



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 11, 2016
CONTACT: Brian Namey, bnamey@naco.org, 202.942.4220

NACo research: Counties play pivotal role in reducing recidivism, increasing economic opportunities

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) today released *Second Chances, Safer Counties: Workforce Development and Reentry*, a new research report that examines county efforts to foster economic opportunities while reducing crime. Reentry programs offer a way for counties to reintegrate formerly incarcerated residents into the labor market, which is instrumental to keeping them in communities safely and out of jail.

The study finds that the federal government, through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), largely supports these local programs. Two-thirds (66 percent) of reentry programs operated by local workforce development boards (local WDBs) receive the majority of their funding from the federal government. In 2015, WIOA enabled federal investments of more than \$3.2 billion in states and local areas for education, training and employment services, including reentry programs.

“Counties are centrally situated in the workforce development and justice systems to help realize the public safety and economic benefits of reentry and employment,” said NACo Pres. Sallie Clark. “The county role in local WDBs facilitates partnerships that deliver programs to reintegrate individuals into the workforce, reduce recidivism, save taxpayer dollars and keep communities safe and secure.”

Counties collaborate with local workforce development boards (WDBs) responsible for implementing WIOA.

- Counties are involved in 90 percent of the country’s 557 local WDBs.
- Twenty-eight percent of WDBs are within a county department or function as a county government department.
- Twenty-one percent of reentry programs are financially supported by county governments.
- Nearly half of WDBs operate reentry programs.

County governments and local WDBs with reentry programs work with a wide network of partners to improve employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals.

- A majority (79 percent) of WDBs work with non-profits to prepare these individuals for reentering the workforce.
- Close to half (47 percent) of local WDBs with reentry programs work with schools and colleges.
- Forty percent partner with faith-based organizations to deliver reentry services.
- Thirty percent involve the private sector.

-- more --

Reentry programs are a high priority, but they present challenges.

- Maintaining reentry programs is a high priority for 77 percent of local WDBs.
- Forty-one percent of local WDBs without a reentry program indicate creating one is a priority.
- The majority of local WDBs (54 percent) identify funding as a major challenge to creating or maintaining reentry programs.

“Reentry programs are an important part of county efforts to maintain public safety while reducing jail populations and costs,” said Dr. Natalie Ortiz, NACo senior research analyst. “Counties also play a role in local workforce development efforts.”

Counties have a key responsibility in maintaining safe, secure and economically resilient communities. For example, counties:

- Invest \$93 billion annually in justice and public safety
- Support local economies, including investing \$122 billion in infrastructure and public works and \$25 billion in economic development and workforce training, and
- Own 91 percent of all local jails, which admitted 11.4 million individuals in 2014.

Jails release more than 135,000 inmates each day, and together with individuals released from federal and state prisons, they often turn to county social services for assistance upon returning home.

“Employment is one of the best ways to reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals, as it reduces recidivism and allows them to contribute to their families and communities,” said Ortiz.

To read NACo’s new research report and the accompanying case studies, visit:

www.NACo.org/WorkforceAndReentry.

NACo supports increased resources for the Second Chance Act, which assists states, counties and non-profit organizations in developing and implementing reentry programs. Under WIOA, local WDBs are encouraged to partner with Second Chance Act grantees. For more information on NACo’s support of federal investments in reentry programs, see the policy brief [here](#).

#

The [National Association of Counties](http://www.naco.org) (NACo) unites America’s 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public’s understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service. More information at: www.naco.org.