

Improving Prisoner Reentry Services Through Faith and Community-Based Partnerships

“America is the land of second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.”

President George W. Bush, January 20, 2004.

A Critical Need for Reentry Services

Each year more than 650,000 inmates are released from Federal and State prisons to be reunited with their communities and families. The return of these ex-prisoners threatens the fragile cohesion of many already-troubled neighborhoods. In fact, in the absence of intervention, a majority of ex-prisoners relapse back into criminal activity. According to the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, two out of three returning inmates will be re-arrested for new crimes within three years of their release from prison and more than half will be re-incarcerated.

Released prisoners face myriad challenges that contribute to their return to criminal activity, re-arrest and re-incarceration. Some of these challenges include joblessness, substance abuse, mental health problems, low levels of educational attainment, lack of stable housing and poor family connections.

Joblessness among ex-prisoners has been linked to recidivism rates. Over one-third of serious offenders were unemployed in the six months prior to their arrest.¹ Post-incarceration, employment rates plummet even further. Unemployment rates of ex-prisoners are estimated to be between 25 and 40 percent. Prisoners also demonstrate low levels of educational attainment—some 40 percent of adult state prisoners are functionally illiterate² and more than half of state parole entrants have not graduated from high school.³

Conversely, research shows that ex-offenders who find stable employment and develop social bonds have significantly lower recidivism rates.⁴

President George W. Bush’s Response

Faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) are among the most trusted and influential institutions in the urban neighborhoods to which the majority of released inmates will return. Local FBCOs have many resources from which to draw, including buildings, volunteers and a tradition of outreach and service.

¹ Visher and Lattimore, 2007

² Rubinstien, 2001 as quoted in Petersilia, 2002.

³ Petersilia, 2002.

⁴ Laub, John H., and Robert H. Sampson. 2001. “Understanding Desistance from Crime.” In *Crime and Justice*, M. Tonry and Norval Morris, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative has implemented many innovative reentry programs—including the President's Reentry Initiative, the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, Ready4Work, and others—that draw on the unique strengths of FBCOs. These programs rely on faith-based and community partners to deliver a wide range of social services to ex-prisoners that provide direct links into the communities to which they are returning.

The President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI)

President Bush announced his Prisoner Reentry Initiative in the 2004 State of the Union address. Expanding on the elements of Ready4Work, PRI helps returning nonviolent offenders by linking them to faith-based and community institutions that help them find work and avoid a relapse into a life of criminal activity. This four-year program provides services to 6,250 ex-prisoners annually.

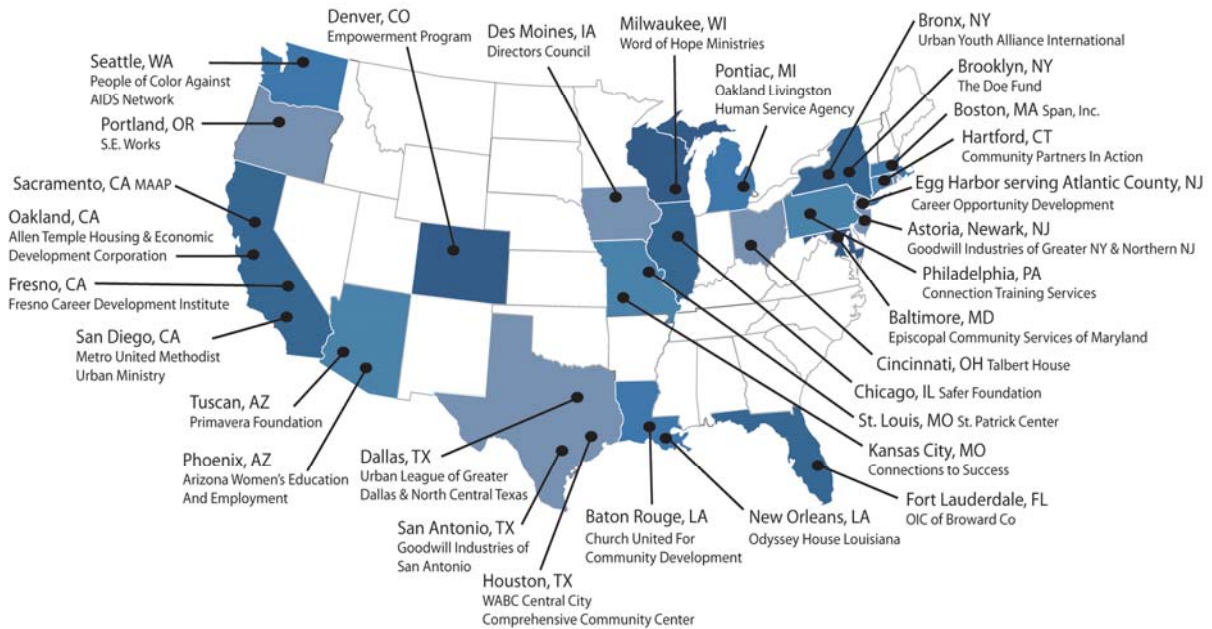
The development of the program was a collaborative process that brought together a team of federal and national partners designed to ensure that ex-offenders have access to those services necessary to successfully integrate into their communities through employment.

