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## **ALLEGHENY COUNTY FORENSIC PROGRAM WINS AWARD FROM HARVARD**

### ***Prison Release Program Wins \$100,000 Award***

Cambridge, Mass., – July 27, 2005 – The Allegheny (PA) County State Forensic Program has won the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award. The Innovations Award is a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, and is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government. One of six award winners, the program will receive a \$100,000 grant to support replication of its significant and creative efforts.

The Allegheny County State Forensic Program is a unique approach to working with individuals with behavioral health diagnoses as they are released from Pennsylvania penitentiaries. The program promotes participants' re-integration into the community as productive, valuable members of society. "The Allegheny effort focuses on the participants as individuals," said Gowher Rizvi, Director of the Ash Institute. "Its success stems from the fact that it does not utilize a one-size-fits-all approach."

The program has successfully re-integrated more than 300 individuals with behavioral health issues into the community upon release from prison through a comprehensive program that includes face-to-face meetings while in prison, post-incarceration housing, psychiatric treatment as well as access to bus passes, new clothes, and help in applying for eligible benefits and job search assistance. The program spends approximately \$3,000 on each participant, which is far less than the yearly cost of incarcerating a prisoner.

The program has already shown a significant return on investment. Its recidivism rate of 10.4% is roughly one-sixth that of the national rate (61%) for individuals released from state prisons with a behavioral health diagnosis. "There is clear evidence that this program works," said Stephen Goldsmith, Director of the Innovations in American Government Awards. "When compared with the national average, it's easy to see how this program is changing lives, changing attitudes and saving tax dollars."

#### The Allegheny County State Forensic Program

(<http://www.county.allegheny.pa.us/dhs/BH/acsfp.html>) was one of more than 1,000 applicants for the 2005 Innovations in American Government Award. Eighteen finalists delivered a public presentation before the National Selection Committee at Harvard University on May 11, 2005. The Committee, chaired by David R. Gergen of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard, included former Maryland Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, former San Diego Mayor Susan Golding, former White House Deputy Chief of Staff Maria Echaveste, and former Congressman William Clinger. The award was presented today in Washington, D.C.

For 18 years, the Innovations in American Government Award has recognized quality and responsiveness at all levels of government, honored government efforts that are creative, effective and address significant problems, and has fostered the replication of innovative approaches to the challenges facing government. The award is a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government.

**The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation** ([www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu](http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu)) at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government fosters excellence in government around the world in order to generate and strengthen democracy. Through its awards program, research, publications, curriculum support, and global network, the Institute champions critical milestones in creative and effective governance and democratic practice.

**The Council for Excellence in Government** ([www.excelgov.org](http://www.excelgov.org)) is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to improve government performance by strengthening results-oriented management and creative leadership in the public sector, and to build understanding by focusing public discussion on government's role and responsibilities.

For more information on the Innovations in American Government program and this year's award winners, please visit [www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu](http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu) or [www.excelgov.org](http://www.excelgov.org).

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