The innovative *Smart Start* project demonstrates a successful interagency partnership among the Oregon Public Health Division, Reproductive Health Program, the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC), and Washington County Health & Human Services. *Smart Start* provides reproductive health education, resources, birth control and clinical services for thousands of inmates being discharged each year from Oregon correctional institutions.

### Why is *Smart Start* important?

*Smart Start* strives to reduce the hardships of unintended pregnancies. Upon release, Oregon inmates have:

- knowledge about birth control choices,
- awareness of community resources,
- a *Smart Start* bag with birth control supplies, reproductive health information, and community resources, and
- the option of contraceptive clinical services.

“Incarcerated women who are released into the community are at particularly high risk for unintended pregnancies… leading to increased infant death rates and higher rates of child abuse and neglect.” Research shows that providing education, contraceptive services, and community resources to women prior to release greatly increases birth control use after release compared to providing services only in the community. (1)

Men’s involvement in family planning enables men and women to limit family size. Contraception, a joint responsibility of male and female partners, should reflect the needs and concerns of both partners. Primary responsibility of using a method often falls on one of the partners. When using male methods; such as condoms, vasectomy, withdrawal or periodic abstinence; the male partner has the primary responsibility. But even when a couple uses a female method, such as the pill or an IUD, men play an important role in the method’s use and effectiveness. “Men often hold decision-making power over matters as basic as sexual relations and when and whether to have a child or seek health care.” (2)

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**Smart Start History**

In **2000**, the Oregon Health Division, Reproductive Health Program began talking with the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) about increasing inmate reproductive health care services in correctional institutions.

Several factors supported the establishment of a collaboration:
- Reproductive Health could obtain federal Title X funds to serve additional clients.
- Serving male clients was and continues to be a federal priority.
- 90% of state prison inmates are male.
- State Corrections was developing a program to prepare inmates for transition into the community.

During the first few months of project planning, *Smart Start* staff held focus groups in men and women’s prisons. Initial feedback from inmates was positive. After state reproductive health and DOC planning meetings, the *Smart Start* project emerged: (1) reproductive health education would be added to pre-release risk reduction classes, and (2) inmates would receive a *Smart Start* bag when they were released. Project staff incorporated focus group suggestions into the development of *Smart Start* bag supplies, pamphlets and resource lists.

The project started at two pilot sites in **2002** and expanded to seven release facilities. Other DOC institutions integrated a reproductive health education component into pre-release risk reduction classes. Reproductive health program staff trained local health department and American Red Cross instructors and provided curriculum and teaching materials.

In **2003**, the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility for women opened in Wilsonville. Washington County Public Health joined the collaboration. They began receiving family planning grant funds for contraceptive services and initiated monthly birth control and risk reduction classes for inmates close to discharge.

When Coffee Creek joined the project, a new Smart Start service emerged. To start on a contraceptive method prior to release, inmates were offered a clinical visit and counseling with a Washington County nurse practitioner. Federal Title X funds paid for clinic services and birth control supplies, including birth control pills, Depo Provera injections, contraceptive rings and emergency contraception. Inmates’ individual counseling session included information about where to go for further services in their discharge location. These services continue today.

**In July 2006**, Reproductive Health supplied a third stock of 9,600 *Smart Start* bags. *Smart Start* bags contain birth control supplies, personal items, educational materials and community resources. Inmates continue to assemble the bags while DOC stores and distributes them.

**In 2007**, contracted pre-release risk reduction classes were phased out. Today, DOC transition coordinators facilitate *Smart Start* reproductive health classes. A Washington County health educator teaches Coffee Creek risk reduction and birth control classes.

**In 2010**, Reproductive Health supplied 5,000 *Smart Start* bags.

**In 2013**, Reproductive Health will supply 5,000 *Smart Start* bags. *Smart Start* continues to serve thousands of inmates in nine state correctional institutions.
The **Smart Start Partnership**

The Oregon Public Health Division, the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC), and Washington County Health & Human Services work together to make *Smart Start* a success.

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**Oregon Public Health Division, Reproductive Health Program**

- Manages the *Smart Start* project in nine state prisons.
- Partners with other Oregon Public Health Division state programs to integrate HIV, Hepatitis C, and STD education into reproductive health curriculum.
- Partners with the Shangri-La *Connections* program to provide *Smart Start* low literacy reproductive health curriculum for offenders with special learning needs.
- Develops and implements evaluation processes.
- Develops and updates inmate reproductive health curriculum.
- Trains DOC class facilitators.
- Determines content, develops education materials and community resource lists, and purchases birth control supplies for *Smart Start* bags.
- Collects and analyzes data.
- Provides technical assistance and consultation.
- Participates in Oregon State Correctional Institution inmate transition events.
- Manages a Washington County Health and Human Services Title X grant contract to provide reproductive health services in the Oregon women’s prison.

**The Department of Corrections:**

- Integrates *Smart Start* classes into transition programs.
- Provides staff to facilitate inmate classes.
- Schedules and coordinates classes and services.
- Collects and submits data.
- Assembles, distributes and tracks *Smart Start* bags.

**Washington County Health and Human Services provides services for female inmates:**

- Provides risk reduction and birth control classes.
- Provides clinical visits for female inmates starting birth control methods prior to release.
Smart Start Accomplishments

Partners have successfully integrated Smart Start into transition programs increasing the number of inmates receiving education and resources.

Inmate reproductive health class participation increases each year. (Percent increase from previous year.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,387 (46%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,052 (48%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2,337 (14%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2,490 (7%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2,763 (11%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2,976 (8%)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Health Implications

With public health support, prisons can reach large numbers of high-risk inmates nearing prison release with:

- Birth control education.
- Understanding of the male role in contraception and partner support.
- Understanding reproductive life planning.
- Pre-release clinical services to start a birth control method.
- Awareness of community sexual health services.
- Birth control supplies, educational materials and resources.

Interagency partnerships can lead to increased prevention services for high-risk populations. Trained prison staff can provide program stability. Department of Corrections programs can successfully integrate and provide inmate reproductive health services.

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