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Urban Institute Evaluation of Jail Collaborative Programs Show Strong & Credible Evidence that County's Reentry Programs Reduce Recidivism

PITTSBURGH – Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and members of the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative joined together today with researchers from the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center to release an evaluation of the County's Reentry Programs. The evaluation, which was funded by a collaboration of 13 local foundations, found that participation in the programs reduces the likelihood of rearrest.

"Since its creation in 2000, the Jail Collaborative has focused on increasing public safety, reducing recidivism and increasing success for inmates following incarceration. This evaluation of the County's reentry programs by the Urban Institute shows that we are continuing to make great strides and are improving inmates' transition to the community," said County Executive Fitzgerald. "Perhaps the most significant finding is that reentry program participation reduces the probability of rearrest, the strongest model by an astounding 24 percentage points, compared to inmates who did not go through the program. That's a fact of which we can be extremely proud."

In 2010 and 2011, the Jail Collaborative launched local reentry programs under the U.S. Department of Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Programs initiative. The programs sought to reduce reoffending through risk/needs assessment, coordinated reentry planning, and evidence-based programs and practices. The study examined the extent to which the reentry programs were operating as intended and assessed the programs' alignment with core correctional practices. The results suggest ample evidence of implementation fidelity, finding that the programs were serving the highest risk offenders, assessing their risks and needs, and providing evidence-based interventions designed to address those needs.

"Readying inmates for successful reentry is hard," said Janeen Buck-Willison, senior research associate at the Urban Institute, "and it should start before and continue after release. Our study indicates that Allegheny County has crafted an effective reentry strategy, through a long-standing, collaborative commitment to this issue that lowers rearrest among program participants, better equips them for life in the community, and enhances public safety."

The study also involved focus groups with participants, as well as with their families. The team from the Urban Institute found high satisfaction with the program from both clients and family members.

The evaluation provides some of the first findings related to the Second Chance Act. In addition to recognizing best practices utilized in the local programs, the evaluation also provides insight into how the Collaborative can continue to make the programs more effective. The Operations Committee has already begun acting on several of the study's initial recommendations and incorporated several into the reentry program's redesign.

"While we are thrilled to find external evidence that the programs are working, the Jail Collaborative and its committees are focusing on the parts of the program left to improve," said Marc Cherna, Director of the

Department of Human Services, and member of the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative Cabinet. "We are working to fine tune the program and expect the next set of findings to be even stronger."

The complete report can be found online at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/jail.aspx>.

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The nonprofit Urban Institute is dedicated to elevating the debate on social and economic policy. For nearly five decades, Urban scholars have conducted research and offered evidence-based solutions that improve lives and strengthen communities across a rapidly urbanizing world. Their objective research helps expand opportunities for all, reduce hardship among the most vulnerable, and strengthen the effectiveness of the public sector.

The Allegheny County Jail Collaborative is a cooperative effort of the Allegheny County Jail, Department of Human Services (DHS), Allegheny County Health Department, and the Court of Common Pleas. It was formed in 2000 with the purpose of improving public safety, reducing recidivism, and increasing success for inmates following incarceration.

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