

Regular Session, 2014

HOUSE BILL NO. 781

BY REPRESENTATIVE THIBAUT

CORRECTIONS: Provides for the creation of a pilot program to rehabilitate and support offenders

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Part I-E of Title 15 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised of

3 R.S. 15:745 through 745.3, relative to the reentry of offenders who are housed in

4 parish jails; to create an Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program; to provide for the

5 establishment of a pilot program in Pointe Coupee Parish; to provide that the

6 program shall be maintained by the Pointe Coupee Parish Sheriff; to provide

7 offenders with assistance to facilitate reentry into society following incarceration;

8 to provide for the criteria for development of the pilot program; to provide for an

9 advisory council to assist with the implementation of the pilot program; to provide

10 for the membership of the council; to provide for a report of program results; and to

11 provide for related matters.

12 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

13 Section 1. Part I-E of Title 15 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, comprised

14 of R.S. 15:745 through 745.3, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

15 PART I-E. OFFENDER REENTRY SUPPORT

16 §745. Short title

17 This Part shall be known as the "Offender Reentry Support Act".

18 §745.1. Declaration of public policy

19 A. The goals of incarceration in the criminal justice system are:

20 (1) To protect the citizens of the state of Louisiana.

1           (2) To punish conduct which is defined as criminal by the legislature.

2           (3) To deter future conduct which is defined as criminal by the legislature.

3           (4) To rehabilitate offenders so that they may be reintroduced into society  
4 as law-abiding citizens.

5           B. The legislature recognizes that when ex-offenders return to their  
6 communities and families, they face numerous challenges to their successful reentry  
7 into the community. Among these challenges, the most difficult to overcome are the  
8 barriers to employment.

9           C. It is the intention of the legislature that this Part will provide opportunities  
10 to break the cycle of criminal recidivism, increase public safety, and assist the  
11 growing population of criminal offenders reentering the community to establish a  
12 self-sustaining life through opportunities in employment.

13           D. The legislature hereby declares that it shall be the public policy of this  
14 state to promote initiatives that will provide ex-offenders with the support and  
15 services necessary to allow them to find employment and make healthy connections  
16 with their families and communities. Such initiatives can help ex-offenders to  
17 become productively engaged with their communities, to work and support their  
18 families, and thus make both their communities safer and their families economically  
19 secure.

20           E. The legislature further recognizes the excellence that the standardized  
21 reentry programs developed by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections  
22 have had on the successful reentry of many ex-offenders into their communities. As  
23 a result of these successes, the legislature believes that it is equally important to  
24 replicate such programs in local and regional correctional facilities where  
25 statistically larger numbers of offenders are released each year.

26           F. The sheriff of Pointe Coupee Parish has already initiated a reentry project  
27 at the Pointe Coupee Detention Center through a public-private venture. The  
28 legislature believes that establishing a pilot program at this local facility would be  
29 an efficient use of available resources.

1           G. In balancing the legitimate needs of law enforcement agencies and the  
2           desire to facilitate reentry opportunities to individuals who have paid their debts to  
3           society, the Legislature of Louisiana enacts the provisions of this Part and authorizes  
4           the sheriff for the parish of Pointe Coupee to implement a pilot program which shall  
5           be called the "Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program".

6           §745.2. Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program; establishment; participating  
7           correctional institution; content; administration; implementation; reporting

8           A. The "Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program" is hereby created and  
9           established within the Pointe Coupee Sheriff's Office.

10          B. The program shall consist of all of the following components:

11           (1) An Offender Rehabilitation and Accountability Plan that is specific to  
12           each detention center offender and provides for all of the following:

13           (a) Engages the offender personally in the transition to release, sets clear and  
14           defined goals and expectations, and affords access to programs and services that will  
15           meet the individual's assessed risks and needs.

16           (b) Assists the offender in resolving any behavioral issues he may have,  
17           including access to counseling for substance abuse, anger and aggression, antisocial  
18           behavior, cognitive deficits, domestic violence, and lack of parenting skills all as  
19           needed by the offender.

20           (c) Assesses the offender throughout incarceration to determine progress and  
21           achievement of the goals and expectations established for that offender.

22           (d) Introduces the offender to stakeholders in the community where the  
23           offender will be returning upon release to reinforce law-abiding and responsible  
24           behavior.

