

OCO and other external stakeholders participated in a DOC-led workgroup to assist with the development of new language for the revised and expanded Transition and Release policy. Over the course of several workgroup sessions, OCO staff made numerous policy recommendations, many of which were adopted and included in the present draft policy.

Comments Submitted 12/17/2021

POLICY:

I. OCO supports the proposed policy statement that recognizes the significance of transition and release planning.

DIRECTIVE:

I.C. OCO supports the identification of DOC 350.500 as it helps to clarify the referral process for individuals subject to an End of Sentence Review.

III.B. OCO suggests (1) identifying who will be responsible for initiating and completing coordination of reentry planning (case manager, Reentry Division, etc.), (2) providing clearer timelines throughout the section, and (3) clarifying how this information will be communicated with the incarcerated person.

III.C.1. OCO suggests changing the language from “may be used to determine reentry needs” to “will be used to determine reentry needs.”

OCO questions whether this section is intended to limit the use of DOC 07-053 to only individuals impacted by sentence reform. If so, OCO suggests changing the language here so that the form is used for all individuals, as it appears that all individuals could benefit from engaging in this review.

OCO suggests adding a requirement that the completion of the Reentry Needs Survey occur at least 12 months before the person’s release date. The act of completing this survey could be the initiation of the reentry planning process. Completing surveys one year in advance could allow case managers to better project their future workload and prioritize complex cases.

IV.A. OCO suggests clarifying where to find the “Individual Release Plan” if that is a specific document. If it is not, this section should specify that it must be written, and by whom.

IV.G.1.b.1)a) OCO strongly suggests changing this section to allow individuals to apply for Housing Vouchers prior to benefits being approved. Presently, the Job Aid specifies that an incarcerated person may not apply for benefits earlier than 30 days prior to release. The process of having this application approved can be extensive. The ultimate result is that many individuals are able to secure a housing voucher only days prior to their ERD. Finding an appropriate release address for individuals using housing vouchers is frequently a lengthy process, which means that some individuals with housing vouchers must remain in total confinement past their ERD. Allowing people in custody to apply for the housing voucher before they apply for benefits would provide more time for the case manager to find an appropriate release address prior to a person’s ERD. This would result in more individuals being able to release on their ERD.

V.A.1.d. OCO strongly supports this revised language as previously discussed with DOC.

VI.A. OCO suggests allowing more time for appeals to be submitted. Ideally the time allowance should mirror the time limit imposed on DOC to review the appeal (20 business days).

OCO suggests adding details about the proper form appeals should take (are they submitted via a specific form? via a letter?)

VI.B.2. OCO suggests incorporating an additional level of review for individuals determined by the Victim Services Program to be ineligible for the appeal process.

VIII.A.5. OCO suggests changing “may” to “will.”

VIII.A.6. OCO suggests creating and distributing to releasing individuals an informational sheet that discusses RCW 18.400.

VIII.A.7. OCO suggests changing to the language to acknowledge that individuals “will be issued gate money if eligible per DOC 210.025.”

ATTACHMENT 1 (COUNTY OF ORIGIN):

Reason 2: OCO questions how DOC will be able to ensure timely consideration of factors by the Community Victim Liaison and Victim Services Program Manager and prevent a bottleneck effect from occurring during this process. Additionally, OCO suggests that DOC require the documentation of the decision and justification in the electronic file.