

New York City Department of Correction Discharge Planning Report Calendar Year 2023

Pursuant to NYC Administrative Code 9-129, the Department must produce an annual report regarding implementation of NYC Administrative Code sections 9-127 and 9-128, as well as recidivism among individuals who receive discharge planning services.

Implementation of NYC Administrative Code 9-127

The Department of Correction ("DOC" or "the Department") and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) developed a data match process by which DOC sends its discharge files on a monthly basis to DHS; then DHS computes the percentage of shelter entrants with DOC stays in the six months preceding shelter entry. This data match is conducted monthly, and its results are used to inform various components of the discharge planning effort.

Additionally, DOC partners with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) and its contracted social service organizations to assist sentenced individuals with discharge planning and post-release services. These organizations meet with interested individuals to complete a discharge plan that identifies each person's housing, employment, and sobriety needs. Based on the information provided in these discharge plans, the social service organizations assist individuals in addressing their unique needs. This includes providing housing support, vocational training, job readiness workshops, job placement, and case management, among other services.

Implementation of NYC Administrative Code 9-128

DOC ensures that sentenced individuals have an opportunity to meet with a social services organization to complete a transition plan, receive information about community-based services, and get connected with safe, stable housing. In 2023, DOC streamlined this process, by assigning a dedicated DOC staff member to coordinate with facility-based Programs staff as well as social service organizations to ensure that sentenced individuals with upcoming release dates receive vital discharge planning services. As a result, the Department has seen a notable increase in the number of successful transition plans and housing placements.

DOC utilizes benefit boards, also known as Resource Centers, to make applications for government benefits for individuals in its care. These Resource Centers are located in areas that are readily accessible to persons in custody, including law libraries, counseling offices and discharge planning areas. Resource Centers contain applications or descriptions of benefits available through the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA), the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Veterans Administration (VA), and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). The Resource Centers also include information provided by the Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and Education (DOE), as well as general tips on obtaining employment and 311 Jail Release Services.

New York City Department of Correction Discharge Planning Report Calendar Year 2023

In 2023, due to multiple facility closures and other significant changes affecting the Department's operations, the approach to providing these materials varied by command. The Department plans to conduct an assessment of the Resource Centers in calendar year 2024 to ensure their availability in each command. In addition, the Department will be utilizing tablets to provide people in custody with information about applications for government benefits. This will enable them to have this vital information at their fingertips throughout the duration of their incarceration.

DOC partners with the Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS) to assist sentenced individuals with preparing applications for government benefits. CUCS staff work with individuals to determine their eligibility and complete applications during incarceration, enabling activation/reactivation as soon as possible post-release. CUCS also assists individuals with Medicaid applications. The DOC, HRA, and CUCS had previously developed a process to complete Food Stamp applications in jails so that newly released individuals will have access as soon as possible post-discharge.

In April 2008, DOC and the Bureau of Vital Statistics, a unit within DOHMH, adopted a procedure by which sentenced incarcerated individuals can request a copy of their birth certificate. DOC Counselors are also available to assist interested individuals in completing birth certificate applications. However, it can take ten-plus weeks for a birth certificate to be returned, which often means individuals are unable to receive them prior to their release. Individuals are also not required to provide a mailing address upon discharge, which means the Department is unable to forward these critical documents to the individual after their release.

Recidivism

The primary goal of discharge planning services is to support successful community reintegration, and subsequently reduce recidivism. In 2023, the Department experienced significant budget cuts that affected its reintegration programming, which supports discharge planning services offered by external providers. During the second half of the year, the Department worked closely with MOCJ to ensure a continuation of discharge planning services in the face of these budget cuts.