Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (Lead agency) * Technically expansion of HELP I
ENROLLMENT and CASEFLOW	* 28 women enrolled as of January 28, 2013 * Enrollment was to conclude April 2013 to ensure six months of post-release services
TARGET POPULATION and ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	* Women who are pregnant and/or who have children under the age of 10 * Ohio Reformatory for Women * Returning to Franklin County (Columbus, OH) * Initial focus on medium or high risk on ORAS
PRE-RELEASE CORE COMPONENTS	* <i>Active Parenting Now</i> curriculum * Employment classes (Alvis House) * Case management by Easter Seals Family Reentry Specialist (weekly)
POST-RELEASE CORE COMPONENTS	* Case management * Permanent Supportive Housing (Amethyst) * Transitional Housing (Exit Program) * Halfway House (Alvis House) * Job readiness skills/case management (Alvis House)
FEASIBILITY OF RANDOMIZED/QUASI-DESIGN	NO—neither is feasible given population and case flow
LOCAL EVALUATION	NONE
PROGRAM STABILITY	No anticipated changes
IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES	* Program modifications necessary to address components that were not working as intended (e.g., replaced Goodwill with Alvis House) * New staff and partners in fall 2012 * Eligibility criteria modified in fall 2012 * Limited communication from ODRC to partners/across partners; reinitiation of monthly meetings but not all partners at the table * No structured post-release component(s)

**Target Population, Selection, and Enrollment**

HELP II enrolls female offenders who are pregnant and/or who have children under the age of 10, are sentenced in the ORW, and anticipate returning to Franklin County at release. While HELP II currently targets women assessed as moderate to high risk on the ORAS, risk level is not an eligibility requirement. Additionally, HELP II participants do not have to have custody of their children or be on post-release supervision to take advantage of the program’s services. Women convicted of sexual offenses or child abuse warrant further review by HELP II program staff, but are not automatically excluded from the program. Lastly, HELP II intends to enroll participants six months prior to their release, but this also is not a requirement; in turn, while participants may be identified as

eligible at entry to ORW, they may not begin programming until about six months prior to their release.

The program's case flow is illustrated in Exhibit B. Participants enter the program in one of two ways: 1) they may self-refer, or 2) they are identified and referred by program staff based on review of administrative data (used to verify time left to release and commitment county as a proxy for release county) and knowledge of women who have children of the requisite age. Once identified, staff engage program candidates in the following nine-step process:

