

## REFERRALS

For more information about the boards,  
when and where they meet, or to make  
a referral, please  
contact:

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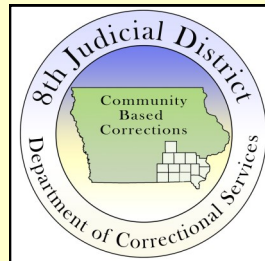
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## **Eighth Judicial District**

## **Community Transition Boards**



**“Providing an Opportunity  
for Change.”**



# COMMUNITY TRANSITION BOARDS

## HISTORY OF BOARDS

Community accountability boards have been operating in the Eighth Judicial District since the inception of the Ottumwa Youthful Offender Program board in 1996. Similar boards were subsequently formed in Burlington and Keokuk to complement the respective YOP programs in those communities. Eventually, two boards were added to specifically serve adult probationers and parolees in the Ottumwa and Burlington areas. With the goal of providing services that address the constantly evolving needs of clients in conjunction with the emphasis on reentry services in Iowa, the aforementioned boards have been replaced in favor of the community transition board model.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Eighth Judicial District Department of Correctional Services has long believed that establishing and nurturing working relationships with community stakeholders is critical to its mission. Community transition board members come from all walks of life including private citizens, retirees, educators, law enforcement officials, attorneys, ministers, social workers, and healthcare professionals. They volunteer their time and skills to serve as a unique resource for clients. Membership is open to any citizen. In the past, former clients have also served on a board.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is a Community Transition Board?

Local citizens and professionals concerned about the welfare of their communities comprise community transition boards. Working directly with community-based corrections staff and clients, the goal of a board is to represent the community perspective in addressing crime by serving as a resource for clients as they begin the process of returning to their communities.

### What Happens at Board Meetings?

The focus is on the future. Each month, the respective boards meet with clients to establish a rapport and discuss any obstacles they may be facing as they prepare for life without supervision by the criminal justice system. Those obstacles may include employment, housing, finances, relationships and other problems. After some brainstorming, board members work with clients to establish obtainable goals for the upcoming month. Referring probation and parole officers will receive copies of the monthly meeting minutes.

### What If a Client Fails to Comply?

Although board members have adopted an informal, non-confrontational approach to working with clients, they do evaluate an individual's progress on a regular basis. If a client refuses to cooperate with the board, the relationship is terminated and a letter outlining the problem is mailed to the referring probation and parole officer to use as he or she sees fit. On several occasions, those letters have been submitted to court officials during revocation hearings.

## REFERRAL CRITERIA

Probation or parole officers will know best whom to refer to the reentry services coordinator, who in addition with other reentry duties, will determine whether a client may benefit from attending board meetings. Community transition boards are most effective when working with clients who are motivated to make positive changes in their lives, but can still benefit from receiving extra guidance and mentoring in working toward the goal of successfully returning to their communities as productive citizens. While it is not unusual for some clients to be skeptical at the outset, they should at least be receptive to working with a specific board. Experience has shown that working with clients who are extremely resistive or continually violating the rules of probation or parole are not likely to thrive in a board setting. The boards are not a panacea, but rather another tool or option that can effectively complement existing probation and parole practices and treatment. Below are some referral guidelines for clients:

- Motivated to Change
- Mandatory Attendance
- Available Transportation

Once a referral is made, the board facilitators assume responsibility for sending meeting notification letters and any other follow-up paperwork.