In November 2005, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) awarded PRI grants to 30 faith-based and community organizations in urban areas across the country. Each site is working to reduce recidivism by helping returning nonviolent prisoners through an employment-centered program that incorporates mentoring, job placement, job training and other holistic transitional services.

Working in collaboration with the DOL, the U.S. Department of Justice made PRI awards in September 2006 to state departments of corrections and state criminal justice administering agencies to provide pre-release services to prisoners who will be served by the DOL grantees.

Grant Locations. The 30 DOL grants awarded under the President's Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative grant competition are designed to serve urban centers and areas of high need (see PRI Grantee Site Map).

Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) Grants



Participants. To be eligible to participate in PRI, an ex-offender must be 18 years of age or older and have a nonviolent or non-sex-related presenting offense. Participants should be enrolled in the program within 180 days after their release from prison or a halfway house. Up to 10 percent of individuals served can be enrolled more than 180 days from their prison release date.

Results. PRI sites began serving program participants in the spring of 2006 and early results are promising. As of November 9, 2007, 10,361 PRI participants have been enrolled in the program and 6,035 participants have been placed into jobs. The one-year post-release PRI recidivism rate is currently 20% -- less than half the Bureau of Justice Statistics' national benchmark of 44%.

The Serious And Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI)

SVORI is a collaborative Federal effort to improve criminal justice, employment, education, health and housing outcomes for adults and juveniles returning home from prison. Beginning in late 2002 through 2006, the Departments of Justice, Labor, Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services provided about \$110 million to develop new or expand existing programs offering integrated post-release supervision and reentry services. Reentry efforts were funded in all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia. The 69 grantees operate 89 adult and juvenile programs for serious and violent ex-offenders, and received between \$500,000 and \$2 million in single, three-year awards.

Through SVORI, FBCOs provided returning ex-offenders with such services as needs- and risk-assessments, reentry planning, one-on-one mentoring, life-skills training, dental and medical services, housing placement, interviewing skills, and job placement.

SVORI has also funded a four-year comprehensive impact evaluation that will continue through 2008. The evaluation will include implementation assessment of all grantees, an impact evaluation focused on 16 (12 adult and 4 juvenile) sites, a cost-benefit analysis, and a dissemination plan.

Ready4Work

In 2003, the President’s Faith-Based and Community Initiative launched Ready4Work, a three-year pilot program to address the needs of ex-prisoners utilizing FBCOs. This \$25 million program was jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), the U.S. Department of Justice, Public/Private Ventures—a Philadelphia-based research and demonstration non-profit—and a consortium of private foundations.

Ready4Work placed faith-based and community organizations at the center of social service delivery to ex-offenders. It placed an emphasis on employment-focused programs that incorporate mentoring, job training, job placement, case management and other comprehensive transitional services.

Participants. Participant eligibility for Ready4Work was determined based on three factors: (1) age of the ex-offender; (2) presenting offense; and (3) length of time pre- or post-release. Ex-prisoners between the ages of 18 and 34 who had most recently been incarcerated for a nonviolent felony offense and were no more than 90 days pre- or post-release were eligible to enroll in the program.

Criminal History. Ready4Work targeted for enrollment individuals returning from prison with a high probability of recidivating. Ex-prisoners with extensive criminal backgrounds—those most likely to return to prison—participated in the program. Half of Ready4Work participants had been arrested five or more times. Less than 10 percent had been arrested only once (see Table 1). More than 55 percent had most recently been incarcerated for a drug or property offense. As a result of these criminal records, the majority of participants had spent more than two years in prison, and almost 25 percent had spent five or more years behind bars. Participants averaged 17 years of age at the time of their first arrest.

