

North Carolina Governor's 2024 Executive Order on Reentry

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On January 29, 2024, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper signed an [Executive Order](#) joining the national Reentry 2030 initiative.

What's the Reentry 2030 initiative?

According to the [Reentry 2030 website](#), the initiative is being led by the [Correctional Leaders Association](#), [The Council of State Governments Justice Center](#), and [JustLeadershipUSA](#). It describes the program as an initiative "to dramatically improve reentry success for people exiting prison and those under supervision" and a future of reentry that is human centered, coordinated, transparent, and equitable. It seeks to have all fifty states join the initiative, committing to creating and implementing state-level plans to accomplish three tasks:

1. Scale up access to stable housing, education, employment skills training, behavioral health treatment, healthcare, and other supports.
2. Remove unnecessary barriers to economic opportunity and mobility.
3. Advance racial equity by using data to understand and address disparities in access to services, quality of services and outcomes.

Participating states are expected to bring together diverse stakeholder teams; establish public goals and milestones; and track and share progress. According to the website, only two other states joined before North Carolina: Alabama and Missouri.

Why the Executive Order?

The Executive Order lists a number of reasons for joining the initiative. They include, for example, that 95% of all people in prison will complete their sentence and return to their communities; that more than 18,000 people are released from North Carolina prisons annually; that providing education and training during incarceration can promote successful reentry and break the cycle of recidivism; that improved access to housing will reduce homelessness and recidivism; and that a unified state approach is needed to improve access to education, vocational training, employment opportunities, and behavioral health services.

What does the Executive Order do?

It directs the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (DAC) to create a new North Carolina Joint Reentry 2030 Council, charged with developing a reentry Strategic Plan. That plan must establish strategies and metrics to:

1. Improve economic mobility of formerly incarcerated people by increasing the number of local reentry councils and providing access to educational, technical training, apprenticeship, work-based learning and employment opportunities before and after release.

2. Improve health by expanding access to behavioral health and substance use disorder services before and after release and ensuring that all eligible people get Medicaid upon release.
3. Expand housing opportunities for formerly incarcerated people.
4. Remove barriers to successful community reintegration, especially for people returning to historically underserved communities.

The Council must present the plan to the Governor by July 31, 2024, and report annually on progress.

Who will serve on the new Joint Reentry 2030 Council?

The Council will be chaired by the DAC Secretary, or the Secretary's designee. Council members will include:

- The Secretary of each Cabinet agency.
- A designee chosen by the Co-chairs of the Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice.
- The Chair of the Post-Release Supervision & Parole Commission.
- The Director of the Office of State Human Resources.
- The Director of the Office of State Budget & Management.

Certain members may appoint designees. DAC may invite a designee from each Council of State agency to the Council, and, in coordination with the Governor's office, may expand the Council's membership.

Are any specific metrics outlined in the Executive Order?

No, but the Governor's [press release](#) states that North Carolina has committed to achieving the following metrics by 2030:

- Increasing the number of high school and post-secondary credentials earned by incarcerated individuals by 75%.
- Reducing the number of incarcerated individuals who are homeless upon release by 50%.
- Providing reentry assistance to previously incarcerated people in every county through Local Reentry Councils.
- Increasing the number of post-secondary degrees offered in facilities by 25%.
- Increasing the number of Pell Grant partners by 30%.
- Ensuring that all eligible individuals are offered the opportunity to apply for Medicaid before release.
- Increasing the number of apprenticeships completed by incarcerated individuals by 50%.
- Increasing the number of second chance employer partners by 30%.

Does the Executive Order require any specific agency action?

Yes. To support educational programs in correctional facilities, the Executive Order includes a list of directives to DAC. These include, for example, establishing quality measures and evaluation for all prison education programs; increasing programming through Pell Grants and partnerships with educational institutions; and making resources available to allow incarcerated people to resolve legal issues before release from prison, such as outstanding warrants and obstacles to driver's license restoration.

The Executive Order also directs Cabinet agencies to assist DAC. For example, directives to the Department of Transportation include increasing the availability of state identification cards for people preparing for release; directives to the Department of Information Technology include developing and implementing a plan to measure and improve digital literacy skills for those in incarceration; directives to the Department of Commerce include increasing the number of incarcerated people getting virtual career services through NCWorks; and directives to the Department of Health and Human Services include creating mechanisms to allow people to be prescreened before leaving prison for federal and state benefits, such as Medicaid and SNAP.

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