



South Carolina Department of Corrections

For immediate release

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COLUMBIA, S.C. – South Carolina has the lowest recidivism rate in the nation and its lowest in 25 years, new data shows.

The largest national survey that measures recidivism shows South Carolina tied with Virginia for a 23.1 percent return-to-prison rate for all inmates who have been out of prison for three years. These numbers show that the state's efforts to train and prepare inmates to return to society are paying off, with fewer inmates returning to prison within three years of their release.

"This success is a direct result of the strong partnerships we have across South Carolina," said Bryan Stirling, Director of the S.C. Department of Corrections. "Sentencing reform and changes in the parole system help shorten the time offenders spend behind bars. A strong economy coupled with partnerships with the Department of Employment and Workforce, Catholic Charities and other agencies help support people after they leave. It is truly a group effort."

This is the lowest return-to-prison rate since the state started tracking the data in the early 1990s. The rate in 1993 was 33.3 percent, which increased to 33.9 percent in 2005. Since that time, it has steadily decreased. This data is from inmates released between July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016.

Recidivism rates are measured after inmates have had time to rebuild their life after release. If they remain out of prison for three years, they are considered a success. There is no national standard, but this is the lowest rate for the 42 states that report three-year recidivism rates by tallying the number of offenders reincarcerated within three year of their release from prison.

This rate includes former inmates who return to prison on crimes committed before they were incarcerated. South Carolina also measures recidivism without including these offenders, because their crimes were committed before they attended programming aimed at helping them succeed in society. That rate is even lower, at 21.2 percent after three years.

The department has a strong focus on preparing inmates to reenter society, with reentry programs for inmates at all custody levels. Inmates are taught work skills, given help with job placement and housing and offered support for drug addiction, anger management and other obstacles to success.

Pre-release programs now exist for all custody levels. Manning Reentry/Work Release Center works with minimum-security inmates who are six months from being released, and Kershaw Correctional Institution and Reentry Center works with medium-security inmates. A new two-year program opened at Lieber Correctional Institution and Reentry Center in September to help maximum-security inmates gain the necessary skills and services.

The investment is considerable, and one the department is committed to.

“Preparing offenders to reenter society is essential and a key part of our mission, and we are committed to this hard work” Stirling said. “We like hearing from formerly incarcerated people about their success, but when someone leaves the Department of Corrections, we hope to never see them again.”

Here is a link to the study:

<https://vadoc.virginia.gov/media/1485/vadoc-state-recidivism-comparison-report-2020-02.pdf>