

# Arkansas

Going  
Home

Reentry  
Initiative

## OVERVIEW

*Together we improve the quality of life for all Arkansans by protecting the vulnerable, fostering independence, and promoting better health. Intensive Aftercare provides Arkansas youthful offenders with opportunities to turn their lives around and become productive, law-abiding, and contributing members of society.*



## A New Paradigm for Youthful Offenders in Arkansas



The *Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative*: “*Going Home*” (SVORI) is a five-year \$2.087M grant project that has allowed the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Services (DYS) to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate programs and services that will help youthful offenders, ages 14 to 21 to reenter their communities after periods of time in confinement as law-abiding, chemical-free, productive and contributing members of society.

By forming partnerships with state, local, and community-based service providers, DHS has encouraged government agencies, social services organizations, and community-based organizations to make the youthful offender population their highest priority. DHS has formed partnerships that are helping to use existing resources to collaborate on programs that will protect their communities by providing for the successful reentry of its most serious and violent clients.

The SVORI program provides opportunities for offenders to receive services including transitional housing, academic and job skills and employment education, substance abuse and mental health treatment and counseling, and mentoring.

### **Vision**

Our vision is to provide program-eligible adolescents and young adults who have come in contact with the juvenile justice system opportunities that will enhance potential and abilities, and promote human dignity and worth while, at the same time, improving public safety and expanding possibilities for these offenders to successfully reintegrate into the community.

## Goals

The goals of the Arkansas SVORI are designed to promote public safety and reduce crime by providing a comprehensive reentry plan for serious, violent, and high-risk offenders that through state and local collaboration, offer intensive supervision and services and programs that focus on reintegration during confinement, and a highly structured and gradual transition process that serves as a bridge between commitment and aftercare. Specifically, the providers work to:

- To prevent reoffending by facilitating overall life style changes and alleviating barriers that prevent high-risk youth from reoffending;
- To enhance public safety by promoting successful community adjustment through intensive supervision, offender accountability, and crime avoidance;
- To access, redeploy, and leverage existing resources, and locate new sources of support by fostering linkages in the community accessing existing services;
- To assist the offender to avoid crime, engage in pro-social community activities, and meet family responsibilities by creating an atmosphere that will significantly reduce violence by focusing on offenders, families and communities;
- To achieve program sustainability by developing and enhancing long-term partnerships on the state and local levels to assure that available funding is used effectively and remains accessible when federal funds are unavailable; and
- To evaluate the delivery of care and efficacy of programming to determine if the program should be replicated throughout the state.

## The Problem

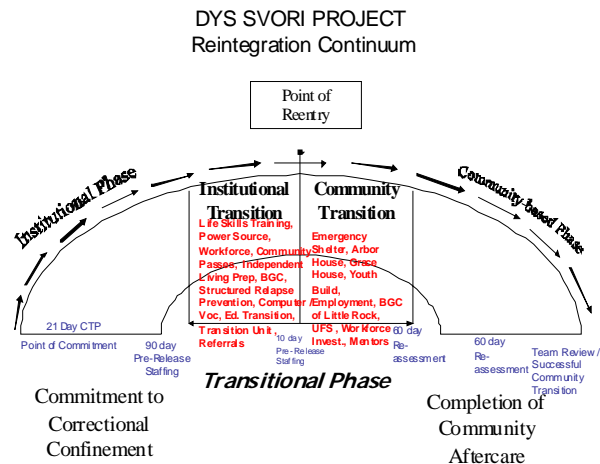
The growing concern about overcrowding in juvenile correction facilities, which has contributed to the ever increasing and escalating cost of confinement, coupled with high rates of recidivism, has played a role in renewing interest in bringing change and innovative programming to juvenile offenders in Arkansas. Research has shown that the recidivism rate among juveniles is high and that a large percentage of previously incarcerated juvenile offenders continue their criminal involvement into adulthood. This high recidivism rate is due in part to the lack of aftercare and support resources available to juveniles when they return to their communities.

In order to prepare juvenile offenders, in the custody of the Division of Youth Services (DYS), for successful reentry into the community, focused and collaborative efforts among stakeholders were needed to improve service delivery and promote successful outcomes by planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating an integrated team management approach to treatment, vocational education and job training programs, life skills training, drug addiction and awareness programs, mental health treatment and counseling, and mentoring tutoring programs.

