



**Governor's Office of
Faith Based Community
Development Services**

**Council on Community
Re-Entry
and Reintegration**



Guidelines for Faith Leaders and Faith Communities

**New York State Guide to
Re-Entry and Reintegration**

In Cooperation with the New York Theological Seminary

**Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor**

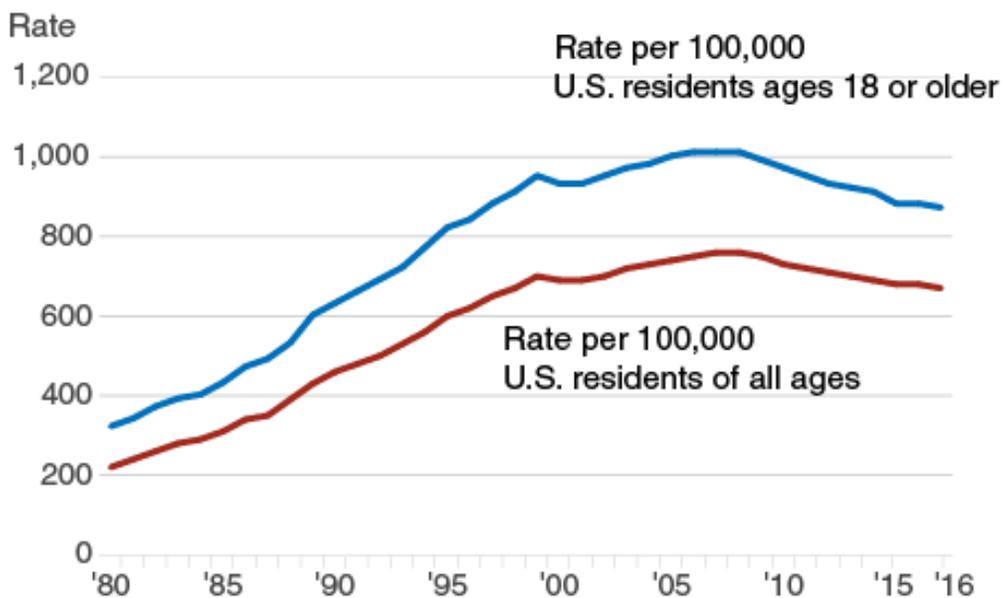
**Karim Camara
Executive Director**



The page contains a large, faint watermark of a globe centered on the Atlantic Ocean, spanning most of the page's width and height. The globe shows the continents of North and South America on the left and Europe and Africa on the right, with latitude and longitude lines visible. The watermark is light gray and semi-transparent, serving as a background for the page.

Note: According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice, the incarceration rate is the number of persons under the jurisdiction of local jails and state and federal correctional authorities per 100,000 residents. This includes persons held in private prison facilities under the jurisdiction of state and federal authorities. This may also include halfway houses, boot camps, weekend programs, and other facilities in which individuals are locked up overnight.¹

Incarceration rate, 1980–2016



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jail Inmates, and National Prisoner Statistics Program, 1981-2016; and U.S. Census Bureau, postcensal estimated resident population for January 1 of the following year, 1981-2017

¹ The U.S. Bureau of Justice. <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=kfdetail&iid=493#figure>

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Introduction

The United States has one of the highest rates of incarceration in the world. Mass incarceration, as this phenomenon is often called, has resulted in exceptionally high rates of imprisonment among young African American and Latino men living in poorer neighborhoods. However, it has not affected just these demographic groups. Mass incarceration has affected people of all racial, ethnic, gender, and social categories. It is a severe public health crisis affecting the whole society. Its impact is felt not just by those who are caught up in the criminal justice system, but by their children, families, and broader communities. The ongoing effects of incarceration are felt even after persons have completed their sentences, through ongoing discrimination in employment and housing, among other areas. Mass incarceration is a community issue, and not just a problem affecting isolated individuals.

It is not just a community and justice issue. It is also an economic issue. The tax burden of keeping people incarcerated is enormous. Any cost analysis that looks at the tax burden of keeping people in prison quickly shows up as a significant loss of tax dollars. Finding ways to keep persons from being sent to prison in the first place, or keeping them from being sent back to prison after having completed their sentence, without increasing the danger of exposing the broader society to more criminal behavior, is clearly in everyone's economic interest when it comes to paying for prisons.

Many efforts to address mass incarceration at all levels of government, within the private sector, in the non-profit world, and in faith-based communities are now underway. Reforming sentencing guidelines for drug-related offenses has been a significant accomplishment. Other efforts such as providing alternatives to incarceration especially for younger persons and first-time offenders are being implemented. Educators are looking at ways to end what has been called the "school to prison pipeline" that has resulted from the disproportionately harsh disciplinary policies that have too often been implemented in schools where a large percentage of students are affected by poverty. Increased involvement by community leaders, including faith leaders, in the lives of the young people in their communities, and more significant efforts to build bridges of understanding with local police departments are being undertaken.

