

RCW 72.78.005 Findings—2007 c 483. The people of the state of Washington expect to live in safe communities in which the threat of crime is minimized. Attempting to keep communities safe by building more prisons and paying the costs of incarceration has proven to be expensive to taxpayers. Incarceration is a necessary consequence for some offenders, however, the vast majority of those offenders will eventually return to their communities. Many of these former offenders will not have had the opportunity to address the deficiencies that may have contributed to their criminal behavior. Persons who do not have basic literacy and job skills, or who are ill-equipped to make the behavioral changes necessary to successfully function in the community, have a high risk of reoffense. Recidivism represents serious costs to victims, both financial and nonmonetary in nature, and also burdens state and local governments with those offenders who recycle through the criminal justice system.

The legislature believes that recidivism can be reduced and a substantial cost savings can be realized by utilizing evidence-based, research-based, and promising programs to address offender deficits, developing and better coordinating the reentry efforts of state and local governments and local communities. Research shows that if quality assurances are adhered to, implementing an optimal portfolio of evidence-based programming options for offenders who are willing to take advantage of such programs can have a notable impact on recidivism.

While the legislature recognizes that recidivism cannot be eliminated and that a significant number of offenders are unwilling or unable to work to develop the tools necessary to successfully reintegrate into society, the interests of the public overall are better served by better preparing offenders while incarcerated, and continuing those efforts for those recently released from prison or jail, for successful, productive, and healthy transitions to their communities. Educational, employment, and treatment opportunities should be designed to address individual deficits and ideally give offenders the ability to function in society. In order to foster reintegration, chapter 483, Laws of 2007 recognizes the importance of a strong partnership between the department of corrections, local governments, law enforcement, social service providers, and interested members of communities across our state. [2007 c 483 s 1.]