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Slowing the revolving door: editorial

Policies appear to reduce number of ex-convicts returning to prison

Ohio reached another milestone in reducing recidivism among convicted offenders, achieving a record-low 28.7 percent rate for the three years ending in 2012 for inmates released in 2009.

That's good news for everyone: for taxpayers, since millions less need to be spent on incarceration; for residents in general, since public safety is improved; and certainly for the convicted, who are receiving more help and being more appropriately segmented according to need.

Through 2012, those who were released in 2009 had a recidivism rate of 28.7 percent, down from 31.2 percent the prior year and 34.1 percent the year before that. Put another way, the total number of offenders who exited in 2009 who were re-admitted to Ohio's correctional system by the end of last year was 7,533; at the previous year's rate of recidivism, the number would have been 8,191. So hundreds of ex-convicts are not being re-admitted to the system.

The statistics keep Ohio in line with national trends, but still well below the U.S. average recidivism rate. Last year, the national average was about 43 percent, down from about 50 percent two years ago.

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction credits a multifaceted approach. On the front end, the department has instituted a new risk-assessment tool that aims to identify the appropriate level of security and type of intervention merited for each offender. First-time, nonviolent criminals found guilty of offenses such as property theft or low-level drug crimes are being kept out of prisons in greater numbers in favor of other types of monitoring and rehabilitation.

Editorial continued here: <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/editorials/2013/03/02/slowing-the-revolving-door.html>

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