One of the critical components to ending mass incarceration is to reduce the likelihood that after being released someone is going to commit a new offense or violate the conditions of his or her parole, sending them back to prison. Returning to prison after being released is called “recidivism.” Reducing recidivism is an essential step toward ending mass incarceration. One of the most effective means of reducing recidivism is to provide individual and community support to assist returning members of the community as they are coming home from prison, and to stay with them to ensure a successful re-entry and reintegration into society. The purpose of this Guidebook is to assist faith leaders and faith communities in undertaking programs to support re-entry and reintegration.

Re-Entry and Reintegration 101: An Overview

“Re-entry” refers to the process and experience of leaving prison after completing a sentence or being paroled and re-entering the wider society. It is often also called “returning” as the person is in effect coming back home. It is a journey that someone who is incarcerated is almost always eventually going to undertake. More than 95% of persons who are incarcerated in New York State are eventually released. Re-entry does not begin the moment a person steps outside the walls of a correctional facility. It is already underway months and even years in advance of the actual release date as the person begins to prepare to re-enter or return. Some say that it begins at the point of an initial arrest or conviction as the person begins to contemplate what “getting out” entails.

Reintegration refers to the process in which a returning person is successfully brought back into the community and society. It refers both to the adjustments and connections that are necessary for the re-entering person to make and to the adjustments and connections that others in the community or society must make to help someone successfully return.

Among the most pressing issues that a person typically faces in re-entry and reintegration are housing and employment. Finding affordable housing after being incarcerated for many years can be daunting. A person who has been incarcerated has not paid a light bill or maybe not even cooked a meal for many years. Someone who has been incarcerated for any length of time has a hole in their resume that is hard to hide. Employers may refuse to hire someone with a criminal conviction in their background, even though such blanket discrimination is illegal in New York State. Other needs that arise from the reintegration process entail family relationships, and building new social networks to attain what amounts to significant social capital.

There are also often legal issues to be faced, starting with those that arise from being on parole. Finally, there can be health and mental health issues for some people, including post-traumatic stress disorder arising from their time in prison, or incidents in their lives before prison.

Why Should Faith Communities Be Involved?

Coming home is more than just a physical journey. It is a spiritual journey. For re-entry and reintegration to be successful over the long-term, the returning person needs spiritual support from family members, neighbors, and the wider community. Successful re-entry and reintegration require faith, not just on the part of the returning person, but on the part of the entire community. Spiritual resilience and faith enable a person not just to face the challenges and hardships of returning home, but to use such challenges and hardships as stepping stones to success.

Faith communities in this regard have a crucial role to play in re-entry and reintegration. People of faith are specialists in being able to see things that others do not always see, or might not even think possible. Faith communities of all religious traditions share one thing in common: they believe in the possibility of transformation, restoration, and renewal. In this capacity, they can impart hope where hope is badly needed but sometimes in short supply. Members of a faith community often have other roles that they play in their capacity as employers or co-workers, in civic life, or even in the court system. When they act from their faith commitments, they can help "returning persons" see possibilities that they might not have seen in themselves. One of the most essential contributions members of a faith community can communicate to someone coming home is that the worst moments in our lives ultimately define none of us. We can be defined instead by who we are to be and whom we can become.

One of the critical components in successful re-entry and reintegration is to identify and build upon the strengths of the returning person. Anyone who has been incarcerated has learned to face challenges and navigate obstacles throughout the experience. Too often returning persons are greeted by deficit-based thinking that only sees them for what they are lacking and not for what they have attained. Faith communities are well positioned to be able to operate from asset-based thinking that starts with an examination of someone's strengths and positive accomplishments.

Another significant contribution that faith communities have to make to the re-entry and reintegration process is communicating a sense of acceptance even to those who have done unacceptable things in the past. The debt of having caused extreme harm to another person or their property is not one that can quickly be forgotten. Faith communities of all religious traditions know that forgiveness is not the same as forgetting, but that forgiveness is about being able to move ahead. A vital part of this journey in any spiritual or religious tradition is the movement from regret, which is the necessary starting point of the journey, to some form of resolution that will serve the common good. The resolution comes in different ways, but in the end, it means that someone has not just successfully re-entered the wider society, but has successfully been reintegrated in a meaningful way.

Finally, faith communities are people who put their beliefs into action. Many people talk about what our society needs, or have ideas about what ought to be done to make this a better world. Faith communities are by their very nature experts at turning these words into deeds. Sometimes within our faith communities, we hear complaints that members are not doing enough to make the world a better place. That is itself a reflection of just how much our faith communities value constructive change and the work that needs to be done to make the world a better place.

One crucial caution to note is that members of any faith community are not always going to agree with each other about specific policies, proposals, actions, and even ideas. We often have honest disagreements about the best way forward or the most critical steps to take in helping someone make the successful journey home. Sometimes these disagreements take the form of resistance from some members of the wider community who do not agree with the need to support re-entry and reintegration, or who express fear about bringing formerly incarcerated persons into their community. We should expect this. Our members do not always agree. Faith includes the capacity to live with such disagreements and at the same time provides the way to overcome resistance to help make the journey from punishment to transformation that coming home entails.