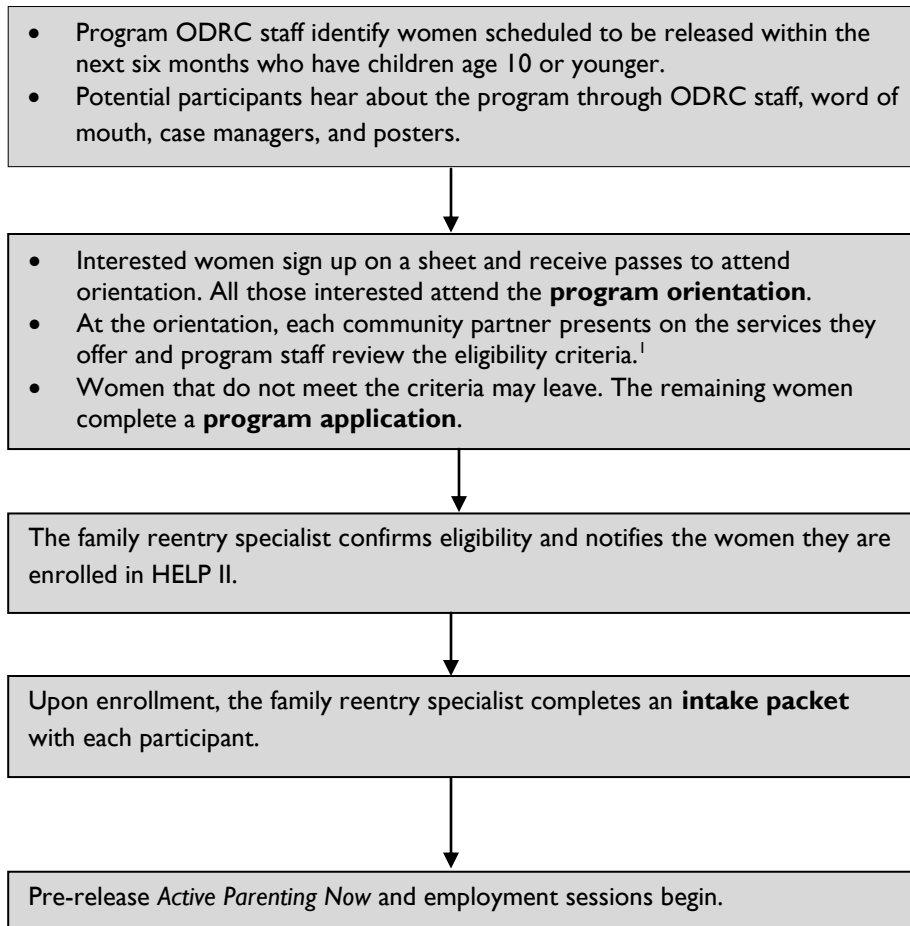
1. Women receive notice of an upcoming program orientation. The **program orientation** is the opportunity for all of the program partners to introduce themselves and to discuss their respective service components.
2. Women sign up to receive a pass (or kite) to attend the orientation. Every woman that signs up is permitted to attend the orientation.
3. During the approximately 45-minute orientation, the family reentry specialist passes out information about the program and reviews the eligibility criteria (e.g., Franklin County release, age of children); women not meeting the eligibility criteria are free to leave the orientation at this point.
4. Each community partner presents information about services and requirements for participation (e.g., conditions on housing placements).
5. Interested women then complete a **HELP II program application**.
6. Following the orientation, the family reentry specialist filters the applications to verify eligibility; the accuracy of the application information is confirmed with the ORW unit manager.
7. If deemed eligible, women are enrolled in the program by the family reentry specialist who also notifies new participants of their enrollment.
8. Upon enrollment, each woman meets with the family reentry specialists one-on-one to complete an **intake packet**. The intake packet includes questions about the women's children, mental health issues, medications, substance abuse history, and housing needs.
9. Upon completion of the intake packet, participants are referred to the group parenting sessions offered by Easter Seals.

If an interested prisoner misses the orientation, she may contact the family reentry specialist to complete an application, and be admitted into the program if she meets the eligibility criteria. Enrollment occurs on a rolling basis.

The first HELP II orientation occurred in December 2012. Approximately 50 women attended. Roughly 24 women stayed to hear from the community partners following review of the program's eligibility criteria. Of those 24, 12 completed a program application (4 women did not wish to return to Franklin County) and 8 were enrolled in HELP II and confirmed to attend the pre-release parenting and job readiness sessions in ORW.



## Exhibit B. ODRC HELP II Case Flow



### I. Eligibility criteria include:

- Female inmates who are pregnant and/or who have children under the age of 10
- Committed to the Ohio Reformatory for Women
- Returning to Franklin County (Columbus, OH)
- Release date of March/April 2013

### ***Pre-Release Processes and Core Components***

The HELP II program's core pre-release components consist of parenting skills classes and job readiness sessions. Upon program enrollment, participants attend the pre-release parenting and job readiness sessions provided by the family reentry specialist and Alvis House, respectively. The parenting curriculum is *Active Parenting Now*, an evidence-based curriculum consisting of eight sessions. The family reentry specialist leads one session per week on Thursdays. The curriculum is not progressive (e.g., the sessions do not build on each other) which allows for mothers to join the parenting course at any time (rolling enrollment). The family reentry specialist added cognitive lessons, skill building, role playing, and other evidence-based practices to the curriculum since she believes the

curriculum is too focused on parents with younger children and not as applicable to those with older children. The family reentry specialist also provides individual case management services to the participants on Tuesdays at ORW.

Alvis House provides participants with 15 hours of job readiness classes before release in a group setting. The classes are structured around its Help In Reentry Employment (H.I.R.E.) curriculum. The H.I.R.E. curriculum covers topics such as resume writing, preparing for interviews, and how to discuss one's criminal history. Alvis House also conducts career aptitude assessments and skill inventories with HELP II participants. The job readiness classes can be finished in the community post-release if participants do not receive the full 15 hours of pre-release services.