DYS launched the *Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative: "Going Home"* (SVORI) in July 2006 after several years of planning and developing partnerships and building capacity among service providers and administrators. DYS challenged the community to adopt a new way of providing services to its clients. This change in methods of service delivery represents a major change in the paradigm under which juveniles at DYS have been treated in the past. Partners representing three tiers of service, and building relationships through Memoranda of Understanding and Contracts with city, county, and state providers joined forces to ensure that juveniles were receiving the best care possible as well as, building the juveniles' service networks to help them become successful, productive, law-abiding, and contributing members of society.

## The Answer

The Division of Youth Services is the primary agency responsible for children, adolescents, and young adults who have come in contact with the juvenile justice system. Since September 2001, the Division has collaborated with a group of high-level agency administrators representing institutions, aftercare, the judiciary, law enforcement, prosecutor's offices, politicians, and mental health, education, employment, and social services agencies and others with a heterogeneous purpose to challenge and change the paradigm for provision of services to youthful offenders by developing and fully implementing a comprehensive model of offender transition planning.



- Begins with the three-phase reentry approach of the Department of Justice's SVORI;
- Further delineates the process by adding the decision points of the Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP; Armstrong & Alschuler) model.
- Incorporated into its approach the policy statements and recommendations from the *Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council* that is coordinated by the Council of State governments.

In this way, the Arkansas Initiative represents a synergistic model for youthful offender reentry that is deeply influenced by the nation's best thinkers on how to improve former offender success.

To develop the Arkansas Model, Arkansas had the tremendous benefit of a discretionary grant from the federal that provided substantial resources for consultation, research, training, and technical assistance. Arkansas was poised for success combining a strong mandate from the Governor, a powerful policy framework, and strong community buy-in. The challenge was to test a model in Central Arkansas from which an eventual statewide implementation. Have committed any felony and recidivating.

### **PHASE I—COMMITMENT**

The institutional phase describes the details of events and responsibilities which occur during the offender's confinement from intake (admission) until the point when the juvenile begins pre-release programming. This phase involves intake and assessment and offender treatment/service delivery.

### **PHASE II—TRANSITION**

The transition phase is a two-step approach to reentry beginning with a 90-day institutional transition phase (pre-release programming) followed by a step-down community-based transition phase. During the institutional transition phase, a highly specific aftercare plan is organized that addresses housing, employment, and services to address addiction and mental illness. During the community transition phase), the juvenile is linked for provision of services, resources, and other activities as indicated in the aftercare plan. It is the responsibility of the former offender and his community-based aftercare worker to make connections with the offender's network of community supports and mentors to assure continued success. The transition phase includes offender release preparation, release decision making and supervision and services:

### PHASE III—COMMUNITY SUPERVISION/NORMALIZATION

The community supervision/normalization phase is the period of supervision during the community aftercare period. The case manager insures that contacts with individuals, agencies, or organizations have been identified as service providers or community resources and maintains and identifies service providers of community resources. Phase III includes supervision and service delivery, revocation decision making, and discharge determining the youth's capability to live in the community on his own.

#### The Partners

The Department of Human Services  
Division of Youth Services

University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
College of Professional Services  
Department of Criminal Justice

Arkansas Workforce Center of Little Rock

United Family Services, Inc.

Boys & Girls Club of Saline County

Boys & Girls Club of Central Arkansas

University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
College of Professional Services  
Department of Social Work

Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center

Dermott Juvenile Correctional Facility

Arkansas Supportive Housing Network, Inc

## General Beliefs

Every child matters.  
People need family.  
Strong communities build strong families.  
Our job is to empower people to help themselves.  
We have the responsibility to provide services that work.

## Specific Beliefs

Child safety comes first.  
Children deserve to thrive, not just survive.  
Juveniles will be effectively served in the community.  
Communities are to be safe from juvenile crime.  
People need skills to succeed.  
We shall provide best practices programs.

## Principles

**Inclusion:** We reach out to everyone in our society to be represented and involved in the important decisions that affect their lives.

**Integrity:** It's about honesty and so much more. It means, "We do what we say we will do," and "We do what we say."

**Excellence:** We are not just about getting it done, but getting the work done in a way that we can be proud of and that our citizens are impressed with.

**Teamwork:** We focus on what we can do together, sharing information, resources, and energy to achieve our vision of Arkansas.

**Focus on Strength:** We reach out to individuals in their development of personal strengths so that they may thrive as productive members of soc

### *Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative: "Going Home"* (SVORI)

This federally-funded initiative was developed by the Office of Justice Programs and the National Institute of Corrections two agencies within the U.S. Department of Justice, through collaboration and with support of the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Housing and Urban Development. The Arkansas SVORI was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice' Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, and The State of Arkansas