New York State Initiatives

Prisons and jails are by their very nature institutions under the authority of the government, be it municipal, federal, or state. They are a crucial component of the legal system and, in this regard, are part of our broader commitment to be governed by the rule of law. Faith communities seeking to work with re-entry and reintegration must always be aware of the legal aspects of incarceration, and the legal ramifications of their work in re-entry and reintegration, especially on the lives of returning members of the community. It is also crucial for them to know what their government is doing that is impacting the re-entry and reintegration process.

New York State has taken the lead in this regard with the creation of a state-wide Governor's Council for Re-entry and Reintegration in 2014. The Council was created to identify and alleviate barriers to re-entry for people with any conviction history. Due to Council recommendations, New York has made many changes in state policies, regulations, and laws affecting how people with criminal convictions are treated. Among these changes are:

- Allowing courts to seal up to two, non-violent criminal convictions for individuals who have been crime-free for at least ten years. Sealing means these convictions will not be seen for civil purposes, such as by employers or housing providers;
- Banning the criminal history box from admissions to SUNY colleges (CUNY already did not inquire about criminal history);
- Implementing fair chance hiring practices for New York state employment;
- Implementing anti-discrimination guidelines for state-financed housing;
- Amending parole board regulations to ensure the board is guided by risk and needs principles, including an individual's current level of risk to public safety;
- Creating uniform guidelines for state licensing practices that presume that qualified individuals with criminal histories will be licensed, unless a fact-based, individualized review determines otherwise;
- Prohibiting insurance companies from denying commercial crime insurance coverage to businesses who hire people with criminal convictions;
- Investing in employment programs for justice-involved individuals;
- Increasing public housing opportunities for those with conviction histories through family reunification pilots

- Increasing the number of clemencies considered each year, through the conditional youth pardon program and partnering with pro-bono attorneys to help individuals prepare their applications; and
- Launching the Work for Success Employer pledge to encourage companies to commit to considering individuals with conviction histories for jobs publicly.

New York State has made many other criminal justice accomplishments which ease re-entry or in many circumstances, prevent people from leaving the community in the first place. Some of these recent accomplishments include:

- Closing 24 adult and juvenile detention facilities, eliminating 5,500 adult prison beds;
- Investing \$25 million annually in a community-based alternative to incarceration (ATI) programs including alternatives to pre-trial detention; local and state incarceration; jail-based cognitive behavioral intervention programs; and residential programs serving specific types of individuals;
- Expanding college in prison programs for 2,500 students over five years in 17 correctional facilities in collaboration with the Manhattan District Attorney;
- Improving special education within prison by increasing the number of special education teachers to reduce class size and hiring psychologists who can identify individuals in need of alternative educational approaches;
- Raising the age of criminal responsibility to 18 years old, ensuring that young people in New York who commit non-violent crimes receive the intervention and evidence-based treatment they need; and
- Implementing stricter regulations on who can go to solitary confinement and for how long, allowing the state to close more than 1,200 solitary confinement beds.

These are essential steps, but state government cannot do this work on its own. Faith communities are essential partners in the re-entry and reintegration journey.

Before Getting Started

You have reached the point where you and other members of your faith community have decided that you would like to become involved, or that you are being called to become involved in re-entry and reintegration in your community. Here are some important things to note as you get started.

1. No proselytizing.

Persons coming home are vulnerable and need support. Taking advantage of their vulnerability and using the offer of support as an incentive to proselytize or “evangelize” is unethical. Deciding to change one’s religious beliefs under conditions of duress is not an authentic conversion, which is always a matter of freedom and responsibility. It does not mean one cannot authentically share their faith commitments with someone coming home. It means that religious conversion should never be a condition or an expected result of providing support for the re-entry and reintegration process.

2. Collaborate with others.

Sometimes faith communities have a “go it on your own” mentality that causes them to ignore other existing programs in their communities that they can work with, or offer their support in isolation from others who are involved in the re-entry and reintegration process for returning persons. Don’t be afraid to work with others even if they do not share your faith commitments. It does not tarnish one’s faith to work with persons of different faith commitments or with other secular or non-faith based organizations committed to doing good work.

3. Involve credible messengers as much as possible.

A credible messenger is a person who has both the personal experience and the cultural competence to communicate effectively with someone who is returning home from prison and jail. Typically, they are persons in leadership who have grown up in the neighborhoods that a large percentage of people in prison and jail come from, have had experience with the legal system, have successfully made the journey home, and have gained the respect of others in the community for their integrity and engagement. Credible messengers not only make the best mentors for those who are on the journey home, but they are also often the best instructors of those seeking to help others make the journey home.

4. Do not try to do too much.

Be realistic about what you and your faith community can do, or is willing to do. A grand vision of transformation often energizes faith communities, but their programs are most effective when they focus on measurable, realizable achievements. Be realistic about the kind of program your faith community can offer, and how you will sustain it. This can appear to go against the earlier statement that faith communities believe in transformation. It is not a contradiction however if you recognize that you do not have to achieve the impossible all at once or all by yourself. For the sake of those who are returning home as well as those who are giving of their time and energies, plan for the long haul.

