



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor

Executive Order

NUMBER THIRTY-SIX (2024)

ESTABLISHING THE

STAND TALL – STAY STRONG – SUCCEED TOGETHER REENTRY INITIATIVE

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor of the Commonwealth, I hereby issue this Executive Order to ensure our Commonwealth supports the thousands of Virginians on probation striving to re-enter society successfully following incarceration.

Importance of Initiative

Each year, around 10,000 adults and juveniles are released from incarceration into supervision in Virginia. Fifty thousand returning citizens are managed by the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) at any one time and remain on supervision for an average of three years. Unfortunately, too many of these Virginians eventually return to prison and jails.

More than half of those currently in our prisons and jails have recidivated, although this is not immediately apparent from some of the recidivism data. Under the main recidivism metric adopted by most states – reincarceration rates of returning citizens within three years of reentry – Virginia’s rate is the 2nd lowest in the nation at 19%. While even under this standard it means that one-in-five formerly incarcerated Virginians do not have a successful reentry into society within three years of reentry, this metric does not paint a full picture of success because of the three-year time period¹ and the requirement that the returning citizen be reincarcerated in a prison instead of a jail or other correctional facility.²

While the numbers are alarming, the reality is that *every* Virginian who re-enters successfully generates great benefits to the Commonwealth:

- Individuals benefit when they contribute to society and achieve their human potential;
- Communities benefit when families are made whole and crime decreases; and

¹ This rate jumps to over 40% within 12 years of reentry for state responsible releases.

² Virginia State Responsible incarcerations are for felony convictions with a sentence of 1+ years or a parole violation with a sentence of 2+ years. These rates are much higher when accounting for recidivism for local responsible felonies and misdemeanor crimes.

- The Commonwealth of Virginia benefits from the increased societal and economic contributions and the reduced burden on public safety infrastructure.

In April of 2023, in accordance with section 2.2-221.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, I tasked the Chief Transformation Officer with the Secretary of Public Safety to partner to create a cross-agency effort to improve reentry outcomes using existing personnel and resources. This effort, consistent with the *Code of Virginia* § 53.1-32.2, takes an innovative approach creating the nation's first dynamic system to measure the achievement of the six positive factors that facilitate a successful reentry for returning citizens, which include:

- 1) gainful employment;
- 2) stable housing;
- 3) healthcare insurance coverage;
- 4) appropriate supervision levels;
- 5) necessary mental health treatment;
- 6) necessary substance abuse treatment.

Today, we formalize our ongoing work as we establish by Executive Order the *Stand Tall – Stay Strong – Succeed Together* Team (the Team). Since April of 2023, the Team has helped 3,100 more returning citizens gain employment, 7,100 more enroll in health insurance, and updated appropriate supervision levels for 5,500 more returning citizens by focusing on the six success factors. Additionally, the team stemmed the increase in absconding for the first time in 12 years with a net decline of 600 absconders, or 10% of the overall population.

By focusing on factors directly linked to reentry success on a monthly basis, we strategically managed resources to address critical gaps proactively, to identify and initiative pilot programs across agencies to address issues and celebrate best practices. Current successful partnerships included employment referrals with Virginia Works and Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), healthcare enrollment referrals with the Department of Medical Assistance (DMAS), veterans referrals with the Department of Veterans Services (DVS), pre-release coordination with the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), and public safety coordination with the Virginia State Police (VSP) to reduce absconding.

While these efforts resulted in great improvements without any increases in funding through cross-agency partnerships, we need to do more as a Commonwealth to improve reentry. To further improve reentry in accordance with Section 2.2-221.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, this Executive Order directs agencies to continue to collaborate on an integrated system to support reentry and directs the Team to integrate non-state entities into this critical effort.