Table 1: Criminal History of Ready4Work Participants

Presenting Offense		Number of Arrests	
Drug	44%	1	9%
Property	14%	2 to 4	41%
Other	42%	5 or more	50%

Source: R4W sites’ management information systems and participant questionnaires.

Results. The Ready4Work pilot program formally ended August 31, 2006. The results of the program, which were verified by an independent third party, are promising. A total of 4,482 formerly incarcerated individuals enrolled in Ready4Work. Of these participants, 97 percent received comprehensive case management services, 86 percent received employment services and 63 percent received mentoring services.

Ready4Work sites placed 2,543 participants (57 percent) into jobs, with 63 percent of those placed retaining their job for three consecutive months after placement. On average, program costs were approximately \$4,500 per participant, compared with average costs of \$25,000 to \$40,000 per year for re-incarceration.

Recidivism. Recidivism is defined in Ready4Work as returning to an in-state prison as a result of a conviction for a new offense. This is a common measure used by other studies and programs assessing recidivism rates. However, this definition excludes those returning to prison for violating their probation or parole conditions, as well as those incarcerated in local jails.

Data analysis on Ready4Work prepared by Public/Private Ventures shows that only 2.5 percent of Ready4Work participants have been re-incarcerated in state institutions within 6 months of release, and 6.9 percent were re-incarcerated at the one-year post-release mark. Though these statistics are promising, it is important to note that a random-assignment study has not been performed, so no strict control group existed for the sake of comparison.

The recidivism outcomes from Ready4Work were, however, compared against the universally accepted recidivism benchmark from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) re-incarceration study, "Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994⁵." Ready4Work recidivism rates are half the national re-incarceration rate of 5 percent at six-months and 44 percent lower than the 10.4 percent national rate of re-incarceration one-year after release.

Ready4Work recidivism statistics are of particular significance given the fact that the program's population was at a statistically higher risk for recidivating than the general ex-prison population represented by the BJS statistic, due largely to age, race and type of offense. When compared against a subset of the 1994 BJS study that includes only African American male inmates between the ages of 18 and 34 released after serving time for nonviolent offenses, the 2.5 percent recidivism rate for Ready4Work participants at 6 months is 58 percent lower than the 6 percent BJS benchmark figure. The 6.9 percent Ready4Work recidivism rate at the one-year post-release mark was 52 percent lower than this BJS subset at the one-year post-release point.

⁵ Langan, Patrick A. and David J. Levin. 2002. *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics. This study represents the most comprehensive, reputable, widely used and recent data regarding recidivism.

Table 2: Ready4Work Recidivism Rates and Bureau of Justice Statistics Benchmarks

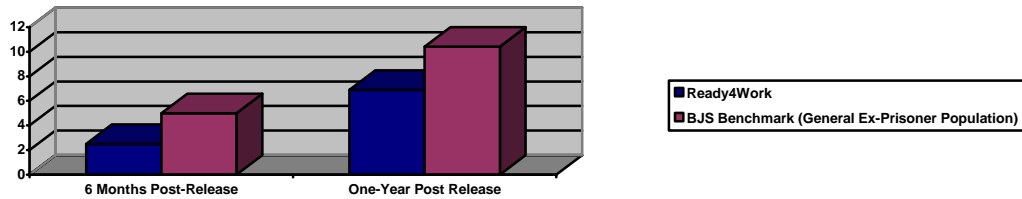
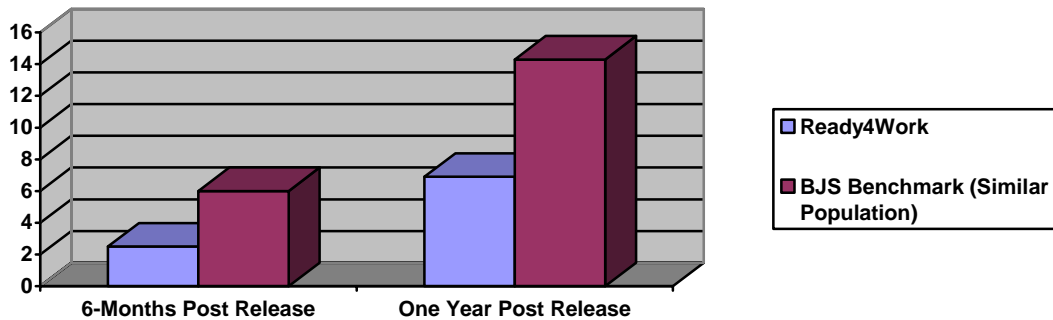


Table 3: Ready4Work Recidivism Rates and Bureau of Justice Statistics Benchmarks for African American Male Non-Violent Offenders between the Ages of 18 and 34.