5. Be aware of potential problems.

This is closely related to the ethical injunction to not harm. Persons who are returning home are often on parole, which means they are continuing to serve their sentence and are bound by many of the conditions that were part of their incarceration. If this is the case, they are under the supervision of a parole officer and are bound by strict guidelines set by state law. Do not involve them in any activities that might violate their terms of parole, knowingly or unknowingly. Good intentions are never enough on their own. They need to be combined with skilled knowledge and adequate training.

6. Commit to increasing general awareness of the broader society.

This idea is a version of the injunction "not to put your candle under a basket." Let others in the community know of your work, and be effective advocates not just for those who are coming home, but for more comprehensive efforts to end mass incarceration, support restorative justice, and transform underlying social conditions such as poverty that feed into the criminal justice system.

Types of Programs to Consider

The following pages offer several models of working re-entry and reintegration programs or ministries which are organized and operated by faith communities in New York State. They serve as models to consider as one starts a program. Contact information on the web for each program is provided for more details.

“Coming Home” Reformed Church of Bronxville <http://www.reformedchurch.org/coming-home>

Introduction to the Program:

“Coming Home” is a 24-week program developed for formerly incarcerated men and women and is designed to be replicated by other congregations. “Coming Home” assists individuals in the process of recovery from the traumas associated with a major life crisis and rebuilding one’s life through the strengthening of essential life skills, and the sharing of life stories in the context of the establishment of a supportive community. A typical “Coming Home” program has between 8 and 12 participants. The sessions include the following distinct components:

Program Elements:

- 1. Life Skills Sessions with Guest Speakers:** Speakers offer presentations on relevant topics including Self-Image, Goal Setting, Healthy Relationships and the World of Work.
- 2. Goal Setting with Congregants:** Each participant works one-on-one with a trained volunteer to set and achieve short and long-term goals.
- 3. Style Night:** A session devoted to outer appearance. Participants take part in an evening of shopping for clothing and accessories provided by Reformed Church of Bronxville and affiliate organizations. Personal shoppers assist the participants.
- 4. Active Citizenship:** A session devoted to systemic change. The group communally selects a piece of advocacy and takes part in promoting their chosen cause through policy visits to legislators, letter writing or grassroots organizing.

5. **Personal Stories:** Participants are guided in sharing their life experiences and their narrative to reflect their growth and strengths. At the end of the program, they may choose to share their stories at graduation.
6. **Tools for Healing Trauma:** Each evening closes with a healing practice. Participants learn tools for self-awareness and healing trauma.
7. **2 Special Sessions:** A Graduation where participants, congregants, instructors, friends, and family celebrate the successful completion of the program, and where graduates receive a certificate of completion; and a formal meeting with public officials and community members to discuss public policy regarding the New York State correctional system and ways that it could be improved.
8. Each session begins with a shared meal (cooked at the church or catered) and shared reflection on a passage from scripture or other inspirational reading. All religions and philosophies are welcomed. “Coming Home” seeks to be inclusive of diverse spiritual traditions.

Participant Profile:

- Have a history of incarceration.
- Have the determination to achieve and build healthy futures.
- Must be clean from drug or alcohol abuse for at least three months, and are committed to staying clean
- Are interested in learning and sharing about themselves
- Are interested in connecting with a supportive group in a positive surrounding

Participants are referred to the program from various agencies involved with re-entry and reintegration. Members of the ministerial staff of Bronxville Reformed Church are in regular contact with re-entry agencies in New York City and Westchester County to get referrals, interview potential participants, and publicize the program. Participants are also recruited through “word of mouth” as graduates recommend the program to others who are in the process of re-entering.

Participants are expected to meet specific requirements such as punctual attendance and sobriety. If at any time these expectations are not met, a participant may be terminated from the program.

Mentors:

Mentors are recruited from among the congregation and are trained before being assigned one-on-one relationships. Mentor training includes:

- Listening skills
- Goal setting
- Accessing resources
- Additional material is provided on poverty, race, and trauma on our site:
<http://www.reformedchurch.org/coming-home/#reality>

Each participant is assigned a mentor who is a member of the Bronxville Reformed Church who will work with them on a one-on-one basis for the duration of the program. Mentors are recruited from the congregation through regular announcements in worship and various church publications.

Circles of Support:

In addition to mentors, the program sponsors restorative circles for participants who desire support in mending family or community relationships. Each circle of support includes a small number of volunteers who meet collectively with the participant to provide emotional, moral, and spiritual support through the healing process.

Credible Messengers:

In addition to the mentors drawn from the membership of the congregation, the program includes several “credible messengers” or persons who have successfully made the journey home through re-entry and reintegration as speakers and resource leaders. Graduates of the program are included in various events, a regular reunion barbeque, and church holiday gatherings.

Aftercare and Evaluation:

Graduates of the “Coming Home” program are welcomed to return from time to time. It is common that when a graduate experiences a challenge down the road, they will show up back at the church for a session.

