

OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

Entrants must complete all sections for the entry to be considered complete. A copy of this official entry is available at <http://www.pacounties.org/ProgramServices/Pages/Criminal-Justice.aspx>

Name/County Nominator Christian Leinbach/County of Berks
Address 633 Court Street
City, State, Zip Code Reading, PA 19601
Title Commissioner/Chair
Contact Phone 610-478-6136

PARTNER INFORMATION

Name of nominee Berks Connections/Pretrial Services
Title of nominee

NARRATIVE

Enter narrative that explains the following:

Contributions – Discuss the contributions the nominee has made to improving county corrections or juvenile justice re-entry services at the local, regional, or state level

Berks Connections/Pretrial Services (BCPS) has been in the Life Improvement Business serving the criminal justice population in Berks County for over 40 years. BCPS is the leading provider of reentry services in Berks County, serving both county and state reentrants, and operates a robust workforce development program that provides employment readiness, financial literacy, job placement and job retention to individuals returning to the community from incarceration. BCPS provides reentry programming in the Berks County Jail System and in several state correctional institutions. They also host Returning Citizens Career Fairs twice per year, providing a forum where anyone involved in the criminal justice system can have access to employment opportunities offered by over 40 second chance employers.

Perhaps the most impactful contribution BCPS has made to reentry services in Berks County is their Rebuilding Reentrants & Reading (R3) program. R3 is a comprehensive pre-apprenticeship program in the construction trades that began in October 2017 and is supported through a U.S. Department of Labor Reentry Training grant. The program has 3 main components: classroom instruction, hands on training, and an evidence based cognitive curriculum. While the program has been operating for just over one year, the results have been incredible! To date they have graduated 76 participants; of those, 76% were employed within 6 weeks of graduation and 8% have recidivated (compared to the general statewide

reentrant population employment rate of 39 % and 42% recidivism).

Reading, PA has one of the highest poverty rates of all major cities in the state. This coupled with a high crime rate has left many of the city's neighborhoods in disrepair. Additionally the city has a significant amount of residents involved in the criminal justice system. R3 is providing opportunities for some of Reading's most marginalized residents to not only improve their lives and that of their families, but to also have a profound and visible impact on a blighted neighborhood - literally rebuilding lives and a neighborhood simultaneously!

Promotion of best practices – Explain how the nominee has knowingly or unknowingly promoted the goals of the best practices program

BCPS created this comprehensive program model that utilizes best practices in reentry programming, adult learning and vocational training. The training portion of the program lasts 8 weeks. BCPS partners with the Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC) and Habitat for Humanity of Berks County (HFHBC) to provide the technical components of the training. Participants receive classroom instruction that includes theory as well as some practical experience at RMCTC. HFHBC properties in the City of Reading provide hands on learning where the participants can put their knowledge gained at RMCTC to use. This combination of classroom style instruction and hands on learning is a best practice for adult learners. To date, the R3 program has provided over 5,000 volunteer hours to HFHBC. In addition to the technical training, participants receive CPR, Flagger and OSHA Safety certifications.

R3 incorporates the Risk Needs Responsivity (RNR) Principle. In its simplest form, RNR addresses the who, the what and the how in working with the reentrant population. Research demonstrates that reentry programming is only successful if the correct dosage of cognitive base services is provided. BCPS staff were trained by the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute in Core Correctional Practices, Case Management, and Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Offenders Seeking Employment (CBI-EMP) classes. BCPS staff deliver the CBI-EMP curriculum over the course of the 8 week training session. While the cognitive groups account for much of the dosage, R3 program staff use cognitive techniques learned through the UCCI training in all interactions to strengthen the clients' commitment to values that are conducive to successful reentry and employment. This combination of best practices – classroom learning, hands-on experience, and cognitive interventions – has proven to significantly reduce recidivism and improve employment outcomes for participants.

BCPS also provides case management, mentoring, and support services to participants for one year following their graduation from the training. The comprehensive case management is a best practice for reentry program success and includes financial literacy and coaching as well as job search, placement, and retention support. The Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) provides assistance recruiting employers in the construction trades

to ensure that the training is relevant and to solicit employment opportunities for graduates.

The inclusive partnerships that BCPS has forged for the R3 program model represent a best practice of community based programs. BCPS accepts referrals for the program from Berks County Adult Parole, the PA Department of Corrections, Berks County Specialty Courts as well as from several community based organizations. The program partners, HFHBC, RMCTC and the Berks County WDB create an important link between the criminal justice system, corrections, workforce development and the nonprofit sector.