### ***Post-Release Processes and Core Components***

Core post-release services consist of housing and case management. At exit from ORW, HELP II participants can opt to live with their families, access housing through one of the program's core providers (Alvis House, the Exit Program, or Amethyst), or enter a non-affiliated housing provider in Franklin County. The HELP II program will provide up to six months of rent including assistance with a security deposit.

#### Housing

Using its permanent supportive housing model, **Amethyst** provides a structured living environment with chemical dependency programs, support groups, counseling, and case management, as well as parenting, relationship, and job readiness classes to the HELP II program participants. Women participating in HELP II who are interested in the Amethyst program will work with their ODRC case manager to file a referral. If the woman meets Amethyst's eligibility criteria—such as if she has a chemical dependency, does not have a history of arson or sexual abuse of a child, agrees to return to Franklin County, and is willing to abstain from alcohol and tobacco use—then Amethyst is notified and will then visit the woman in prison, approximately 60 days before release to complete an intake assessment. At release, Amethyst will transport the HELP II client from ORW to one of the Amethyst apartments. The woman is first enrolled in a rapid stabilization program for 90 days, and then she moves into the long-term recovery program that includes various levels of programming and after care. Amethyst encourages women to commit to spend at least year in an Amethyst apartment (she may remain up to five years). Amethyst also receives funding from ODRC under its Returning Home Ohio initiative (supportive housing pilot focused on disabled offenders at risk of homelessness) to provide housing to other DOC women—i.e., those not eligible for HELP II. A unique feature of Amethyst is that children may live with their mothers. Male children can stay until they are 16 years old and female children can stay until they are 18.

Through its Returning Home—Ohio contract with ODRC, **CSH** provides a monetary match for housing units at Amethyst that can be used by both Returning Home and HELP II participants. The number of Amethyst units funded by CSH recently increased from four to ten when ODRC awarded additional funds to CSH.

**Alvis House** is a halfway house for males and females transitioning from county, state, and federal institutions in one of five Ohio counties (Athens, Franklin, Lucas,

Montgomery, and Ross). The majority of the residents are on post-release supervision. Additionally, those individuals released on transitional control (an inmate status) must reside at an Alvis House halfway house. In Franklin County, men and women are housed in two halfway houses, according to ORAS risk level. One halfway house serves high-risk individuals and the other serves low-risk individuals on transitional control. Individuals at moderate risk are divided between the two houses. The average stay for an Alvis House resident is four months. Total capacity of the Franklin County Alvis houses is 58 beds. As of January 2013, Alvis House had served two HELP II mothers released on transitional control.

Alvis House is proposed to also provide post-release job readiness services to HELP II participants at its Community Reentry Center. Although the structure of the post-release component was not developed as of January 2013, Alvis House would like to meet with the participants twice a week for approximately an hour. The various classes offered at the Community Reentry Center are also open and free to individuals (non-HELP II participants) with a criminal history; there are no exclusionary offenses.

The **Exit (Ex-offenders in Transition) Program**, a transitional housing agency, offers limited case management and programming services. The Exit House is intended to be a shared home with multiple bedrooms for multiple families. Residents may stay for approximately 90 days, but can extend their stay by 30 days for as long as funding from ODRC allows (currently, six months). Mothers are allowed to bring up to four children (under the age of 10) with them to live at the house. As of January 2013, the Exit Program had not served any HELP II mothers.

Lastly, HELP II women served by the Exit Program will be enrolled in Jessie's World, a collection of services consisting of food stamps, services for chemical dependency and child care services. They may also take parenting classes attend support groups, and work with a case manager to plan for long-term housing and to enroll children in school, as well as receive type B day care.

### Case Management

The HELP II family reentry specialist expects to continue post-release case management services to the HELP II participants on an as-needed basis. The level and extent of the case management will be determined by participant's risk and needs and the level of case management available through the housing provider. The program has not established a schedule of case management meetings, but anticipates bi-monthly meetings at the housing locations. The family reentry specialist also plans to check in with the housing unit case managers bi-weekly to discuss participant progress. The expectation is that the family reentry specialist will be more involved with those participants not residing at one of the three housing providers.