Fordham University’s Beck Institute on Religion and Poverty evaluates participants before, immediately after, and six months after the completion of the program. Their findings provide insight for both the members of the congregation and the persons coming home.

Involvement with the Wider Congregation:

Participants in “Coming Home” are given opportunities to participate in the broader life of the congregation on a regular basis. The church makes an effort to include those with a history of incarceration as guest preachers, adult education leaders, and participants on panels following films designed to educate the congregation about issues of mass incarceration.

Involvement with the Wider Community:

“Coming Home” is intentional in seeking to build support from the broader community that is more than just financial. One of the most important of these is its relationship with Westchester library services, which makes a range of reading materials available online and in the library. A member of the library’s staff comes to one of the program sessions each year to talk about the library’s resources and receive suggestions for particular materials that members think would be helpful.

**Back to Basics Outreach Ministries, Inc. &
Mt. Hope Community Church, Buffalo, NY
Pastor Charles Walker, Manager, Re-Entry Program
(716) 854-1086 X110
walkerbuffalo@aol.com**

Back to Basics Outreach Ministries Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing services that improve the quality of life for residents in the City of Buffalo and surrounding communities. Since 1994, its services address problems associated with substance abuse, gang violence, unemployment, prisoner re-entry, homelessness, and youth development. Its mission is to serve our most vulnerable citizens with programs that improve their overall safety and quality of life (Mission Statement).

The Prisoner Re-entry Community Mentoring Program is a pilot program developed by Back to Basics and adopted by Erie County as a model for successful re-entry mentoring. The program offers encouragement, support, and guidance to propel participants forward in a positive direction toward a smooth transition back into society. This program captures the understanding that personal experiences of a successful transition back into the community can be the “guiding light” for newly released participants. The program offers some opportunities for the faith community to partner in a variety of ways.

Pastor Charles Walker, who directs the Re-entry program for Back to Basics, is also pastor of Mt. Hope Community Church in Buffalo. The Mt. Hope Church sponsors a Neighborhood Nutrition Initiative that promotes access to healthy food choices in a neighborhood that lacks a nearby grocery store. Part of the Initiative entails a farmer's market during the summer months on Saturdays that brings fresh meat, fruits, and vegetables into the neighborhood. The program hires several re-entering persons to run the market, providing them with an opportunity to develop business and customer service skills, and to interact positively with the community.

Other Partnerships with Faith Communities Include

- An Annual Tree of Hope Lighting Ceremony in which re-entering clients participate with faith communities and other community leaders to promote peace, pride, love, and hope in their neighborhoods;
- The Neighborhood Clean-Up Campaign where re-entering clients join in with neighborhood efforts to promote pride of ownership & responsibility; and
- An Annual Community Revival designed to meet the spiritual needs of re-entering clients and others in the community.

St. Luke & St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church
Rochester NY
Phone: (585) 546-7730
Email: office@twosaints.org
Website: www.twosaints.org
(from the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester website)

Prison Ministry

What has been called prison ministry in the church has developed in a broader framework of re-entry to the community, and care for formerly imprisoned persons and their families. The social implications of the "big picture" are great too as they adversely affect entire large sections of the city.

Three areas of activity have occupied Two Saints parishioners concerned with such prison re-entry and aftercare for youths, men, and women with experiences of incarceration.

Communal Prayers

Communal prayers recognize the humanity and dignity of each imprisoned man, woman, and youth as well as of those reentering society. Services for them are improving. The whole area requires more resources and better service coordination to reduce recidivism, assist reentrants and families, and enhance public safety.

Individual Ministries

Some Two Saints members engage in individual ministries. Trained as a mentor by Judicial Process Commission, one counsels a Monroe County inmate. Another is website administrator and coordinates communications and research for SMART (Safer Monroe Area Re-entry Team).

Turning Points Resource Center

Turning Points Resource Center (TPC) is a service providing information for justice-involved individuals and their families involved with New York State prisons and jails operated in the area around Rochester NY. TPC is located at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 350 Chili Avenue, in Rochester NY. If one has a family member who is currently in one of these facilities or know of a person or family who is touched by incarceration, this center provides the information one can use.

A joint project of St. Luke's and St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church, and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, the TPC, in operation since November 2012, provides up-to-date information for justice-involved individuals and their families before and during incarceration, as well as during the re-entry process back into the community. The name "Turning Points" was chosen in recognition that behaviors leading to incarceration often occurs through multiple generations within families and due to systemic deficiencies. It is hoped that with access to the most appropriate services and support, these multi-generational cycles can be "turned around" and focused on positive behavior.

The Brick Presbyterian Church in the City of New York Prison Ministry Kent McKamy, Chair of the Committee Kent.McKamy@gmail.com (from the Church's Ministry Description)

The Brick Presbyterian Church Prison Ministry focuses on helping formerly incarcerated men and women come home.

Coming back into civil society is hard for those who have served time in prison. Such individuals face many challenges, from the most complex to the seemingly mundane, from finding somewhere to live, securing a job, and reintegrating with family and faith communities, to using a MetroCard, navigating public transportation, getting proper identification, and dealing with a rapidly changing technological world. Strangers in a strange land, returning citizens need to learn and relearn countless things most of us take for granted.