Mentoring as a Component of Ready4Work. Over 60 percent of Ready4Work participants received mentoring as part of their services. Participants who met with a mentor at least once showed stronger outcomes than those who did not participate in mentoring in a number of ways:

- Mentored participants remained in the program longer than unmentored participants (10.2 months versus 7.2 months);
- Mentored participants were twice as likely to obtain a job. After the first encounter, an additional month of meetings between the participant and mentor increased the former's likelihood of finding a job by 53 percent.
- Meeting with a mentor increased a participant's odds of getting a job the next month by 73 percent over participants who did not take advantage of mentoring. An additional month of meetings increased a participant's odds of finding a job by another 7 percent.
- Those who met with a mentor were 56 percent more likely to remain employed for three months than those who did not. An additional month of meetings with a mentor increased the participant's odds of remaining employed three months by 24 percent.

A complete analysis of mentoring outcomes can be found in *Mentoring Ex-Prisoners in the Ready4Work Reentry Initiative*, on-line at www.dol.gov/cfbci.

Mentoring Children of Prisoners

The Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program (MCP), a program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at the Administration for Children and Families, awards competitive grants to eligible organizations serving a geographic region with substantial numbers of children with incarcerated parents. These grants support the establishment and operation of mentoring programs for this specific population of at-risk youth. With these grants, nearly 70,000 children have been paired with mentors -- and the initiative is on track to match 100,000 children by the year 2009. This year, the First Lady announced the award of the \$30 million voucher demonstration program to MENTOR. As a mentoring organization in Alexandria, this organization identifies children in need of mentoring services residing outside of areas currently served by location-based MCP programs. They will also locate new organizations to provide mentoring services through the voucher program in communities throughout the United States so that families of children of prisoners can choose the group that best meets their needs. In the first year alone, the authorized \$5 million will provide at least 3,000 vouchers for mentoring services for children of prisoners. For more information on the MCP program, please visit <http://www.hhs.gov/fbci>.

Access to Recovery

In his 2003 State of the Union Address, President Bush announced a new substance abuse treatment initiative named the Access to Recovery Program (ATR). This initiative provides people seeking drug and alcohol treatment with vouchers to pay for a range of appropriate community-based services. Since its creation, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) ATR has expanded capacity, supported client choice, and increased the array of faith-based and community based providers for clinical treatment and recovery support services. ATR's voucher system allows clients to choose where to receive substance abuse clinical treatment and recovery support services (RSS) based on the provider network.

After a competitive grant process, funds were awarded in 2004 to 14 states and one tribal organization⁶ to implement Access to Recovery. These grantees have helped ATR exceed its target goal of 125,000 clients served. To date, the program has served over 170,000 clients.

Recent data reveals that recovery support services play a large role throughout the service networks established by the program. Over 63% of the clients for whom status and discharge data are available have received RSS, and approximately 50% of the dollars redeemed for ATR has been redeemed for RSS.

⁶ California, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and the California Rural Indian Health Board.

SAHMSA recently awarded 24 new 3-year Access to Recovery grants⁷. Just under \$100 million is expected to be awarded each year, for three years to help the grantees increase access to clinical treatment and recovery support services for an estimated 160,000 individuals. For more information on the ATR program, please visit <http://atr.samhsa.gov>.

U.S. Department of Justice Anti-Gang Initiative

The U.S. Department of Justice's anti-gang initiative provides pre- and post-release services and supervision for gang members returning to their communities after a period of incarceration in state, local or other correctional facilities. The program advances the President's vision for expanded choice by offering ex-offenders the option of selecting one of several faith-based and community providers.

Faith-based and community organizations partner with criminal justice, law enforcement, therapeutic treatment, and other service agencies to provide vouchers for offenders to obtain treatment and services in their communities. Probation/parole officers, working closely with law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, treatment and service providers, FBCOs, mentors and others within the community provide intensive supervision of the ex-offenders.