### ***Business as Usual***

Assessment of criminogenic risks/needs using a validated assessment (the ORAS) is standard procedure across the ODRC. Offenders sentenced to the ODRC are assessed at intake using the Prison Intake Tool (ORAS-PIT) and prior to release using the reentry tool (ORAS-RT), which also informs parole recommendations. Post-release assessment

uses the Community Supervision Risk Assessment Tool (ORAS-CST). Results from the ORAS-PIT guide institutional service goals and work with an institutional case manager.

Each female offender at ORW is assigned a Corrections Program Specialist or case manager. ODRC case managers serve both HELP II participants and non-participants. ODRC case managers provide women with services related to family visitation, child support and/or child custody, transitional control release, judicial releases, and parole plans. Each ORW case manager is assigned to no more than 250 cases each (an ODRC-wide policy). Women meet with their case manager during office hours, which are typically four hours per weekday.

HELP II participants receive assistance from both the ODRC's corrections program specialists as well as the HELP II family reentry specialist. The latter provides one-on-one and group sessions to HELP II participants only.

For HELP and non-HELP participants released on supervision, Franklin County offers many resources. Each parole unit receives bus passes to distribute to ex-offenders as incentives. Franklin County also has halfway houses and a chemical dependency specialist on staff at the parole office.

Post-release supervision plans are informed by the ORAS-CST. Individuals that score low on the ORAS-CST do not require a case plan, while those with moderate and high risk scores do require a case plan. In addition to the ORAS, parole agents use other field tools and the Department Offender Tracking System to collect information on released offenders. Parole agents do not receive any background information on released offenders. Low-risk offenders must contact their parole agent at least once every three months. This contact can be a face-to-face meeting, a telephone call, or record check. Those at moderate-risk on the ORAS-CST must report twice a month with one face-to-face contact every six months. Individuals assessed as high risk are required to report weekly (i.e., two face-to-face contacts, one family contact/intervention, and one contact in the community. A home visit is considered a family contact/intervention, but only if the former prisoner is home at the time of the visit.

### ***Potential Comparison Groups***

The EA team explored the options for constructing a comparison group with program stakeholders. The program is targeting approximately 30 women for pre- and post-release services. Given the enrollment criteria (e.g., pregnant women, women with children under the age of 10, release to Franklin County), it is reasonable to assume that a comparable group of women with similar characteristics (yet not served by the program) could be identified. ODRC, however, acknowledges that there is unreliable administrative data on women with children (and their ages) and that the county of release is assumed (often, incorrectly) based on the county of admission. Consequently, the HELP II enrollment process includes talking with women about their family and expectations for release.

Therefore, administratively, it would be difficult to reliably identify a potential comparison group. The comparison group would have to be identified by talking with women about their family and expectations for release. Further, given that the HELP II program is engaging in this process for women being released to Franklin County from

ORW, another prison, and perhaps another county of release would have to be identified to recruit a comparison group. Finally, the percentage of women that enrolled following the initial orientation (8 enrollments out of 50 women, or approximately 16 percent) suggests that several dozen orientations would need to occur in ORW and another facility in order to achieve a reasonably large sample size for evaluation.

### **Training and Technical Assistance**

While ODRC does not foresee any training or technical assistance needs regarding program operations or implementation, they would like a model to guide them in sustainability planning. They have not had any contact/involvement with the Council of State Governments, the SCA training and TTA provider.

The EA team supports the ODRC's request for guidance and assistance on sustainability planning and would also suggest that TTA around evidence-based, gender-specific approaches and programming could strengthen the program.

### **Data Elements, Data Sources, Systems, and Strategies**

#### **ODRC Data**

ODRC's Research and Statistics department conducts policy analysis, program evaluations, policy statistics, bill analysis, and population projections. The department also tracks recidivism based on exit cohorts. The ODRC database does not collect information on the number or age of children upon entry to prison. Sometimes the number and age of children is collected in arrest data and included in the admissions data, but this does not occur routinely. If the department wanted to research the number of women who are potentially eligible, they would need to ask a sample of women at intake about the number of children living with them at the time of arrest. The department uses the commitment county as a proxy for the release county, which is not always accurate.