Members of the Brick Prison Ministry try to help to return citizens with these overwhelming hurdles.

It takes a degree of learning. Understanding and navigating the obstacles that sentencing, probation, and parole requirements present can be tricky. That is why the Prison Ministry group meets once a month (first Monday of each month) to learn about and consider developments in the complex and changing world of re-entry, a system that involves many public and private agencies offering different services. Typically, we meet with invited experts, including formerly incarcerated people who are now leaders in the field of re-entry.

The more we understand, the better we can genuinely help our returning brothers and sisters adjust to life on the outside, as positive and productive citizens. The more we understand, the better we are at merely being present, listening, and sharing as a mentor and fellow human: the most significant service we can offer.

Opportunities for Brick Prison Ministry volunteers include (but are not limited to):

- Writing letters to incarcerated women and men, and maintaining correspondence;

- Visiting Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining one Sunday afternoon per month to meet with students currently enrolled in New York Theological Seminary's master's degree program that is given inside the correctional system; and
- Meeting with men and women who have come home after serving their sentences or having been released on parole.

Healing Communities

Rev. Dr. Harold Dean Trulear, National Director

<http://www.healingcommunitiesusa.com>

(215) 268-7920

Bishop Darren A. Ferguson, New York Coordinator

Darren.Ferguson77@gmail.com

(646) 620-2214

Healing Communities is a distinct form of ministry training faith communities to become Stations of Hope for men and women returning from or at risk of incarceration, their families and the broader community.

Healing Communities began in 2006 when The Annie E. Casey Foundation launched a prison re-entry program in response to the devastating effect the 'drug war,' and mass incarceration was having among urban families and communities in cities across the country. Key to the success of the development of the Healing Communities training program was the understanding that faith communities play an essential role in re-entry

Since then Healing Communities has been implemented in over 25 sites nationally, in partnership with such organizations as the Progressive National Baptist Convention, The General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church and the D-Free Ministry.

Healing Communities, we train members of communities of faith to:

- Walk with the returning citizens (connect returning citizens to resources that will help set attainable goals);
- Help them connect with their faith (provide spiritual support);
- Open their hearts to them (foster positive relationships);
- Embrace them (extend open and affirming fellowship);
- Provide understanding (collaboration with family and friends to rebuild relationships);

Advocate for political change on a local, state, and federal level.

We Minister To:

- The defendant, individual convicted, or responsible party (those who are incarcerated or returning citizens);
- The family of the responsible party/defendant/incarcerated individual (the families of the currently incarcerated and returning citizens)
- The harmed party/crime victim; and
- The communities to which responsible parties return and where harmed individuals live; the caregivers; and families of returning citizens.

Any faith community in New York State that wishes to receive the Healing Communities training can contact Dr. Ferguson for more information.

Starting Your Program

Once you have decided what your program is going to look like, it is time to plan it and put it into action. Effective program planning generally starts with identifying a goal, which entails the broader picture, and measurable objectives or outcomes, which will tell you if and when you reach the goal. Your strategy for achieving those goals and objectives or outcomes, which is the road map that you design for getting there, comes next. It should answer the “when and where” questions. You also need to identify the resources that are going to be needed in order to answer the “how” questions. Engaging in on-going evaluation or assessment that measures outcomes and not just activities is critical. An evaluation that only comes at the end of a program does not help much when you are in the middle of things.

A key question is how do members of a faith community that plans to run a re-entry program or ministry make contact with persons returning from prison if they are not personally already involved with re-entry and reintegration. The best answer is to start with making contact with those already working on re-entry and reintegration in your local community, city, or region. Explain what you want to do. Ask them for advice. And then ask them to make referrals to you. Referrals can also come from family members in the community, or from those who have recently returned and have successfully reintegrated. Persons who are returning are often living initially in temporary housing arrangements, so plan to reach out by phone or email when you begin to make contact with returning members of the community.

Many counties in New York have a Re-Entry Task Force that works with organizations already providing services for re-entry and reintegration. The Re-Entry Task Forces are overseen jointly by the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). Most include representatives of various local service agencies providing support for re-entry and reintegration. They also are an important resource for making connections with returning members of the community as well as with parole officers. A list of all 19 New York State Re-Entry Tasks Forces can be found at the end of this booklet.

It is important to recognize that one of the most important resources needed for a successful re-entry and reintegration program is knowledge. Take time to educate yourself and others in your faith community about the realities of re-entry, the services that are being provided in your region, and what makes for positive results. Learn more about how children and families are affected, what others are doing in your region, and how your faith community can become more involved not just directly in re-entry, but in some of the wider public policy issues that affect re-entry and reintegration. Join a local round-table or get involved with the re-entry task force in your region. Communicate what you are learning to others in your faith community and in your wider circles of influence.

Some Online Resources for Re-Entry and Reintegration Services

An online search for re-entry and reintegration services will quickly turn up a number of excellent resources found on the web. Other web pages often cite two of these as being helpful for offering services that support re-entry and reintegration.