Directive

Pursuant to the authority vested in me as the Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth by Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and the laws of the Commonwealth, including *Code of Virginia* §§ 2.2-2005 and 2.2-2007-2012, I hereby order my administration, the Secretary of Public Safety, the Chief Transformation Officer, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Secretary of Education and all executive branch

agencies to work with the Team to establish and integrated system to support reentry by taking the following actions:

Pre- Release Reentry Programming and Job Training Efforts

1. Implement a Commonwealth-wide partnership between Virginia's Community College System and VADOC prisons to improve continuing education for those incarcerated.
2. The Secretary of Education, in collaboration with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the Virginia Community College System, shall explore opportunities to increase the number of incarcerated individuals using Pell Grants in qualifying prison education programs, as defined under 34 CFR 668.236, at Virginia's public and private nonprofit institutions of higher education.
3. Implement a strategy to increase remote learning and programming in VADOC prisons with the support of Virginia's Information Technology Agency (VITA) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to maximize connectivity and affordability.
4. Align VADOC workforce program success metrics to Virginia Works' state-wide metrics and ensure programs are preparing those incarcerated for the top industries³ effectively.
5. Accelerate VADOC adult education efforts for those in VADOC prisons with low-level literacy to increase reading levels two grades by 2026.⁴
6. Facilitate increased opportunities for prison ministries and faith-based nonprofits to volunteer at VADOC prisons.

Employment Efforts

1. Implement hiring practices friendly to returning citizens in state government, including direct-hire, apprenticeship, and internships as specified in the new DHRM policy guidance.
2. Scale Virginia Works and DARS partnership with VADOC probation and parole for supervisee referrals to enhance utilization of workforce readiness and job placement services upon reentry.
3. Implement Commonwealth-wide partnership between Adult Education and VADOC Probation and Parole to improve supervisee literacy and GED completion rates.
4. Integrate jails into reentry employment best practices working through the State Compensation Board (SCB).
5. Integrate the business community into second chance hiring ecosystem with Virginia Works.

Benefit Enrollment Efforts

1. Virginia Department of Social Services shall designate a state-wide reentry coordinator to help:
 - a. Re-establish local DSS leadership across all 43 local reentry councils;

³ As identified by Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE)

⁴ Low-level literacy inmates defined as 3rd grade/NRS Level 2* or below.

- b. Collaborate with local DSS offices to partner with VADOC to increase benefit enrollment success; and
 - c. Partner with VADOC Probation and Parole to use family programming and related services to improve connectivity with their families.
2. Assess opportunities to strengthen and modernize DMV's partnership with VADOC and jails to ensure returning citizens have valid identification upon reentry.
3. Integrate Community Services Boards into reentry efforts, including during incarceration within prisons and jails.
4. Partner with Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to refer returning citizens who are veterans to address gaps in critical success factors, including housing.
5. Share data, in accordance with state and federal law, among DSS, DMAS, and VADOC to improve reentry data accuracy, and implement best practices prescribed by the Office of Data Governance and Analytics (ODGA).
6. Integrate jails into benefit enrollment best practices working through the State Compensation Board.

Parenthood Efforts

1. In partnership with VADOC, SCB, DSS and the Commonwealth's Chief Diversity Officer, implement and scale programming within prisons, jails and communities to help incarcerated parents be the best father or mother possible, to give them a purpose for change, and to help end generational incarceration.
2. DSS to partner with VADOC Probation and Parole to use family programming and related services to improve connectivity with their families.
3. Increase non-state and private entities to scale parenthood volunteer efforts through streamlining of the VADOC volunteer approval and training practices.

Public Safety Efforts

1. The Secretary of Public Safety in coordination with VADOC is to review and update its methodology for measuring and tracking reentry success to ensure accuracy and actionability of data.
2. The Secretary of Public Safety is to coordinate use of law enforcement resources and agency data consistent with federal and state law to decrease absconding and enhance public safety.
3. The Secretary of Public Safety with the help of VADOC and the Attorney General is to identify changes in regulations and code that would help VADOC provide more effective supervision.

I also order my administration to create a *Stand Tall – Stay Strong – Succeed Together* Executive Task Force (“Task Force”) comprised of stakeholders from the leadership of the Department of Corrections, local jail leaders, the leadership of the Senate Rehabilitation and Social Services Committee as well as the House Public Safety Committee or designated representatives, the Office of the Attorney General of Virginia, Lieutenant Governor, Virginia Sheriffs Association, Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, Virginia State Police, justice-

involved individuals, faith-based organizations, prisons and jails, community advocacy groups, victims of crime, and the Virginia Association of Commonwealth's Attorneys, and other stakeholders. The Task Force shall meet every three months to review reentry progress and results.

Effective Date

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in force and effect unless amended or rescinded by further executive order or directive. Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, this 15th day of August 2024.



Glenn Youngkin
Glenn Youngkin, Governor

Attest:

Kelly Gee
Kelly Gee, Secretary of the Commonwealth