The program administers the ORAS, a gender responsive risk assessment tool, to inmates to determine risk and supervision levels. Developed in 2009 and implemented in 2011, the ORAS is given at the following decision points.

- Prior to trial (pretrial)
- When an inmate may be sentenced to probation/community control
- Prison intake
- Prior to an inmate's release from prison
- When a former prisoner begins community supervision post-release

ORAS was validated on the Ohio adult incarcerated population and is administered system-wide by probation/parole officers, case managers, court clerks, etc. Condensed versions or screeners are used at the time of prison intake/reception to screen out those individuals at low risk, and to allocate resources to those at high risk. Implementation of ORAS required extensive training and technical assistance. ODRC is currently working to develop quality assurance measures, which will take another 2 to 3 years to complete.

#### **HELP II Data**

The family reentry specialist maintains attendance sheets and an Excel database that tracks the participants' names, release dates, release plans, ORAS score/level, and

number of groups completed. The database is current from September 4, 2012 to present. The family reentry specialist highlights a participant yellow on the spreadsheet if she is not successful in completing both the pre- and post-release phases of the program. If a mother completes both the pre- and post-release components, she is highlighted pink on the spreadsheet, signaling “successful” completion. The family reentry specialist shares the Excel database with the reentry administrator. The Reentry Specialist also writes monthly activity reports for Easter Seals and the quarterly BJA progress reports. The family reentry specialist does not have access to the ORAS system.

### **Community Partners Data**

The Amethyst case managers collect participant data and case notes. Alvis House uses an Access database to track participant case notes and the number of hours served. Alvis House staff is, due to their being a contracted halfway house for ODRC, certified to administer the ORAS and can access the ORAS database. The Exit Program maintains a file for each participant, inclusive of an intake form, case management notes, sign-in sheets, and any incidence reports for infractions (if applicable). The Exit Program also reports monthly to its board of directors and completes monthly progress reports for parole/probation officers. The Exit Program also receives residents’ ORAS score, which helps assess the level of programming.

### **Local Evaluation**

ODRC is not engaged in a local evaluation of its HELP II program. There was no local evaluation of the HELP I program.

### **Support for Additional Evaluation Activities**

ODRC appears to be supportive of an independent evaluation. The department has a long history of working with evaluators and supporting their data collection efforts. The Urban Institute has recently worked with the department on an evaluation of their Returning Home—Ohio project, which used data from ODRC and other state agencies and housing organizations (including Amethyst). Ohio was also a site for the multi-site evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, which was conducted by RTI and the Urban Institute.

### **Evaluability Assessment Recommendations**

The EA research team does not recommend that HELP II become a site for the *impact evaluation* because: (1) the target number for program participation is small (projected N=30); (2) two of the critical enrollment criteria, children under 10 years old and Franklin County release, are not reliably captured in ODRC’s administrative data systems; (3) there is considerable variation within the program (e.g., the housing supports offered by HELP II vary) and the variation would be difficult to measure reliably given the small sample size; (4) there are no apparent plans to continue or sustain the program after September 2013; (5) not all of the program components are fully operational (e.g., The Exit Program is not yet taking women into their housing, the pre-release job readiness classes have not yet started); (6) case flow appears to be extremely low—efforts to recruit 50 eligible women yielded 8 participants; and (7) the program logic and

goals have not been sufficiently articulated, indicating that an impact evaluation may be premature.

However, the HELP II program is unique and relatively comprehensive. Information about outcomes would benefit the field. Thus, an *implementation/process evaluation or case study* could be conducted that may yield useful insights for criminal justice practitioners and policymakers. These findings could be disseminated as topical briefs on a variety of topics such as family reunification, family housing, family-centered case management approaches, and female reentry more broadly. In addition, an assessment of ODRC’s partnership with community-based partners may yield insights for other departments of corrections or community-based agencies considering similar partnerships in their own jurisdictions. Evaluation recommendations and considerations are summarized in Exhibit C.