The first is The New York Public Library *Connections: A Guide for Formerly Incarcerated People in New York City*. Accessed online at the New York Public Library's website at <https://www.nypl.org/help/community-outreach/correctional-services>, this is an annual comprehensive publication by the New York Public Library that lists agencies with contact information and descriptions of their services. Agencies are listed for a variety of categories such as housing or education.

Connections is free to anyone incarcerated in a New York State prison or a local jail. Priority is given to persons who are soon to be released. One can obtain a hard copy by writing to NYPL Correctional Services, 445 Fifth Ave, NY, NY 10016. Others are asked to download the document in .pdf format from the web page to save the cost of publication. A Spanish translation edition is also available as a .pdf only. The New York Public Library will copy up to 40 pages of the Spanish language version to send to someone who is incarcerated.

Page 4 of the 2018 edition of *Connections* lists a series of nine similar publications that cover other areas of New York State. For regions not covered by one of these other publications, page 5 provides contact information for the various relevant County Re-entry Task Forces.

A second website that is often cited by those looking for resources online in New York State is Re-entry Net. Its web address is <https://www.re-entry.net>. Sponsored by The Bronx Defenders, Prisoner Re-entry Institute at John Jay College, and Pro Bono Net, Re-entry Net is an online clearinghouse of attorneys, social service providers, and policy reform advocates on re-entry and reintegration, with a concern for the consequences of criminal proceedings. Individuals can register as members without cost to receive access to additional library resources and other materials.

Additional Organizational Resources

Albany County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Department of Mental Health
175 Green St., Albany, NY 12202-2011
Phone: (518) 447-2003

Bronx County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Borough President's Office
851 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY 10451-2937
Phone: (718) 590-3562

Broome County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Department of Mental Health
229-231 State St., 6th Floor
Binghamton, NY 13901-2777
Phone: (607) 778-1364

Dutchess County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Exodus Transitional Community
85 Cannon St., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601-3303
Phone: (845) 452-7620

Erie County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Department of Mental Health
95 Franklin St., Rath Bldg., Buffalo, NY 14202-3925
Phone: (716) 510-3282

Kings County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O ComALERT
210 Joralemon St., 3rd FL, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2904
Phone: (718) 250-5557

Manhattan Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Harlem Community Justice Center
170 E. 121st St., New York, NY 10035-3523
Phone: (212) 360-4131

Monroe County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Catholic Family Center
1645 St. Paul St., Rochester, NY 14621-3162
Phone: (585) 546-7220 Ext. 4515

Nassau County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Department of Social Services
60 Charles Lindbergh Blvd., Suite #240, Uniondale, NY 11553-3653
Phone: (516) 227-7025

Niagara County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Community Missions
1570 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls, NY 14303-1516
Phone: (716) 285-3403 Ext. 2258

Oneida County Re-Entry Task Force
209 Elizabeth St., Utica, NY 13501-4328
Phone: (315) 798-3644

C/O Department of Social Services
60 Charles Lindbergh Blvd., Suite #240
Uniondale, NY 11553-3653
Phone: (516) 227-7025

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C/O Community Missions
1570 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls, NY 14303-1516
Phone: (716) 285-3403 Ext. 2258

Oneida County Re-Entry Task Force
209 Elizabeth St., Utica, NY 13501-4328
Phone: (315) 798-3644

Onondaga County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O District Attorney's Office
505 South State St., Syracuse, NY 13202-2598
Phone: (315) 435-2985, Ext. 153

Orange County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O RECAP, Inc.
280 Broadway, 2nd Floor, Newburgh, NY 12550-8203
Phone: (845) 421-6247

Rensselaer County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O District Attorney's Office
80 Second St., Troy, NY 12180-4002
Phone: (518) 270-4002

Rockland County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O District Attorney's Office
11 New Hempstead Rd., New City, NY 10956-3664
Phone: (845) 624-1366, Ext. 115

Schenectady County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O The Center for Community Justice
144 Barrett St., Schenectady, NY 12305-2004
Phone: (518) 346-1281, Ext. 22

Suffolk County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Probation Department
Box 205, Yaphank, NY 11980-0205
Phone: (631) 852-5100

Ulster County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O Family of Woodstock, Inc.
39 John St., PO Box 3516, Kingston, NY 12402-3821
Phone: (845) 331-7080

Westchester County Re-Entry Task Force
C/O District Attorney's Office
111 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., White Plains, NY 10601-2509
Phone: (914) 995-2791

What Faith Organizations Should Expect Offering Re-Entry Services

By Julio Medina, CEO & Founder, Exodus Transitional Community

Exodus Transitional Community is a faith-based re-entry program with offices in East Harlem, Poughkeepsie and Newburgh that serves men, women, and youth who have been justice involved. When Exodus was founded in 1999, its sole purpose was to offer re-entry programming for its participants. Although Exodus remains steadfast to this basic and vital principle, today there is a broad spectrum of supportive services executed in a holistic manner. Exodus has long been committed to building on the strengths of its participants and the approach is trauma-informed and culturally relevant.