Six sites were awarded Anti-Gang Initiative grants during the fall of 2006⁸. Each site is using the funding to target 100 high impact gang members who have a history of violence and pose a risk to their communities. Participants must be enrolled within six months of release from incarceration.

Pre-release services provided through the program include mentoring, risk/needs assessment, treatment services—including substance abuse, mental health, and anger management—cognitive restructuring, motivational interviewing, socialization skill development and domestic violence rehabilitation. Post-release program services include job skills development, education, employment, housing, language skills and child care resources.

Latino Coalition

The Department of Labor awarded a three-year, \$10 million grant to The Latino Coalition for Faith & Community Initiatives to help 2,750 Latino at-risk and adjudicated youth. The Reclamando Nuestro Futuro (RNF) project provides capacity building and support to 22 affiliates in six cities (Dallas, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Phoenix and San Diego) that provide direct services in the areas of skills training, community service, subsidized

⁷ Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council, District of Columbia, California Rural Indian Health Board, Arizona, Rhode Island, Washington, Ohio, Iowa, Texas, Colorado, and Wisconsin Louisiana, Hawaii, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma Cherokee Nation, California, Alaska Southcentral Foundation, Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Connecticut, Tennessee, Oklahoma,

⁸ Cleveland, Ohio; Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas; East Los Angeles, California; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Tampa, Florida; and the "222 Corridor" between Lancaster and Easton, Pennsylvania.

and unsubsidized work experience and internships, job preparation, college preparation, GED preparation, basic and remedial education, language proficiency, substance abuse services and mentoring.

According to results reported by the Latino Coalition, the service efforts and capacity building activities of the RNF project have produced the following results:

- A total of 2,806 at-risk and adjudicated youth have been served;
- One thousand seventy eight (1,078) at-risk or adjudicated youth either obtained full time employment, entered the military, entered and/or completed long term occupational training or entered full time post secondary school;
- Two hundred and five (205) at-risk or adjudicated youth received their high school diploma, G.E.D. and/or a certificate;
- Twenty-two sub-grantees implemented a centralized database tracking and reporting systems to support and expand their programs; and
- Formal partnerships between Latino Coalition affiliates and juvenile justice/probation, workforce investment systems, community colleges, “last chance” schools and other community and faith based organizations have been developed to support the needs of at-risk and adjudicated youth.

Affiliates have focused on targeting Latino youth, as 82% of project participants have a Hispanic ethnicity. Sixty percent of the adjudicated youth served were returning from incarceration. Through the RNF project, only 18.1% of participants have recidivated during the three year project period. Of that number, only 6.5% of adjudicated youth had their parole/probation revoked after entering the project.

Esperanza USA

The Department of Labor awarded Esperanza USA a three-year \$10.5 million grant to help 2,500 troubled and at-risk youth in 16 sites across America, including many large cities⁹. This program utilizes faith-based and community organizations to provide educational and employment services to Hispanic at-risk and adjudicated youth to make a positive impact on their communities.

Each site provides job training, job placement, case management, mentoring, aftercare, transitional support services, educational training services and career preparation..

Esperanza has enrolled more than 3,000 participants in its program. Sixty-two percent have been placed into jobs, and only 3.5 percent have recidivated.

⁹ Service areas include the Bronx and New York, New York; Boston, Massachusetts; Bethlehem and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois; Miami, Orlando, and Tampa, Florida; Tucson, Arizona; Orange County, California; and Tacoma, Washington

Beneficiary-Choice Contracting

The Department of Labor recently awarded five grantees under its "Preparing Ex-Offenders for the Workplace through Beneficiary Choice Contracting" program. This program addresses the specific workforce challenges of ex-offenders and encourages positive outcomes with a particular focus on employment and reduced recidivism. Beneficiary Choice contracting allows for a diversity of service styles and approaches. The participant can select a provider who best meets his or her personal needs and interests.

In addition to basic employment-focused services, each faith-based or community provider may offer its own set of specialized services that might include: one-on-one or group mentoring, substance abuse counseling, child care services, or English proficiency courses. Five grantees¹⁰ were awarded \$1 million each for this initiative. For more information on this program, please visit www.dol.gov/cfbcj.

¹⁰ Arizona Women's Education and Employment Inc. of Phoenix; Colorado's Department of Labor and Employment; the City of Chicago; the Indianapolis Private Industry Council Inc.; and the Director's Council of Des Moines, Iowa.