**Exhibit C. Healthy Environments, Loving Parents Evaluation Recommendations**

SITE	Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (Lead agency)
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Administered by ODRC which is reentry focused</li> <li>* Added additional housing partners because participants did not want structured environment</li> <li>* Made program modifications with components that were not working as intended (e.g., replaced Goodwill with Alvis House)</li> <li>* Unique population targeted</li> </ul>
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Low case flow</li> <li>* Staff and partner changes</li> <li>* Eligibility criteria modified</li> <li>* Limited communication from ODRC to partners/across partners</li> <li>* No structured post-release component(s)</li> <li>* If funding interrupted some aspects of the program are likely to be affected.</li> </ul>
LEVEL/TYPE OF EVALUATION RECOMMENDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Case study only</li> <li>* Unique population (female offenders with young children)</li> </ul>

We expound below on the evaluation considerations outlined in Exhibit C.

- **Site strengths.** The program is being administered by ODRC, a department that is known for focusing on successful reentry outcomes. ODRC is committed to the program’s intended structure, having continued to fundraise for the program and having made program modifications when implementation fidelity was poor. Further, ODRC has been supportive of evaluations in the past. The program has the attention and support of local and state reentry task forces.
- **Weaknesses.** There is no sustainability plan. All of the program components are not yet operational. The target population/eligibility criteria significantly changed in fall 2012, meaning that a potential evaluation must focus its attention on the program implemented in fall 2012—the population of women served in previous grant years cannot be compared to those in the current grant year. The case flow into the program has been and continues to be low.
- **Feasibility of randomized or a quasi-experimental design incorporating matching or statistical controls.** Randomized evaluation design or quasi-

- experimental design does not appear feasible at this time, given the lack of administrative data on eligibility and limited case flow.
- **Case flow to support evaluation.** Enrollment into the evaluation of both treatment and comparison cases would need to follow enrollment into the program, which as mentioned, requires talking with the women about their family and release plans. Given that enrollment into the program (HELP I and HELP II) is proceeding slowly over time, it does not appear that enrollment of at least 200 women (treatment and comparison) would be possible. Further, the program proposes to serve approximately 30 women only. HELP I enrolled nearly 20 women, very few of which took part of the post-release component over more than one year. Sufficient enrollment into an evaluation, presuming the program serves more than 30 women, would take a considerable amount of time and would likely need to involve another correctional institution that may or may not be well-suited for evaluation purposes.
  - **Quality and availability of administrative data for both sample groups—treatment and comparison.** ORAS and ODRC administrative data are good and have been used for evaluation purposes in the past. The quality of case management data have not been assessed by the EA team.
  - **Concerns regarding program implementation or fidelity.** ODRC and HELP II staff are committed to implementing the program as designed and understand the importance of serving the population. The EA team has some concerns regarding implementation fidelity given that the pre-release job readiness and post-release components of the program had not yet solidified by the time of the January 2013 visit, which raises concerns as to whether the individuals identified for HELP II are getting the intended suite of program services.

Additionally, as of January 2013, ODRC has not focused on sustainability of the HELP II program. Indeed, the efforts of the reentry administrator and the HELP II program partners are focused on identifying and enrolling eligible women into the program. ODRC is interested in introducing the HELP II program to the Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition, hoping to leverage new funds and/or ask community partners to realign their current funds in support of HELP II.

## Summary

The HELP II program, through a collaborative approach with several key community partners, uses a model of case management and skills-building to assist mothers reentering the community in Franklin County, Ohio. Although case flow is a challenge, ODRC has made program modifications over time to improve service delivery. Given this assessment of the HELP II program, the EA team recommends conducting a case study of the HELP II to document program operations and the experiences of participants as a method to glean critical lessons learned that may inform the broader field of practice and provide a foundation for future research.