Exodus has an extensive history of working to reduce recidivism by empowering individuals with the skills they need to adapt to all that changes during one's separation from society. The programming offered at Exodus varies and seeks to tailor services to the participants' needs related to housing, physical health, mental health, and substance and alcohol abuse. Our workforce training and development program coach participants in resume writing, interviewing, effective job searching techniques, workplace conflict resolution, employer expectations, and disclosing justice involvement to an employer. Exodus' holistic approach, inclusive of six life areas, realizes that mentoring is a key component in one's transition. This work is enormously rewarding, but also comes with very unique and complex challenges. As your faith community seeks to work with Exodus or another re-entry and reintegration program in New York State, please keep in mind the following points:

1. Your goal should be, first and foremost, providing support. Your organizational purpose should be to meet people where they are, not to try to bring people to where you are. While your services, naturally, are an outward expression of your faith, the goal should be to provide support, not to advocate for any religion.
2. Be prepared to deal with people with troubled pasts. This should go without saying. However, many faith organizations, though well-meaning at the onset, place so many restrictions on who can receive their services that it virtually precludes everyone who actually needs them. Those who need these services the most are often those who have the most troubled histories.

While it is understandable that an organization may choose to exclude, for instance, violent and/or sexual offenders, you should be aware that this is a large and growing subset of both federal and state prison populations.

3. Expect that those returning home will have a wide spectrum of needs that go beyond traditional re-entry services. It's not just a hot meal or clothes that people returning home need. Their needs range from overcoming barriers to obtaining proper identification, to help with placement in GED classes, to housing and welfare assistance. Some are not US citizens. Some are trying to connect with children they've never met. While your organization may not provide these services, being aware of who does and connecting those you serve with them is essential.
4. Understand that those coming home have just gone through a highly traumatic experience. Often there is a tendency to focus so much on the fact that a person is returning home that we forget where they are returning from. On the inside, some have been victims of physical and sexual abuse, and almost all have been a witness to it. Some have gone years without a single visit, others without as much as a hug or the warmth of a loving embrace. It's traumatic, to say the least. Rage and bitterness and deep distrust are natural outgrowths of this type of experience. In light of this, you might want members of your team to undergo Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Visiting a prison before you launch your program might also be helpful, as it will give you a practical reference on the type of experiences you will encounter doing re-entry work.
5. You can expect to find yourself working closely with not just returning persons but those who are collaterally affected by the epidemic of mass incarceration as well. The collateral victims are the relatives, loved ones, children and dependents of those directly affected. They too suffer the psychological and economic effects of incarceration. You should expect that your re-entry work will have you working with these individuals as much as with those who were arrested and/or convicted.

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Mr. Julio Medina, Founder and CEO

Mr. Darrell Bennett, J.D., B.A., Development Associate Consultant

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About This Document

This document was created in partnership between the Governor's Office of Faith Based Community Development Services, the Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration, the New York Theological Seminary, and Exodus Transitional Community.

The Governor's Office of Faith Based Community Development Services

builds upon Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Commitment to support nonprofits and faith-based organizations to better serve communities across the State. The office assists faith-based organizations in applying for grants from state agencies and provides informational resources for faith-based organizations to better coordinate efforts, build coalitions and develop effective partnerships.

Karim Camara, Executive Director and Deputy Commissioner
Andrea McKoy, Assistant Commissioner
February Seok, Program Manager

The Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration addresses obstacles formerly incarcerated people face upon re-entering society. The council promotes collaboration among state, local, and private agencies as well as community groups in order to address a wide range of issues pertaining to successful re-entry, including housing, employment, healthcare, education, behavior change, and Veterans services.

Marta Nelson, Executive Director
Sophie Whitin, Program Associate

To download additional copies of this document, please visit the Governor's Office of Faith Based Community Development Services at: www.ny.gov/GOFaithBasedServices

New York State Resources

For Job Seekers Contact:

New York State Department of Labor

Work for Success

Telephone: (888) 708-6712

Email: workforsuccess@labor.ny.gov

For Discrimination Contact:

New York State Division of Human Rights

Telephone: (888) 392-3644

Email for complaints: complaints@dhr.ny.gov

Website: <https://dhr.ny.gov/>

For Housing Discrimination and Harassment Contact:

New York State Homes and Community Renewal

Fair and Equitable Housing Office (FEHO)

Telephone: (518) 473-3089

Website: <http://www.nyshcr.org/AboutUs/Offices/FairHousing/>

New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision

Website: <http://www.doccs.ny.gov/>

For Support Services Contact:

New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Telephone: (518) 473-1090

Email: nyspio@otada.ny.gov

Website: <https://otda.ny.gov/>

New York State Division of Veterans Affairs

Telephone (888) 838-7697

Email: DVAInfo@veterans.ny.gov

Website: <https://veterans.ny.gov/>

New York State Department of Health

Telephone: (866) 881-2809

Email: dohweb@health.ny.gov

Website: <https://www.health.ny.gov/>



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