25           (2) An Education and Job Skills Training Plan specific to each detention  
26           center offender. Education and training provided within this plan shall be developed  
27           in partnership with employers and educational institutions within Pointe Coupee  
28           Parish, and any other appropriate parishes, to ensure that the types of instruction  
29           provided aligns with the needs of employers in the region that are willing to hire

1 ex-offenders. When possible and appropriate, transitional on-the-job training should  
2 occur prior to release from incarceration.

3 (3) An Employment Preparation Plan that, prior to release, will provide the  
4 offender with skills training that addresses proper work ethic, communication,  
5 attitude, personal responsibility, and workplace culture. If required, the offender  
6 shall receive instruction in completing computerized applications, assistance with  
7 resume development, or assistance in job searches. The Louisiana Workforce  
8 Commission shall assist the Pointe Coupee Sheriff's Office in providing these  
9 services.

10 (4) A Post-Release Support Plan that will provide each ex-offender a single  
11 point of contact for assistance with the needs and challenges that are encountered  
12 after being discharged from the detention center. This assistance shall be made  
13 available to the ex-offender for a period of twelve months following release. Support  
14 provided shall include, at a minimum and as needed, help in obtaining the following:

- 15 (a) Necessary identification documents.  
16 (b) Housing.  
17 (c) Transportation.  
18 (d) Substance abuse treatment.  
19 (e) Family and domestic violence counseling.  
20 (f) Parenting.  
21 (g) Health care.  
22 (h) Child care.  
23 (i) Insurance.

24 C. The sheriff is hereby authorized to research potential funding sources for  
25 this pilot program and obtain funds from any federal, state, and local sources  
26 available for such initiatives as are developed and undertaken by the program. Such  
27 funds shall be used exclusively for the purposes of the program.

28 D. Within twenty-four months following initial implementation of the  
29 "Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program", the sheriff shall submit to the House

1 Committee on Administration of Criminal Justice and the Senate Committee on  
2 Judiciary C a comprehensive report regarding the implementation of the pilot  
3 program, funding obtained for its implementation, the progress of offenders and  
4 ex-offenders under the program, and a recommendation for continuation, expansion,  
5 or termination of the program.

6 §745.3. Advisory council; establishment; duties; membership

7 A. To assist with the creation, development and implementation of the  
8 "Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program", the sheriff shall create and appoint  
9 members to an advisory council. The council will assist the sheriff in the  
10 formulation of offender reentry strategies for the design of inmate education,  
11 treatment, and rehabilitation programs to provide sufficient skills to offenders that  
12 will likely result in their successful employment and reentry into their communities,  
13 reducing their chances of returning to prison after release.

14 B. The programs will be developed after evaluation and identification of the  
15 specific needs for reentry services within the detention center. The advisory council  
16 shall monitor these programs for their effectiveness and the outcomes achieved as  
17 they relate to such strategies. The sheriff may use any necessary resources of state  
18 and local agencies, academic institutions, and other research organizations to develop  
19 the strategies.

20 C. The advisory council's membership shall be from the region served by the  
21 sheriff's office and shall consist of the following members:

22 (1) Two representatives having managerial and business experience.

23 (2) A representative from the Pointe Coupee chamber of commerce.

24 (3) Representatives from each of the educational and training institutions in  
25 the region.

26 (4) Three representatives from community service organizations.

27 (5) Representatives from any state and local agencies relevant to addressing  
28 the pre-release and post-release needs of offenders.

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**DIGEST**

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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Thibaut

HB No. 781

**Abstract:** Creates the Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program in Pointe Coupee Parish.

Present law provides for reentry programs for offenders housed in the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections facilities.

Proposed law retains these provisions of present law and extends reentry programs to offenders housed in local jails through the creation of the Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program to be operated in Pointe Coupee Parish.

Proposed law provides that the program shall include all of the following components:

- (1) An offender rehabilitation and accountability plan - providing for defined goals following incarceration, resolution of any behavioral issues, and introduction to community leaders where the offender will be released.
- (2) An educational and job skills training plan - providing vocational and on the job training prior to release.
- (3) An employment preparation plan - providing work skills, communication, attitude, and personal responsibility.
- (4) A post-release support plan - including housing plans, health care, insurance, transportation, and substance abuse treatment.

Proposed law requires a report from the sheriff to the legislature regarding the implementation of the pilot program.

Proposed law provides for an advisory council appointed by the sheriff to assist with the operation of the program.

(Adds R.S. 15:745-745.3)