## References

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## **Appendix A.**

### **Second Chance Act Logic Model**

## Second Chance Act Prisoner Reentry Initiative Logic Model

**Goal(s):** Increase Public Safety and Reduce Recidivism by 50 percent over 5 years

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES	OUTCOME MEASURES	LONG TERM OUTCOMES/IMPACT*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Support of the Chief Executive officer of the state, unit of local government, territory, or Indian Tribe</li> <li>■ Extensive description of the role of state corrections departments, community corrections agencies, juvenile justice systems, and/or local jail systems – that will ensure successful reentry</li> <li>■ Extensive evidence of collaboration with state and local government agencies, as well as stakeholder groups.</li> <li>■ Analysis plan for: statutory, regulatory, rules-based, and practice-based hurdles to reintegration of offenders</li> <li>■ Target Population (TP): High-Risk Offenders</li> <li>■ Risk and Needs Assessments</li> <li>■ Reentry Task Force membership</li> <li>■ 5-year Reentry Strategic Plan</li> <li>◇ Plan to follow and track TP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop and coordinate a Reentry Task Force</li> <li>■ Administer validated assessment tools to assess the risk factors and needs of returning inmates</li> <li>■ Establish pre-release planning procedures</li> <li>■ Provide offenders with educational, literacy, and vocational services</li> <li>■ Provide substance abuse, mental health, and health treatment and services</li> <li>■ Provide coordinated supervision and comprehensive services for offenders upon release from prison or jail</li> <li>■ Connect inmates with their children and families</li> <li>■ Provide victim appropriate services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A reduction in recidivism rates for the target population</li> <li>■ Reduction in crime</li> <li>■ Increased employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of new offenders added to the TP this quarter</li> <li>Total number of TP in the initiative</li> <li>Number of TP released this quarter</li> <li>Total number of TP released since the beginning of the initiative</li> <li>Number of TP resentenced to prison with a new conviction this quarter</li> <li>Total Number of TP resentenced to prison with a new conviction since the beginning of the initiative</li> <li>Total number of crimes reported during this quarter</li> <li>Total population for the area that the TP is returning to (i.e., statewide, county, city, neighborhood)</li> <li>Number of TP who found employment this quarter</li> <li>Total Number of TP who are employed</li> <li>Number of TP who have enrolled in an educational program this quarter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase public safety</li> <li>■ Reduce Recidivism by 50 percent over 5 years</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Sustainability Plan</li> <li>◇ Plan to collect and provide data for performance measures</li> <li>■ Pre- and post-release programming</li> <li>■ Mentors</li> <li>■ Provide a 50 percent match [only 25 percent can be in-kind]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Deliver continuous and appropriate drug treatment, medical care, job training and placement, educational services, and housing opportunities</li> <li>■ Examine ways to pool resources and funding streams to promote lower recidivism rates</li> <li>■ Collect and provide data to meet performance measurement requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased education opportunities</li> <li>■ Reduction in violations of conditions of supervised release</li> <li>■ Increased payment of child support</li> <li>■ Increased housing opportunities</li> <li>■ Increased participation in substance abuse services</li> <li>■ Increased participation in mental health services</li> </ul>	<p>Total number of TP who are currently enrolled in an educational program</p> <p>Number of TP who have violated the conditions of their release this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP who have violated the conditions of their release</p> <p>Total number of TP that are required to pay child support</p> <p>Number of TP who paid their child support this quarter</p> <p>Number of target population who found housing this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP who have housing</p> <p>Number of TP who were assessed as needing substance abuse services this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP who have been assessed as needing substance abuse services</p> <p>Number of TP who enrolled in a substance abuse program this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP enrolled in a substance abuse program</p> <p>Number of TP who were assessed as needing mental health services this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP who have been assessed as needing mental health services</p> <p>Number of TP who enrolled in a mental health program this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP enrolled in a mental health program</p>	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Reduction in drug abuse</li>          <li>■ Reduction in alcohol abuse</li></ul>	<p>Total number of TP re-assessed regarding substance use during the reporting period</p> <p>Total number of TP re-assessed as having <i>reduced</i> their substance use during this reporting period</p> <p>Total number of TP re-assessed regarding alcohol use during the reporting period</p> <p>Total number of TP re-assessed as having <i>reduced</i> their alcohol use during this reporting period</p>	
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## **Appendix B.**

### **Ohio HELP II Logic Model**

## Appendix B. ODRC HELP II Program Logic Model

